

Stratford Economic Response & Recovery Task Force

MINUTES

July 23, 2020 3pm – 4pm

Zoom Video Conference

Present: Joani Gerber, Zac Gribble, Mike Pullen, Rebecca Scott, Elke Bidner, Rob Russell, Joelle Lewis

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.

3-3:30pm Summary of week/general updates Joani Gerber, investStratford (IS) and Zac Gribble, Stratford Tourism Alliance (STA)

- J. Gerber provided an update of a number of the week's activities and initiatives.
- J. Gerber outlined the process currently underway to merge the mandates of the Workforce, Non-Profit & Charitable, Manufacturing, Agri-Food & Professional Services and Business Intelligence Committees. The structure of the Hospitality, Tourism & Retail Committee will remain status quo and continue with current and new projects.
- Z. Gribble provided updates on a number of Hospitality, Tourism & Retail Committee projects and initiatives:
 - Al Fresco – final components are now completed.
 - LCBO amendment for Market Square - going to Council for approval as a pilot.
 - Drive-in Theatre - opens tonight with some minor adjustments.
 - Barge Summer Music - launches on Friday.
 - Streetside Live - starting a day early.
 - Circles Project – yoga paid spots are sold out for every day.
 - 18 Boardwalks completed this week.
 - Over 600 entries for art pieces submitted – 40 now selected for board walks.
 - STA - increased staffing levels.
- Z. Gribble indicated that it is important to reach out to the business community and advise that enhanced marketing is about to begin and to prepare accordingly.
- J. Gerber requested feedback on the merits of sharing reports with project details with Task Force Members' respective Boards in advance of Council Meetings as information. R. Russell agreed; Z. Gribble agreed with summarizing information for Council members that are part of respective networks. R. Scott also agreed with supplying Council members with as much information as possible.
- J. Gerber will ask if Task Force Members can be added to the City Council distribution list in order to be made aware when meeting agendas become public. Task Force Members can then reach out to their respective Council representatives with project overview information, etc.

- J. Gerber led a discussion re: the importance of the connection between the Task Force and the City Initiatives Team to support various initiatives. (i.e. re-opening the Farmers Market, supporting outdoor venues, etc.). She requested that the Hospitality, Tourism & Retail Committee consider how they might work with the City Initiatives Team to support items such as temporary bylaw amendments, permitting, etc. J. Gerber will continue to work with J. Thomson to help streamline the process with the City and City Council.
- R. Scott suggested providing for more autonomy to City staff in the decision-making process.
- J. Gerber updated the Task Force re: a Fed Dev Ontario grant that is going to be amended for use in tourism recovery. Amendments proposes 3 to 9 funded projects (\$45,000-\$125,000 per project) by March 2021. Funds must be spent within grant guidelines with a lot of opportunity to support various initiatives.
- J. Gerber also provided an update re: a Digital Accelerator Grant Program that was launched in May and was completed in June. 30 participants received \$1,500 each to support their digital initiatives.

3:30-4:00pm Committee Reports and Other Business

- J. Lewis provided additional updates on merging Task Force committees and what is needed to move ahead. Common and key goals and themes include:
 - 1) Communications (e.g. childcare)
 - 2) Broader community concerns – feedback and public forum discussions; what is working; what is not? Examples include not-for-profit organizations.
- J. Merrit and J. Lewis are reaching out to potential Committee members re: updated mandate and process for engagement.
- Z. Gribble noted that the current messaging from the Province is that Ontario will be in Phase 3 for the foreseeable future. He suggested the need for projections and planning for potential different scenarios and wondered if strategic planning could be part of this new Committee’s mandate – i.e. for the rest of 2020 and into 2021.
- J. Gerber suggested a survey of different business sectors to determine impacts of different scenarios to better understand needs and impacts.
- R. Russell noted that that the Stratford Festival is far along with planning for different scenarios and suggested connecting with them because their plans will inform others. J. Lewis agreed and noted that S. Hamza with the Festival is on the new Committee.
- Z. Gribble noted that the Business Intelligence Committee had been a good neutral voice and likes the evolution of the newly formed committee. J. Lewis agreed and noted the importance of thanking past members and the progression the committees now that we have moved from Phase 1 to Phase 3 (i.e. still need the people, but in different ways – i.e. strategic planning).
- J. Lewis noted an upcoming University of Guelph online not-for-profit (NFP) stakeholder roundtable. There was some general discussion of gaps between assistance programs for social NFP’s versus private NFP’s. J. Gerber suggested reaching out to former Committee Members after feedback from roundtable is collected.
- J. Gerber noted the strong collective/collaborative approach between IS, STA and BIA and led a discussion as to how communications to different business sectors will be handled.
- Z. Gribble agreed that there is a lot of openness now due to pandemic and that better communications are now possible due to collaboration of the three organizations.
- There was consensus to build off each other’s communication efforts, and R. Scott suggested the need for a communications strategy moving forward. Z. Gribble agreed with communications being a critical project plan component.

- Z. Gribble noted that STA and DMO's are traditionally all about marketing and noted how much new destination development work has been undertaken in the last several months.
- J. Gerber recommended that a more in-depth discussion re: communications be tabled for a future Task Force meeting and encouraged internal organization discussions in the meantime.
- There was strong consensus to get more strategic on the opportunity for celebrating and communicating successes. Z. Gribble noted that it is the sum of the parts with unprecedented collaboration on a common cause. Task Force's work could be a case study and be celebrated, documented and shared.

Meeting ended at 4:05 pm