

Memo

To: Planning Commission
From: Bryan Myrkle, Community Development Director
Date: June 30, 2016
Re: Food trucks discussion

As the Planning Commission works toward a conclusion in its discussion of whether to allow food trucks to operate in the city, I would like it also to consider a number of other downtown uses and potential uses that are technical violations of the ordinance.

The City has allowed and even encouraged things like outdoor dining and sidewalk café's, the downtown farmer's market on the Courthouse lawn, sidewalk sales, and the commercial use and rental of Beach Market. All of these currently contribute to our downtown's vitality and will, I believe, contribute to its growth and redevelopment. However, they would all run afoul of strict application of our zoning ordinance's requirement that business be conducted within 'a completely enclosed building.'

If the city decides that this portion of our ordinance should apply to food trucks, I would ask that it specifically exempt those activities the Planning Commission thinks it should not apply to. Commission members may be able to think of others that should be exempted, too.

The issue of food trucks was also discussed by the Downtown Development Authority at its June meeting, but the Board did not vote to make a specific recommendation to the Planning Commission. However, individual members did offer remarks, these included:

- Ken Wirt suggested that food trucks, if allowed, be part of a larger downtown plan, not just a response to individual requests. He also

asked the board to consider what this would be like if it was another business type, such as tanning or accounting.

- Travis Silvas said that food trucks could be a commercial draw for downtown if set-up correctly, because many people want more choices.
- Mayor Lewis said that if allowed, they should be regulated and also leveraged as a marketing tool, and gave the example of Monroe, GA.
- Several questioned the timing and said that a booming downtown district could support food trucks, while a district working to get back on its feet likely could not.

Because there wasn't broad agreement on the DDA Board, its decision was to wait until a specific plan for food trucks is presented before making an official comments or suggestions.

Since our last meeting, the *Lansing State Journal* wrote a large piece on the issue and how it's being handled across Mid-Michigan. I have included the text of the article (written by Charlotte resident Rachel Greco) with your packet, but there are several videos and related content on the LSJ website that you may find interesting.