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March 20, 2015

Representative Eileen Heaphy,
Stamford Board of Representatives, City of Stamford
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06901

Re: LR28.041-Amending Chapter 214, Article V, Sidewalk Cafes, Section 214-46, Permit Application, concerning permit fees

Dear Ms. Heaphy and members of L & R Committee,

I regret I am unable to attend the March 23rd Public Hearing regarding permit fees for sidewalk cafes. The cafes are a subject near and dear to me because outdoor seasonal dining has played a crucial role in establishing Stamford Downtown as a regional dining destination. For more than two decades we have fostered their evolution from a few scattered groups of tables to a cohesive network of diverse outdoor dining venues that is unrivaled throughout Fairfield County and beyond. It is my hope that the cafes will remain an important part of our dining scene for many more decades to come.

That said I am concerned with the proposal to increase the annual sidewalk café permit fee and simultaneously layer on an additional fee based on the size of the café. Ninety percent of our downtown restaurants are independent, non-chain establishments that work on slim margins and face many challenges to remain in business. Many rely on the six-month sidewalk café season to remain solvent for the remainder of the year. The proposed additional fee could jeopardize the future of a number of cafés and indeed, the future some of the restaurants themselves. I ask that the committee consider a significant reduction of the fees proposed in this amendment.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter and I again extend my regrets that I was unable to appear before you in person.

Sincerely,

Sandy Goldstein
President