

Comments received concerning allowing pet dogs in outdoor eating areas

From Public Forum 9/9/09

AGAINST: Dogs bite and can be disruptive/eat off silverware or plates

AGAINST: I don't want dog hair/dander near my food; a dog could be set off by a smell, a loud noise, etc. Sanitizer would be needed.

Unregulated animals are bad; where would you stop—a cat? Snake? Dogs are too irregular to have in public settings. What about allergies?

FOR: A well-behaved dog is okay. (Such as a therapy dog.)

Dogs get together; they may play—it could be chaotic.

Some people have an irrational fear of animals.

The permitting process should include submitting a plan on how restaurant staff will be trained to deal with pet dogs and service animals.

Who'll pay to enforce it?

There's also the cost to the restaurant for cleaning up messes.

Enjoy your pets at home.

This would make more work for restaurant employees.

How would you keep the two environments [indoor dining vs. outdoor dining areas] separate?

The chain of germs possible is big!

The Health Department doesn't have enough staff as it is to keep up with their duties now.

The financial burden could/will be great.

Comments received via email, fax or phone

I am in support of dogs being allowed on patios of restaurants in Knoxville. I find it pleasant to see pet owners relaxing with their dogs when I go downtown. I also find it a conversation starter for bonding experiences between Knoxville citizens. (email)

I was just made aware of the meeting held today to discuss the subject of dogs being allowed on the patios of restaurants in Knoxville. If I had known in advance, I would have made an effort to attend. Nevertheless, I would like to tell you at this time that I am in favor of allowing each restaurant to control whether they will allow any particular dog on their patio. I am certain that they will have the best interest of all patrons in mind, at all times. A well-behaved, leashed dog would certainly be more welcomed than some human restaurant patrons I have had to endure in the past. (email)

I recently read an article on the new bill allowing dogs to be in the patio areas of restaurants that said no one showed up in support of the bill. Had I known I definitely would have shown up. I apologize for e-mailing you directly but I felt it important to share my opinion on this matter.

I think that provided individual restaurant owners want to allow it, that it should be allowed. Patios are outdoor areas where patrons may be exposed to smoke, noise, or any number of things not allowed inside of a restaurant. The dogs do not pose a health hazard in the area. As someone with several food allergies, and who responds badly to cigarette smoke I commonly find myself on the patio next to a smoker, but if I want to get away I have the option of going inside where smoking is not allowed. Those not interested in being around dogs on the patio have the same option. Further, people on the patio tend to love dogs! Whenever our dogs have been around the patio when it has been allowed in other areas we constantly have people from other tables coming up to ask if they can pet our dogs which we always allow.

Well behaved dogs pose no food safety risk, and allowing them on the patio should be up to the individual owners. Thanks for listening.(email)

I am a local resident, and my husband and I enjoy visiting Market Square with our dogs. Recently, we were disappointed when restaurants told us we couldn't bring our dogs to the patios. We have two small, well behaved dogs, and it was a very fun way to spend the afternoon and dinner at Market Square on the weekends. We spend more time (and money) downtown when we can bring our dogs and hang out, instead of heading home early to let them out.

I am also in the unique position of being allergic to non-hypoallergenic dogs. If I were uncomfortable near a specific dog, I would have no issue asking for my table to be moved to another patio seat, or inside.

I absolutely support the ordinance to allow dogs, and had I know of the Wednesday meeting, I would have been there to say so. Please vote to allow dogs. (email)

I have no problem with you or anyone else having a dog. But I don't like to eat around dogs. If I go to a restaurant and a dog comes to sit next to me, I will ask the manager if he wants my money or the dog's. There's allergies, too. (call was for two people with the same opinion)

I understand from today's article in the *Knoxville News Sentinel* that you are considering an ordinance that would allow dogs on outside restaurant patios. I am totally opposed to such an ordinance, except for service dogs.

