



State & Commerce Committee – Board of Representatives

Fred Pierre-Louis, Chair

Jonathan Jacobson, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2023

Time: 7:00pm

Place: *This meeting was held remotely.*

The State & Commerce Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Pierre-Louis, Vice Chair Jacobson, and Committee Member Reps. Goldberg, Ley, Miller, and Walston. Excused was Rep. Sandford. Also in attendance were Dana Lee, Law Dept.; Frank Petise, Transportation Bureau Chief; Luke Buttenwieser, Traffic Engineering; Jay Stange, Coordinator of Transport Hartford Academy; and one member of the public.

Chair Pierre-Louis called the meeting to order at 7:00pm

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
11. SC31.006	ORDINANCE <u>for Publication</u> ; Amendment to Chapter 214, Article V , of the Code of Ordinances, Outdoor Dining, to Expand Outdoor Dining Into Parking Spaces and the Roadway. 02/09/22 – Submitted by Frank Petise 03/02/22 – Held by Committee 5-0-0 03/30/22 – Held by Committee 4-0-0 04/11/22 – Moved to Pending 07/19/22 – Approved by Committee, as amended, 5-0-0 09/12/22 – Moved to Pending	Approved 6-0-0

Mr. Petise and Mr. Buttenwieser reviewed the recent changes to the ordinance:

- The changes are organizational.
- Permit section regarding private property and public property has been clarified.
- The ordinance standardizes which city departments review the permit, and streamlines the process internally.
- A section has been added that allows the city to remove materials that have been abandoned. This has not been an issue in Stamford, but throughout the country there have been issues with this. It is a way of being proactive in case a problem arises with abandoned equipment in the future.
- Violation fees have been increased to the highest amount allowed by law. Each hour of the violation is now a separate offense.

¹ Video Time Stamp: 00:01:15

There was discussion:

- The only recourse for the city to get reimbursed for disposing of abandoned equipment would be a lawsuit against the restaurant owner to recover the cost.
- This ordinance mainly addresses tables, chairs, umbrellas, and planters. It does not address more extensive equipment such as in some New York City areas.
- Outdoor gas heaters are regulated by the Stamford Fire Marshal. The Fire Marshal's office reviews and monitors every outdoor dining permit.

A motion to approve Item #1 was made, seconded and approved by a voice vote of 6-0-0 (Reps. Pierre-Louis, Jacobson, Goldberg, Ley, Miller, and Walston in favor).

22. [SC31.011](#) RESOLUTION; Calling on the Governor and the Legislature of the State of Connecticut to Make the Elimination of Local Bus Fares Permanent for All Bus Riders. **Approved as Amended 6-0-0**
- 12/06/22 – Submitted by Reps. de la Cruz, Goldberg, Grunberger, Jacobson, Ley, Mays, Morson, Nabel, Pavia, Pierre-Louis, Pollack, Sandford, Shaw, and Walston.
- 12/12/22 – Moved to Pending

Vice Chair Jacobson explained his reason for putting this item on the Agenda:

- In April 2022 the Governor temporarily eliminated bus fares. This is scheduled to expire in March 2023. The program should be extended permanently.
- Increased use of public transportation can help to curtail problems such as the large amount of vehicles on the road, deteriorating infrastructure, and lack of walking and biking ability across Stamford.
- Bus service benefits the most financially vulnerable residents.
- Eliminating bus fares will improve efficiency of public transportation.
- Similar language has been passed in Hartford and New Haven. As the second largest city in Connecticut, Stamford should pass this resolution.

Mr. Stange explained the need for fare-free transit:

- Many households in urban areas do not have any vehicles and rely entirely on public transportation.
- Bus fares are seen by many as a regressive tax.
- Revenue loss for fare-free transportation is very small considering the Connecticut transportation budget.
- This could be a game-changer for people who rely on buses, and could increase bus use for people who have a choice of transportation.
- Municipalities need to understand that fare-free transit is a part of transportation improvements, not a separate issue.

² Video Time Stamp: 00:22:45

Mr. Buttenwieser stated that according to the CT Transit ridership data, there was a significant increase in ridership after the fare freeze in April 2022.

A motion to amend the 4th Whereas clause to read: “the estimated ~~cost~~ investment of making bus travel free ~~for three months annually~~ is \$8.118 million, a small fraction of ~~annual~~ infrastructure spending by the Connecticut Department of Transportation ~~every year~~” was made, seconded and approved by a voice vote of 6-0-0 (Reps. Pierre-Louis, Jacobson, Goldberg, Ley, Miller, and Walston in favor).

A motion to amend the 2nd Whereas clause to read: “buses are an essential mode of transportation for working- and middle-class families, young people, and ~~individuals~~ ~~students, among others~~, who cannot afford to or otherwise do not want to own an automobile, many of whom live in the city of Stamford” was made, seconded and approved by a voice vote of 6-0-0 (Reps. Pierre-Louis, Jacobson, Goldberg, Ley, Miller, and Walston in favor).

A motion to approve Item #2 as amended was made, seconded and approved by a voice vote of 6-0-0 (Reps. Pierre-Louis, Jacobson, Goldberg, Ley, Miller, and Walston in favor).

Chair Pierre-Louis adjourned the meeting at 8:08pm

Respectfully submitted,
Fred Pierre-Louis, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).