

# Stratford Economic Response & Recovery Task Force

## MEETING MINUTES

March 18, 2021

### Zoom Video Conference

Present: Joani Gerber, Jeff Orr, Joan Thomson, Rebecca Scott, Zac Gribble, Janis Auster, Julia Merritt, Rob Russell

### 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) Structure of Task Force

- a. Determined that the Task Force continues to be necessary as the uncertainty around the pandemic continues and the support structures change and financial support dwindles. The Task Force is present to react and aid quickly.
- b. The Task Force is a small team with limited and/or dwindling resources of time and money. We need to protect the previous investments (i.e. patios) without resources.
- c. Hospitality/Retail/Tourism (HRT) still the predominant sector(s) in need. We have combined all advisory groups into main task force with the exception of the HRT Advisory group which remains separate but fairly dormant without funds to distribute.
- d. Task Force role described as being an engine that help all systems go, but remains in the background. Continue to follow funding opportunities (i.e. FedDev, RT04, etc.) as well as advocacy role.

#### 2) Event/Activity Ownership:

- a. Last year proposed activities submitted through Task Force and HRT committee because funding was available. Without funding to distribute to vetted projects, organically shifting back to city process.
- b. Task Force doesn't have the resources (financial or human) to shepherd potential projects. Projects and programs are primary suggested without offer of time or management to facilitate.
- c. Recommendation: event and activity proposals go through City channels (Allison Jordan) to manage inquiries, City initiatives, and public health plan needs. Z. Gribble to connect with A. Jordan.
- d. Task Force recognized that returning logistics to City will slow down the process. J. Gerber and Z. Gribble to discuss potential roadmap/rule book to help navigate the process.

#### 3) Volunteers:

- a. Recognized motion from council to expand ask for volunteers.
- b. Reach out to 2020 Volunteers.
- c. Reach out to additional volunteers. The asks should be specific: We need you to do "fill in the blank".
- d. Managing volunteers requires time and energy. Temporary new hire funded by investStratford and Destination Stratford could assist.

4) Communications:

- a. Communications and messaging continue to be a challenge. Even with best efforts, public not feeling heard or hearing about Task Force Initiatives.
- b. Concern over expectations and best way to engage public when we don't have funds or human capital to facilitate most suggestions.
- c. Feedback form continues to be live, but rarely-to-never used. Response protocol remains in place: inquires distributed to appropriate Task Force Channel (i.e. Task Force, City, Destination Stratford, BIA, etc.) All feedback received reply if requested.
- d. Suggestion to create a log to cross-reference comments that may be duplicates that have come in through various channels.
- e. Additional suggestions made through external inquiries often not feasible. Do we need to formalize reply on those suggestions?
- f. Proposed another round of Roundtables for continued communication, however expectations need to be set around outcomes.
- g. One more marketing campaign across all organizations and sectors. Recognizing that everyone sees communications in different places (i.e. Beacon, social media, etc.) push to share all communications and positive stories through all organizations channels. Continue to remind community of work that is being done. Celebrate successes.
- h. The Task Force is often misrepresented as a secret group.

5) Other Priorities:

- a. Mental Health
- b. Diversity/Inclusion activities