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FEATURED

## New rules make outdoor dining easier in downtown Pottstown

By Evan Brandt ebrandt@21st-centurymedia.com @PottstownNews on Twitter  
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Patrons at The Blue Elephant in Pottstown enjoy outdoor dining during Montgomery County's "green phase." While most local restaurants are complying with health guidance, Montgomery County officials warn they will crack down on noncompliance to prevent a spike in COVID-19 cases.

Evan Brandt — MediaNews Group



POTTSTOWN — With the move to the less restrictive "yellow phase" of coronavirus rules, restaurants in Montgomery County were allowed to open on June 5.

But, they are only allowed to offer take-out, as they were previously, and "outdoor dining."

That's easier said than done for some locations that have little or no outdoor space

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Under the new rules, restaurants like J.J. Rattigan's, which already offers dining on the sidewalk and patio, could also set up dining tables in parking areas along High Street.

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out of parking spaces.

Council was already in the process of softening rules to allow outdoor dining on sidewalks when the shut-down orders to slow the spread of coronavirus put a stopper in many businesses.

Specifically, the board unanimously adopted temporary rules in place for 90 days that will allow downtown restaurants to serve meals outside on the sidewalk and even in parking spaces along High Street from Manatawny to Evans streets so long as adequate protection from traffic is provided to diners.

That protection has to be significant, said Borough Manager Justin Keller, such as concrete barriers or large planters, to protect diners from automobiles.

Plans must be submitted to the borough for review, he said.

"We're doing whatever we can do to support our local businesses to get back on their feet as soon as possible," said borough council President Dan Weand.

Other restrictions, such as the need to wear a mask when entering a businesses, remain in place except, obviously, when eating. Businesses are urged to follow CDC guidelines both for customer and employee safety.

After the county has transitioned to the yellow phase, the state "will closely monitor for increased risk, such as significant outbreaks. If overall risk remains mitigated for 14 days, we will transition the county to the green phase," according to Gov. Tom Wolf's restrictions.

Mindful of a restaurant renaissance that was taking hold downtown before coronavirus came to town, Pottstown Borough Council took action Monday to create dining spaces



All dining at The Ally on High Street is already outdoors, so the only thing the owners had to do when they re-opened was to ensure the tables were all at least six feet apart.

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### **Evan Brandt**

@PottstownNews on Twitter

Evan Brandt has been a staff reporter for The Mercury for more than 20 years. He covers municipal, school district, political, state government, federal government and environmental news.

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