



## TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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### MEMORANDUM

To: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager

From: Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning & Community Development  
Ali Carter, Economic Development Coordinator

Date: May 14, 2020

Re: Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force Update

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The Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force had its first meetings on May 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. We facilitated the same meeting twice to accommodate varying task force member schedules. The Task Force includes representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Select Board, the Park and Recreation Department, the Office of the Town Manager, the Arlington Redevelopment Board and the Department of Planning and Community Development. These Town officials and their boards and committees establish, create, and implement policies and regulations that will help drive and revive our town's economic recovery. The role of business owners, nonprofit leaders, property owners, banking executives, and others on the task force is to provide the Town with guidance in order to create policies and procedures in Arlington that meet real needs and address concerns of health and safety as businesses are allowed to reopen by the state. The contributions of members of this Task Force will help inform the town's longer-term economic recovery as we discuss the long-term health and stability of our business districts.

The Task Force reviewed some summary data on public health and COVID-19 economic impacts in Arlington. Ali Carter highlighted the following business data based on a survey conducted in March:

- Over 60% of respondents reported having 5 or fewer employees;
- Over 80% rent the space they occupy;
- Over 70% had no disaster recovery plan;

Ali summarized the Town's response to economic impacts thus far:

- created a CDBG-funded program to help microenterprises impacted by the pandemic;
- instituted COVID-19 operations guidelines for restaurants;
- established procedure to allow restaurants to sell groceries;
- compiled resource page on Town's website, including an open business listing and a small business bingo social media contest;
- held Virtual Town Forums for business and nonprofit communities;

- created Arlington Economic Recovery Task Force to advise Town regulators on safe reopening policies and assistance with long-term recovery;
- issued second survey focused on recovery efforts; and
- continue to provide critical updates to business owners via email at least weekly.

### **Emerging practices**

Ali Carter shared emerging practices that are happening in Arlington and other communities locally and nationally that could serve as models for our own local policies and procedures. These include, but are not limited to:

- relaxing sign regulations;
- providing uniform messaging signage for businesses;
- amending traffic rules and regulations, including parking, in business districts (e.g. 15-minute parking in communities throughout the country to facilitate take-out and curbside transactions);
- instituting a temporary moratorium on vacant storefront registry bylaw;
- repurposing parking spaces into parklets to create safe space for outdoor dining; and
- identifying purchases the town could make to benefit the business community (e.g. neighborhood handwashing stations, sanitizer dispensers on public infrastructure, etc.).

Task Force members shared their reactions to emerging practices in breakout groups by answering two questions: What are the top three issues the Town might address in order to safely reopen and the top three policies that the Town might relax in order to get there? A summary of their responses follows.

### **Regulatory options:**

- Lessen red tape to allow people to innovate while encouraging people to stay local and shop in Arlington
- Loosen signage regulations to help in communicating with customers
- Allow more uses in a variety of public spaces (e.g. parks, parking spaces/lots, sidewalks, roadways, etc.)
- Add more restaurant space on sidewalks and in parking spaces
- Relax vacant storefront registry bylaw requirements, as it will be difficult for landlords to find tenants for a period of time

### **Protocols/ Procedures/ Safety:**

- Ensure Pay-by-Phone for parking is working by the time meters are turned on
- Install outdoor sanitation in public spaces
- Aim for consistent practices within all businesses
- Share guidelines for how to work safely in small spaces, old buildings, buildings with poor air circulation
- Determine PPE needs for staff
- Provide guidance on what size of groups can be together, occupancy
- Clarify cleaning protocols by industry
- Identify industry specific guidelines, some businesses and institutions may be more vulnerable than others. Concern expressed about educational and performance institutions

### **General Feedback:**

- Telehealth has been a good substitute for in-person healthcare visits; more testing needed before resuming in-person healthcare
- As businesses come back at different times, how can we assure their survival?
- Messaging from the Town to promote local businesses would be helpful, particularly guidelines for how to shop safely
- A forum for particular businesses (e.g. food service, retail, etc.) would be helpful
- Need to fill the childcare gap
- Arlington Chamber of Commerce a good resource

In response to some of the above suggestions, the Department of Planning and Community Development proposes the following, adjustment may be needed contingent upon approval processes:

**Parking lots (Russell Common, Water Street, and private lots)**

- Allow drive-in movies (to be managed by Capitol Theater, Regent Theater) in evenings with:
  - permission from Select Board
  - online reservation form for municipal lots
  - protocols for operation (every other space, no exiting cars, no idling)
- Allow drive-in religious services with:
  - permission from Select Board
  - online reservation form for municipal lots
  - protocols for operation (every other space, no exiting cars, no idling)

**Parking Spaces (private lots and on-street spaces adjacent to businesses)**

- Accommodate additional outdoor dining/ expanded sidewalk café permitting process with:
  - permission from Select Board
  - streamlined review process (fewer departments on a shorter timeline)
  - revised capacity and service protocols
- Allow outdoor personal services (e.g. haircuts from barbers and hair stylists) with:
  - permission from Select Board
  - protocols for operation (just cuts and styling outdoors, no hair color or permanent service outdoors; masks, etc.)

**Parks/ Open Spaces, particularly playing fields**

- Allow outdoor fitness classes (to be managed by local fitness business owners, Boys and Girls Club, or other nonprofit service providers) with:
  - Approval by Park and Recreation Commission or Conservation Commission
  - online reservation form (could build off of existing Park and Rec reservation system)
  - delineation of spaces within park for classes, including spaces for individual participants and instructors
  - protocols for operation (social distancing, no touching, masks, etc.)

The Task Force is scheduled to hold their next meeting on Monday May 18<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m. A second update with recommendations for proceeding with reopening actions will be provided for the next Select Board meeting in June.