



Office of the Town Manager

Christopher E. Martino

# STAFF REPORT

## Warrenton Town Council

Carter Nevill, Mayor

Heather Sutphin, Ward 1

William Semple, Ward 2

Brett Hamby, Ward 3

James Hartman, Ward 4 Vice Mayor

Jay Heroux, Ward 5

Sean Polster, At Large

Renard Carlos, At Large

<b>Council Meeting Date:</b>	December 13, 2022
<b>Agenda Title:</b>	RollOutWarrenton! Status of Second Street
<b>Requested Action:</b>	Direct staff on the closure of Second Street
<b>Department / Agency Lead:</b>	Public Works and Utilities
<b>Staff Lead:</b>	Frank Cassidy

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town developed and implemented a successful economic development program at the onset of the pandemic called RollOutWarrenton! This program allowed businesses Town wide to create outdoor space for dining, community engagement, display of items for sale, and incorporated road closures on Main Street to further promote businesses. The program's objective was to encourage economic development while enhancing the overall experience for residents and visitors to the Town.

At the Town Council Meeting on March 8, 2022, the program was extended for this year. The end date was targeted as "to be determined" in November before the Thanksgiving Holiday and in the same time frame as last year.

The program was implemented as directed with Town staff managing the parklet program as per the Parklet guide and placing the parklets along Main St. The street closures followed.

Staff has been assessing the conditions of the parklets along with weather, safety concerns, and staffing for a prospective date to remove the parklets. The first week of November is the best week to remove the parklets and bring this years' RollOutWarrenton! program to an end. Staff has been working with EOTW and the businesses for planning to meet this objective.

At the November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Town Council meeting, Staff recommended reopening Second Street. Council requested Staff postpone action until they could discuss with the local business owners and determine what action Council would like to take regarding the closure.

## BACKGROUND

RollOutWarrenton! was a Town-wide economic development initiative to assist all businesses in recovering from the economic impact of COVID-19. The program was based on the following:

1. Creating an environment that would encourage and promote recovery.
2. Finding ways to allow businesses to be creative.
3. Government as a partner to support the businesses during recovery.

RollOutWarrenton! was based on encouraging businesses to move outside and creating additional space for their customers; providing opportunities for other temporary signage and enhancing the sense of community by promoting a walking atmosphere.

Town Council implemented the following:

- Adopted a resolution suspending zoning regulations that would hinder recovery efforts.
- Provided space for businesses to expand:
  - Closed Main Street to provide seating and display areas.
  - Allowed businesses to use parking areas for seating and display.
  - Allowed businesses to expand onto sidewalks but preserve safe access.
  - Created additional space for their customers to meet minimum State- mandated separation.
- Provided resources to assist businesses:
  - On-site consultations to discuss the business plan and layout of space.
  - Supplied PPE as needed during shortages.
  - Cones or other devices to be used as parameters to define outside spaces.
  - Provided additional directional signage.
  - Provided promotions via social media.
  - Provided fliers and handouts defining requirements and expectations.
- Continued monitoring and remaining flexible to adjust to any new orders or phased restrictions from the Governor serving as a resource on compliance questions.

The success of this program was the flexibility and collaboration throughout the community.

#### Council Actions on RollOutWarrenton!:

- November 9, 2022 \_ Council work session discussed re-opening Second St to Vehicle traffic. Council requested to keep Second St. closed until discussion at the December 13, 2022, Council meeting.
- May 12, 2020 – Regular Meeting - it was introduced and had Council support to move forward. The program was implemented Town-wide.
- August 6, 2020 – Work Session – Staff provided an update, and Council discussion continued with interest in how the program would move through fall and winter implications.
- December 8, 2020 – Regular Meeting – Staff provided an update. Some parklets were removed due to non-use during the winter months. A discussion was held to continue the program into Spring with reevaluation after understanding the VDOT Grant award.
- December 2020 WarmUpWarrenton! was established to assist businesses with changes for inclement weather. This is a grant program to complement existing provisions for the businesses.
- April 13, 2021 – Work Session – Staff provided an update of the program. Discussion included a survey conducted by Experience Old Town Warrenton (EOTW) illustrating the overall support of continuing the program, introduction of a parklet program, associated documents, and the recommendation to continue the program for another year. Council voted to continue the program and implement the parklet program.
- February 8, 2022, Town Council Work Session discussion to continue the program while working on a more permanent program. This was based on the overall economic and community-oriented success of the original program.
- March 8, 2022, Town Council Work approved continuation of the program with closing Main St. as outlined and discussed with the removal of the parklets to be determined by Public Works with the

target of November, prior to Thanksgiving.

The Town Public Works and Utilities Department has been assessing the best time to remove the parklets and end the program for this year. The target removal time is the first week of November with an exact date to be determined based on weather and availability of staff. These decisions were reached by considering the following:

- **Weather-** Once the weather starts to reach frost and freezes, the parklets are not used as much.
- **Leaves-** An important part of this decision is based on safety. Currently the leaves are beginning to accumulate Town wide, and we are seeing accumulation around and under the parklets. This creates a fire hazard especially when considering the potential of a stray cigarette, or other heat source dropping underneath a parklet with dry leaves under it.
- **Staff availability-** The first week of November is two weeks after our Fall cleanup and the second week of our first series of leaf collection. This is the “lightest” leaf clean up period and coincides with the removal of the parklets to address safety concerns while providing access to Main St. for leaf removal. Also, given the workload and holidays, this is the best week for scheduling without interfering with our services.
- **Timing-** This week is in line with when the program ended last year and was the discussed time with those businesses who have approved parklets.
- **Condition of the Parklets-** The current parklets have reached their end of life as designed and provided. We do not recommend using them next year nor have the Town provide them. If the program is approved again, businesses will have to provide their own parklets as approved in the Town Parklet Guide.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff recommends the opening of Second Street based on the following:

- There is no existing plan for improvements or use of Second St. if it remains closed.
- Staff is working with EOTW and the existing plans for First Street improvements.
- If Second Street remains closed to vehicle traffic but open for use of pedestrian traffic and use, we will need to provide suitable traffic barricades to ensure the safety of those using the area. This can cost upwards of \$5,000.00 for proper materials alone.
- Permanent closure of Second St. to vehicle traffic will be addressed in the upcoming discussions and plans for developing a permanent RollOutWarrenton! Program to be presented at the January 10, 2023, Council Work Session.

## **Service Level / Policy Impact**

These projects are in line with the Plan Warrenton 2040, Goals as follows:

- Community and Facilities-
  - CF-2: Public safety and services and policies are viewed as amongst the best in similar Virginia towns for responsiveness, community trust, and effectiveness.

- CF-5: To provide fiscally responsible infrastructure that maintains a high quality of life for residents, supports current businesses, and attracts new employers with a stable tax structure.
- Transportation and Circulation-
  - T-2: Enhance the traveling experience by creating great streets.
  - T-3: Provide livability in the Town by creating great places where residents and visitors feel welcome and safe.
- Economic and Fiscal Resilience-
  - E-3: Promote Warrenton as a cultural, entertainment, and arts center.
  - E-5: Be proactive in the Town's Economic Development.

**Fiscal Impact**

The costs will be associated with provided appropriate hard barricades to keep Second St. closed to vehicle traffic. Preliminary cost estimates for materials alone are in the \$5,000.00 range. Costs will depend on the plan for the use of Second ST. if it remains closed to vehicle traffic.

**Legal Impact**

No impact.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

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