

Stratford Economic Response & Recovery Task Force

AGENDA

October 15, 2020

Zoom Video Conference

Present: Joani Gerber, Janis Auster, Joelle Lewis, Jeff Orr, Mike Pullen, Joan Thomson, Elke Bidner, Rob Russell

Regrets: Julia Merritt

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.

- 1) Z. Gribble reported on HRT:
 - a) Remaining DDG money will go to support 3 winter concert/programming activities before the end of the year.
 - b) Lights on Stratford
 - i) Unanimous support from Council
 - ii) On track for timeline, launching Nov 19 and then in stages. Fully open January 2nd.
 - iii) Applied this week for newly announced Provincial funding opportunity. Should hear back in approximately a week.
 - iv) RTO4 running shareable moments challenge to assist businesses and other locations to participate.
 - v) Pause DDG group for now.
- 2) Z. Gribble reported on tourism marketing in light of COVID numbers:
 - a) Destination Stratford remains keenly aware and engaged.
 - b) Pulled back on marketing beyond KW and London, etc. a few weeks ago. Watching guidelines closely.
 - c) Prepared to pivot to various levels of hyper-local marketing: Perth Huron Counties/Perth County/Stratford Only.

Comments

- R. Russell: This is the best we can do while we wait and see. Optimistic we can keep marketing safely. BIA continues to be focused locally.
- J. Thomson: City continues to keep watch. More changes expected Provincially.

- 3) J. Lewis reported on Business Intelligence:
 - a) BI team to reach out to consult on questions for the town hall process.
 - b) A deeper interview process will be utilized as part of the data collection.
 - c) Aiming to maximize the 8 weeks we have Hayden and Oonagh to assist the process, including analyzing already existing surveys, other recovery efforts, etc.
 - d) At the end of the 8 week process hope to identify high-level trends for Joelle and Julia to do a deeper analysis.
- 4) J. Thomson reported from City:
 - a) Well underway for the 2021 budget process

b) **Community transportation project** – scheduled buses with partner municipalities – official soft launch Nov 16, with full launch expected in January. Some concern that we are launching the service during pandemic but timeline mandates proceeding. Hope to fill in the gaps in transportation between communities.

5) **STAT Update:**

- Program has proven very popular.
- 2 submission rounds have been completed and expect to allocate all funds.

6) **Final Comments:**

- M. Pullen updated that there continued to be land interest.
- Z. Gribble reported that the chocolate trail has doubled its sales this year in a surprising success.
- R. Russell indicated that the downtown business has been steady and safely busy.
- Z. Gribble advised that the end-date for the marketing grant received earlier has been extended through the winter which will be helpful as we move forward with a more local marketing plan.

