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Phase III of the state's reopening continues - by Mayor Joseph Solomon

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Mayor Joseph Solomon

As Phase III of the state's reopening continues and colder weather approaches, we've been working to ensure that our businesses can remain open and continue to recover financially in the months ahead.

In May, I issued an executive order to allow temporary outdoor seating for Warwick restaurants, with no additional fees, as long as they are in compliance with related safety regulations. The executive order was set to expire on October 17th, but, last week, I extended it through December 31st. Our restaurants have been very creative with developing outdoor seating areas, so we're hopeful that, by extending the order, they'll continue to offer this option to their patrons. In fact, we've even seen some restaurants encouraging patrons to BYOB – Bring Your Own Blanket – so that diners can continue to safely and comfortably dine outside.

Additionally, the Warwick Board of Public Safety recently voted to allow businesses to make two payments instead of one full payment for liquor licenses in order to ease some of their financial burden. Bars, restaurants, and other hospitality industry businesses whose liquor licenses are due on December 1st will have the option to make two biannual payments instead of one single lump sum payment: One payment of \$525 in December and an additional \$525 payment in May of 2021. Businesses are not required to use the payment plan option for liquor license payments and may still make a single full payment if they are able to do so.

As many know, Rhode Island's commercial fishing industry is vital to Warwick's economy. With 39 miles of coastline, our city is home to more boat moorings than any other municipality in the state, and we are incredibly proud of our rich maritime heritage. With this in mind, we've been supporting the state Department of Environmental Management's efforts to help the industry by allowing the issuance of local temporary sales licenses. These are issued to licensed commercial fishermen to sell certain species of fish, and to sell and transport for sale live lobsters and crabs directly to consumers and licensed seafood retailers.

Further, the state recently solicited applications and distributed more than \$3 million to help Rhode Island businesses. The city of Warwick worked closely with our partners, the Providence Warwick

Convention and Visitors Bureau (PWCVB), and the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, on proposals that would complement each other and afford a broader range of opportunities for our businesses. The PWCVB received \$150,000 for a “lending library” consisting of tables, chairs, heat lamps, and other outdoor items for use by businesses and other organizations. The chamber was awarded \$75,000 to purchase outdoor products, such as tents, lighting, chairs, and heat lamps, for businesses and other groups looking to expand their outdoor offerings. The city was awarded \$40,000, which will allow us to sponsor a 2020 Autumn Outdoor Marketplace, where businesses can sell their goods outside, with appropriate social distancing and health safety measures in place.

Throughout this pandemic, our businesses have demonstrated resilience, creativity, and ways to re-invent themselves. In the weeks ahead, we’ll continue with our efforts, and will seek additional ways to support our business community so they can remain open and provide jobs so our residents can support themselves and their families.

Joseph Solomon is the mayor of the city of Warwick, R.I.

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