I realize that many people are animal lovers and wish to take their pets along with them everywhere they go. However, I believe allowing pets in restaurants is taking this way too far. There are many issues to consider, the main ones being sanitation and safety. And although I like dogs, I certainly don't want to see one slobbering profusely (as many do) while I am trying to enjoy my lunch or dinner. The thought of being sprayed by a dog shaking its fur when coming in from the rain is not a pleasant one, and smelling a dog who hasn't been bathed lately or that is in heat disgusts me. (email)

Yes! I am in favor of dogs being allowed on restaurant patios. (email)

If I would have known there was a meeting on this yesterday, I, along with many of my customers, would have attended to show support in favor of this. My well behaved and very social dogs go just about everywhere with me. It would be so nice to expand where I can eat while I have them. There are a few dog friendly places already, but to have this passed would help a great deal. Thank you for your time. (email)

I DO SUPPORT this being passed. We need more dog-friendly environments! (email)

I am writing to you to express my support for allowing dogs onto restaurant patios and in outdoor eating areas. If a restaurant does not wish to participate, that is their prerogative, but the ones that do wish to allow such a thing should be able to do so. I know that it would increase the amount of time I spend downtown on weekends, and it would probably do the same for many others. I would much rather spend time with a stranger's dog than a stranger's smoke. If Knoxville truly wants to become a pet-friendly city, this needs to happen. Thank you for your time. (email)

I'd just like to voice my opinion regarding the discussion of dogs on patios of dining establishments - I feel that each establishment should be allowed to determine whether or not dogs should be allowed in outdoor dining areas. In my experience, dog owners who bring their pets in public (I'm thinking of somewhere like market square, as a particular example), do so because they have well-behaved pets who are accustomed to a social environment. Any hygiene or nuisance issue should be moot, as I've observed far more young children make

messes and nuisances in social situations than dogs! Thank you for hearing our voices. I do hope for a positive outcome here. (email)

I would like to voice my support for restaurants being allowed the choice to let dogs on their patios. Pet owners are aware of their dog's habits. Downtown is growing and thriving. On any given day Market Square is swarming with dogs and their owners. This is a growing trend with urban living which is something I feel our city is trying to encourage. I've heard some voice opinions about the cleanliness of dogs. However I feel that when you choose to eat outside you are opening up a whole new can of worms anyway with birds and such. I am horribly allergic to smoke so I know when I sit outside I'm taking the chance that someone is going to sit next to me that may smoke. I am the one making that choice though because I am responsible for only myself. My dog is more behaved than most children and she has separation anxiety disorder and cannot be left alone. If we do not have a sitter we can not go out. At least with kids you can take them in places. We often search out restaurants such as Tomato Head, Pelanchos, and The Fountain City Creamery so that we may take Sheva along with us when the weather permits. I am terrified that if this does not pass they will take away these restaurants rights to do something they already do. I certain appreciate you hearing our voices and helping pass them on. (email)

...I think that being able to take your dog to a restaurant with a patio is a great idea! I would say that the dogs have to be on a leash and outside on the patio, but I think it would make things more exciting in Knoxville! I know when I get off work, a lot of times I want to go out, but I feel bad leaving my two border collies at home for longer than I have to! (email)

I would like to express another citizen's support for this legislation. There are many times I would like to join friends/family for lunch but have my dog with me (he goes to work with me), leaving limited options. When it's nice weather, it would be extremely nice to be able to take him for a walk and end up at lunch/dinner with friends at an outside dining area! (email)

I am for allowing dogs in outdoor dining areas. (phone)

I support the ordinance to allow dogs at outdoor restaurants. I was unable to attend the meeting on Wednesday and I was disheartened to read in the paper that the only two people that came were against it. Mr. Woody's concern about dog hairs and dog dander on the tablecloth seem to me to be unfounded. First of all, if a restaurant isn't washing the tablecloths between uses I don't want to eat there anyway and secondly, I can't think of any restaurant where they use tablecloths on the outdoor tables. Mr. Drinkard's concern that the dogs might be disruptive should be satisfied by provisions in the ordinance that the dogs would be required to be on leash and behave in an appropriate manner. And in any case, they don't have to eat outside if it bothers them to have dogs near where they are eating. Or perhaps outdoor dining areas could be divided into dogs and

no dogs sections like the former smoking sections in restaurants before indoor smoking was banned altogether. Thank you for considering my thoughts on this matter. (email)

