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News Release

For Immediate Release

Proposed Food Distribution Ordinance Addresses Food Safety Concerns

A proposed City ordinance regulating the distribution of free food in public downtown spaces has caused confusion, particularly among individuals and groups currently passing out free food to various groups in Center City.

[Council Bill 2013-323](#) would amend the Springfield City Code (Chapter 58, Health and Sanitation, Article II Food and Food Establishments, Division 2, Restaurants).

The new section of code would prohibit the distribution of food on [Commercial Street and in Downtown](#) (pdf), without authorization by the Springfield-Greene County Health Department.

The Health Department provides a variety of services related to food handling to ensure public safety.

"Many things can have a direct impact on the safety of the food," says Kevin Gipson, director of public health. Potential hazards include: cross contamination between raw and ready-to-eat foods, touching ready-to-eat foods without gloves and improper food temperatures.

Citing littering and public health and safety issues as the reason for the need for additional City Code language, the Park Central Square Task Force recommended the no-charge authorization requirement. The group was appointed by the City Manager and charged with researching and making recommendations regarding issues in the downtown area.

"The proposed process would provide some accountability from the individuals and groups distributing food," explains City Manager Greg Burris. "The task force wanted to make sure these groups clean up after their efforts and that the City has a general idea when groups plan to distribute the food to avoid conflicts with other Center City activities."

"We're not trying to stop these well-intentioned groups from feeding people. We are only trying to provide food safety to those receiving the food, who are also our citizens and deserve this public health service, and accountability to those providing the food," Burris said.

The no-charge authorization form requests contact and food distribution information from those individuals or organizations desiring to provide food in this manner. If approved by City Council, the form will be provided on the City's web site and sent directly to those entities known to have distributed food in these areas in the past.

Another source of confusion: the ordinance does **not** contain a provision requiring proof of insurance.

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