

Stratford Economic Response & Recovery Task Force – Meeting #4

MINUTES

Zoom Video Conference

May 21, 2020 3:00pm – 4:00pm

Purpose

Incorporating immediate and long-term actions to support local industry, small business and the workforce across all sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic response and eventual recovery.

- **3:00-3:15pm** **Summary of week/general updates** **Joani Gerber, investStratford (IS)**
 - Successful Mask Project with BIA. Distributed approximately 7,500 masks over two days to 125-130 businesses. 2,300 masks given to Chris Gaylor for City. 4-4.5 boxes remain stored investStratford Office. BIA to determine how to manage future distribution.
 - Amendments to FedDev Grant Agreement have been approved. Cost areas being finalized but should have first installment of funds within 8-10 business days. Per the grant criteria, funds are dedicated to projects involving tourism.

- **3:15-3:45pm** **Committee Reports & Discussion** **Chairs**
(membership & special advisors; activities; next steps; etc.)
 - Hospitality, Tourism & Retail: Stratford Tourism Alliance & City Centre Stratford (Co-Chair)
 - R. Scott updated that the HRT Advisory Group had a good introductory meeting on May 20th.
 - R. Scott continued that the HRT Destination Development (f/k/a Destination Animation) also met on May 21st led by Zac Gribble the lead for that group. The group aims to find a balance between getting programs up and running safely and supporting efforts that can have a longer effect.
 - R. Scott advised that one of the first programs up for review will be “Stratford Al Fresco.” Program could be a good template other programming.
 - R. Scott advised that Julia Merritt, HRT Business Intelligence Lead, will lead a meeting with that working group on May 22nd. Big consideration being given to best practices for how to open safely.
 - Group review of how feedback form and suggestions are being distributed: Intake form -> auto response -> investStratford Response, if requested -> ideas compiled in spreadsheet and distributed to Task Force and City, as well as individual Working Groups as appropriate.
 - J. Thomson updated that the City Initiatives Team hopes to meet early next week including Zac Gribble and Julia Merritt.
 - J. Thomson explained that some decisions need to come from City Council related to managing risk and approvals. Hoping to create a fluid system over time with quick response.

- Workforce, Non-Profit & Charitable: United Way Perth-Huron & Stratford/Perth Museum (Co-Chair)
 - R. Erb updated that the larger Working Group is scheduled to meet next week.
 - Childcare a big concern and Jeff Wilson from city will be part of the conversation.
 - R. Erb suggested Task Force and Working Groups continue to consider how the groups overlap and can aid one another, as well as thinking outside of the box. i.e. Black Swan project to assist hospitality workers.
 - R. Erb advised of new \$600,000 urgent needs funding with CFDC. Information available on the United Way website.
 - Group identified that due to limited resources linking to relevant web pages the best way to keep information up to date. The Task Force website will continue to add resources.

- Manufacturing, Agri-Food & Professional Services: Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce
 - E. Matthews advised that there have been many conversations with banking to manufacturing to golf courses, etc.
 - E. Matthews advised that there is a serious concern in the agri-food sector that they can't get enough workers. In another meeting Vicki Lass from OMAFRA indicated funding is available at 95% employment.
 - Continued concern regarding mental health in the agri-food sector. Michael Masse has offered to help. J. Gerber and R. Erb agreed to open up current small business mental health program to include agri-food businesses.
 - M. Pullen detailed some positive highlights: positive conversations: nonessential construction started 5/18, permits went out so sector opening up, manufacturing starting back up all giving some sense of new normal.
 - RBC hosting an advice for anyone on June 3. Scotiabank also looking to do something similar.
 - M. Pullen reminded that there are still a lot of questions and issues around PPE supplies and requirements for businesses. How can we support them when they are allowed to open? Guidelines are critical and need to be readily available.
 - E. Matthews advised that some businesses are having difficulty getting people back to work because of safety and the SERB.
 - R. Scott agreed that there is a lot of hesitation for businesses and consumers. Most guidelines are suggestions, not required, but the information is vague and often conflicting. Hoping Business Intelligence Working Group will dive into this.
 - Group conversation around career transition led by E. Matthews Partners in Employment and Conestoga Career Centre can assist with transitioning. There are also private HR firms as well.

• **3:45-4:00pm**

Ongoing Concerns & Next Steps

All

- Looking forward to having more Work Group feedback next week.