I just wanted to let you know that I am in full support of the Dine with Dogs motion. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help see this pass! (email)

As I am sure you are well aware this is not a third world country and that the public health is actually important. I would also imagine nearly anyone can infer from the rules and regulations with regard to dining with animals that is an unhealthy and unsanitary proposition. I would never take part in dining with anything that, due to its own undeniable instinct, would mask its own smell, so as to not alert its prey to its approach, in fecal deposits and or decaying flesh. No one should fault a dog for acting on its instinct but a dog cannot and will never act counter to its instinct. I would never give my patronage to an establishment which thought less of the health and safety of the person(s) paying the establishments bills through purchases of the establishments purveyed goods and or services than that of a canine. I will oppose this in all dimensions both discovered and undiscovered in perpetuity. (email)

This is a note in support of dog-friendly downtown restaurant patios. For the last two years (Aug. '07-Aug. '09), I resided in the Sterchi Lofts on Gay Street with my husband and our 4-year-old goldendoodle, Mina. As a downtown dog, Mina enjoyed extending her daily walks to several of the dog-friendly downtown businesses such as Mast General Store, Reruns, Bliss, and Vagabondia. As a result of these establishments' dog-friendly policies, I frequented them and gave them my business often, whereas I simply didn't enter non-dog-friendly businesses (I always had Mina with me if I was walking around the neighborhood!)

Likewise, my husband and I specifically chose to eat out at restaurants where we could multi-task and walk the dog and sit on the patio with her and eat. The restaurants we frequented were the patios of Downtown Grill, Nama, Oodles, Barley's, and Rita's.

Not only did we contribute to the downtown economy more because of Mina, but I believe we contributed more to the quality of life downtown. Wherever we went, young and old, rich and poor, locals and visitors alike were delighted to see this big, shaggy yellow dog smiling at them and brightening their day. It really is not an overstatement to say that she became a bit of a celebrity downtown--she even appeared at the Bijou Theatre in the role of Queenie in UT Opera's production of Street Scene last fall. We never heard a single negative comment from anyone about bringing Mina into a store or onto a patio. On the contrary, people were always extremely positive, wanted to pet her, ask questions about her, and admire her.

Those who wish to see dogs banned from patios have their reasons, but I believe the benefits I've outlined above outweigh the scant justification of their argument. Dogs have been proven to lower our blood pressure, ease tension and trauma, and serve humans in countless ways. Let's keep a spot on the patio for man's best friend! (email)

I just wanted to let you know that I am in favor of allowing dogs on patios. I realize that it was passed statewide in July and it needs to be passed locally as well. I live in south Knoxville and also own a condo in the Candy Factory. My husband and I thoroughly enjoy taking our dogs with us out and about downtown and additionally enjoy dining with them on patios. It truly makes living/ working/ playing in downtown a fantastic experience. In fact, I believe other patrons and restaurant staff are happy to have us. Children and adults alike, stop us frequently telling us about their volunteer work at the local shelter or about their dog/cat/rabbit. Thank you for your time and your vote to continue to allow dogs on restaurant patios. (email)

I am adamantly opposed to allowing animals in restaurants, on patios or any where else that serves/sales food except as authorized by law to allow service animals. I don't want to be subjected to growls, barks, potty accidents, etc. just because someone wants to eat with their pet. If it's that important stay home and cook you both a meal.

Consideration must also be given for those who are allergic to dogs. If you can't go out and eat without worrying about whether or not a dog is nearby where can you go?

I strongly urge the lawmakers to vote NO on allowing pets in eating establishments. (email)