



January 9, 2008

Dear Mayor Euille and Members of City Council:

I know that many of you heard from our customers yesterday regarding outdoor seating. Here's the bottom line – Monday and Tuesday were beautiful spring like days with temperatures in the 70s. Tuesday we sponsored a Civil Disobedience Luncheon by utilizing our SUP and Encroachment permit granted outdoor seating. Our revenue increased \$800 in one day (that's \$32 for the City, for those who are counting).

Clearly we are meeting a demand for services in the City while challenging the validity of the Council's action abolishing our rights under the SUP and Encroachment permits without the specified due process. I feel very strongly that Bittersweet and the three other businesses that went through a legislative process to obtain these rights (prior to the trial outdoor seating period) are being treated unfairly. Beyond that, many of our customers spoke of the unnecessary regulation and the importance of outdoor seating adding life to the community. Bringing vibrancy to the community is part of our mission statement and it's one reason Bittersweet has survived and grown over the past 25 years.

Some sense needs to be brought to this situation. Bittersweet invested nearly \$400,000 during 2007 expanding and renovating its facilities. We did so in part because we knew we could count on these warm winter days to increase our revenue. It's time for the City to really act like it supports and welcomes small independent businesses rather than just saying it does. Otherwise we're going to end up like every other small urban retail core with the same mix of national chains. The City needs a successful blend of big and small businesses to remain a unique destination.

I plan on sponsoring a roundtable discussion on this matter with other affected businesses and would welcome your participation. While I am concerned primarily with my own business, I see that the prohibition on outdoor dining during the winter months creates an unnecessary void in the streetscape. Let's work together to make Alexandria the dynamic, historic urban core of which we can all be proud.

Sincerely,

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