



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:15-5918

Agenda Item Number: 6.

Agenda Date: 11/16/2015

In Control: Neighborhoods and Livability Committee

DEPARTMENT: Health

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Vincent R. Nathan, PhD, MPH

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: City Wide

SUBJECT:

Proposed Changes to Chapter 13 “Food and Food Handlers” for proposed “ABC” Grade Placards and Adoption of the 2015 Texas Food Establishment Rules

SUMMARY:

In the latter part of 2014, the City’s Office of Innovation and Reform conducted a review of Metro Health’s Food and Environmental Program. The Innovation office made several recommendations to include updating the current food establishment scoring method to an A/B/C or Green/Yellow/Red placard system, as adopted in several other cities. Metro Health has thoroughly researched practices in other cities and has also met with local stakeholders to present and discuss the findings. Based on this research and stakeholder feedback, Metro Health is recommending to amend Chapter 13 “Food and Food Handlers” to include references to the new placard system.

In addition, on October 12, 2015, the Texas Department of State Health Services formally adopted the 2015 Texas Food Establishment Rules (TFER). Therefore, Metro Health proposes to amend Chapter 13, “Food and Food Handler” to make the necessary revisions to adopt, by reference, the new rules.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As part of a review and recommendations made by the City’s Office of Innovation and Reforms, Metro Health’s Food and Environmental Health program formed a workgroup to research food establishment scoring methods used by other cities within and outside of Texas. The cities researched were New York, NY, Los Angeles, CA, Santa Clara, CA, Maricopa County, AZ, Longview, TX, Converse, TX and Kerrville, TX.

Research has shown that using an ABC grade card or color coded placard system has reduced the number of restaurant re-inspections needed to gain compliance as well as improving long term compliance with the food rules.

Additionally, the workgroup informally surveyed City employees and others on which system would be most effective at informing residents of a restaurant's inspection grade. Based on this review, the color coded ABC graded placards obtained the most favorable feedback.

Through this process, Metro Health also met with stakeholders to present the proposed system and received positive feedback. Those stakeholders include the following: San Antonio Restaurant Association, San Antonio Food Truck Association, Paseo Del Rio Association. The Department will be meeting with San Antonio Hotel and Lodging Association on Thursday, November 19.

Metro Health has developed educational handouts and materials which will be used to help educate restaurant owners on how to earn an "A" grade placard and is proposing a three month pilot phase from January 1 through March 31, 2016 where health inspectors would focus most efforts on providing education on the new system for high risk food establishments. Full implementation of the new system to all establishments would come into effect April 1, 2016. Additionally, five (5) Sanitarians were added through the FY2016 Adopted Budget, which will have a positive impact on the department's service level.

In addition to the above mentioned changes, Metro Health has also met with stakeholders to discuss the changes associated with the most recent adopted of new Texas Food establishment rules (TFER). Major changes include:

- Changes to bare hand contact with ready to eat foods requirements
- Mandatory food handler requirements
- Changes to the inspection process of mobile food establishments
- Changes to the hand wash and glove use requirements
- Changes to the Food Establishment Inspection form (changing from 27 items to 47 items)

These changes have been reviewed and discussed with major stakeholders. To date, no opposition to the newly adopted TFER requirements have been voiced.

ISSUE:

Metro Health recommends amending City Chapter 13, "Food and Food Handlers" to add language which defines the "ABC" grading placard requirements and display requirements. Additionally, adding a three-month grace period with an effective date of April 1, 2016. In addition, Metro Health recommends amending Chapter 13 to adopt the October 12, 2015 version of the Texas Food Establishment Rules with an effective date of January 1 2016. Metro Health intends to also give food establishments a six-month grace period in order to educate food establishments on the new changes to the TFER.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council can choose to leave City Code Chapter 13 as is.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item. This memo is for briefing purposes only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends forwarding the recommended changes to City Code Chapter 13 “Food and Food Handlers” to add language which defines the “ABC” grading placard requirements and display requirements in addition to the adoption of the new TFER rules to City Council for full consideration.