

# THE Mecklenburg TIMES

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## Businesses would prefer to be left alone

BY CAROLYN STEEVES

**CHARLOTTE** — “The way I look at it, leave me alone and let me work,” said Donnie Cooke, a mobile food-vendor in Uptown Charlotte.

“I can sit right in my spot and I make money. I may not make a killing, but I make money every day. (Customers) know where I am. If I move ... they’ll ask, ‘Where’s Donnie?’”

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## Food

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Cooke has been running a lunch truck in Uptown for nearly 20 years. He was on the square for 14 years, but was then relocated.

Because Cooke is located in Uptown, it’s unclear whether a proposal to regulate businesses like his would affect him.

Raymundo Viyalpando is not located in Uptown. He runs a lunch truck on Central Avenue. Viyalpando, who is originally from Mexico, has been running this truck for roughly three years. Right now he has to move his truck every three months.

He has been following the city’s debate on the proposed new rules. “The problem in this case is the time to close,” he explained. Viyalpando noted that oftentimes his business picks up around 9 p.m. and he runs until 11 p.m. — sometimes midnight.

“I continue to follow the rules,” he said. The possible changes, however, have him concerned. It is becoming “too difficult for us,” he said.

Vic Werany runs a chili and hot dog stand on Tryon Street, also in Uptown. He has operated the stand for almost four years. He noted that it takes almost two years for a mobile vendor to build up business at a location. When trucks are forced to move, they basically have to start again.

“They would never go to Bank of America and go, ‘You know what, you guys have been on the square long enough, we’re going to need you to move down on 2nd Street and we’ll put Wachovia up here because that’s a better spot,’” Werany said.

He agreed with Cooke that vendors work hard to make their livelihood, and that he wants to be left alone and allowed to work.

One issue that several City Council members have raised is that they are unclear about whether the new rules would be uniform or only apply to vendors outside of Uptown. That confusion is one of the many reasons the amendment was sent back to committee.

The council expects hear the amendment it again in September after the city’s Community Relations and Public Safety committees mull it over a bit more.

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