



Arlington Economic Recovery Task Force

Draft Minutes

Date: Monday May 11, 2020

Time: 2:00-3:00 PM

And

Date: Tuesday May 12, 2020

Time: 8:30-9:30 AM

Present: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager; Natasha Waden, Health Department; Jennifer Raitt, Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Ali Carter, Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Robert Jefferson, Park and Recreation Dept.; Rachel Zsembery, Arlington Redevelopment Board; Cristin Canterbury Bagnall, Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture; Michelle Casey, Marchelle Salone; Alyssa Clossey, Support Arlington Center; Derek Curran, Arlington Boys and Girls Club; Tom Formicola, Arlington Center for the Arts; Richard Fraiman, Capitol Theater; Tim Haley, Ellenhorn; John Hurd, Select Board; Julia Kew, Mirak Properties; Erik Kondo, Broadway Athletics; Adam Kurowski, Information Technology; Heather Leavell, Cyrus Dallin Museum; Beth Locke, Arlington Chamber of Commerce; Sarah Morgan-Wu, The Object of Stories; Bootsy Mullans, Town Tavern; Janet O'Riordan, Old Schwamb Mill; Emily Shea, Kickstand Café; Dorothy Zahir, Leader Bank; Bob Bowes, Bowes Real Estate

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introductions.

Jenny Raitt welcomes participants and thanks them for their willingness to participate in Arlington's Economic Recovery Task Force. 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 also inform the town's longer-term economic recovery as we discuss the long-term health and stability of

our business districts. Discussed anticipated timeline for providing recommendations to the Select Board.

Ali explains that in anticipation of updates to the Governor's Order on non-essential businesses on May 18th to begin to reopen our state's economy, we wanted to kick off this Task Force's work right away so we can be ready to respond to these changes as quickly as possible.

2. Overview of COVID-19 impacts in Arlington

- a. Public health--258 cases and 30 deaths to date in Arlington; Natasha Waden from Health Department provided an overview of the Town's contact tracing program.
- b. Businesses, based on our first survey
 - i. Over 60% of respondents reported having 5 or fewer employees
 - ii. Over 80% rent the space they occupy
 - iii. Over 70% had no disaster recovery plan
- c. Response from Town thus far
 - i. Created CDBG-funded Arlington Business COVID-19 Relief Grant program.
 - ii. created COVID-19 operations guidelines for restaurants.
 - iii. created procedure to allow restaurants to sell groceries.
 - iv. compiled resource page on Town's website, including an open business listing and a small business bingo social media contest.
 - v. holding virtual town forums for business and nonprofit communities.
 - vi. critical updates emailed to business owners at least weekly.
 - vii. created Arlington Economic Recovery Task Force to advise town regulators on safe reopening policies.
 - viii. issuing second survey focused on recovery efforts on 5/11/20

3. Emerging practices

Ali shares 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:

- a. Signage
 - i. Relaxing sign regulations
 - ii. Uniform messaging signage for businesses
- b. amending traffic and parking policies in business districts---Pay by Phone in Arlington; 15-minute parking in Brookline and many other communities to facilitate take-out
- c. instituting a moratorium on vacant storefront bylaw---Arlington only innovation

- d. repurposing parking spaces into parklets to create safe space for outdoor dining---Georgia, Florida
 - e. identifying purchases the town could make to benefit the business community (e.g. neighborhood handwashing stations, sanitizer dispensers on public infrastructure, etc.) ---Utah
 - f. prescribing a food business opening workflow---Groceries example in Arlington; others possible?
4. Group discussion: reactions to emerging practices/ sharing other ideas. What do task force participants think are the top three issues we need to address in order to safely reopen and what are the top three policies that we can relax in order to get there? Identify any priority policy issues that immediately address reopening for the week of 5/18. Staff will draft policy recommendations for Select Board review at their meeting on 5/18.

Responses:

- Business owners need to understand the risk associated with reopening their businesses; some will have more risk, some less; the general population needs this information as well, not just businesses
- Government does not want to run the risk of over-enforcement and creating a backlash
- Employees and clients need to understand operational safety protocols as well as business owners
- Parks could be available for fitness uses
- Loosening signage regulations would be helpful
- Allowing more uses in a variety of public spaces (e.g. parks, parking spaces/lots, sidewalks, roadways, etc.)
- Outdoor sanitation set up in neighborhoods would accommodate other uses in public areas
- People are keeping smaller social circles, and that applies to businesses as well (i.e. shop in Arlington)
- Messaging from the Town about local businesses; Amazon treats employees poorly, not our local business owners
- Substitution and adaptation should be allowed to happen; allow people to come up with more things that are safe for them on their own
- Less red tape to allow people to innovate while encouraging people to stay local and shop in Arlington
- Forum for particular businesses (e.g. food service, retail, etc.) would be helpful
- Signage deregulation would be helpful
- Expert information on what the real risks are

- Pay-by-Phone for parking should be working by the time meters are turned on
- More restaurant space on sidewalks and in parking spaces
- Could some streets close?
- Sharing network for scarce supplies town wide; collective purchasing
- Messaging about safety while shopping local
- Information to help businesses and consumer make safe choices for themselves
- Messaging about why you should go to Arlington's businesses
- Assume that people will be reluctant to reengage
- Hire someone to promote the town
- Regulations need to be uniform across Commonwealth
- Safeguards for employees
- Face covering messaging
- Consistent practices within all businesses
- Consistent standards of behavior
- Set up a slack channel or some sort of sharing mechanism for group members
- Reverse 911 for businesses reopening
- Need specific guidance on what size of groups can be together, especially kids
- What are cleaning standards for arts activities?
- What if a kid gets sick at summer camp? Do they have to close for 2 weeks?
- Entry and exit policies for employees and guests at educational and performance institutions
- How to work safely in small spaces, old buildings, buildings with poor air circulation
- What are the PPE needs for staff?
- How to protect or temporarily replace older staff/volunteers with younger staff/volunteers who are less vulnerable?
- Relaxing signage to allow for more advertising would be helpful
- Some industry groups (e.g. National Realtors Association) are providing good guidelines, policies, best practices that smaller businesses and nonprofits could look to for examples
- Parklets would be a great use of outdoor space
- Relax signage and vacant storefront regulations
- Look at models that realtors use to work (e.g. from home, modular, flexible hours, etc.)
- Guidelines needed for how to run a camp (clock is ticking)
- How to communicate with customers
- Need to fill the childcare gap
- Telehealth has been a good substitute for in-person healthcare visits; more testing needed before resuming in-person healthcare
- More consistent procedures at different businesses

- Strategic planning from both and top-down perspective as well as allowing people to innovate at the grassroots level
- Allowing businesses to use open spaces
- Theaters are very vulnerable
- As businesses come back at different times, what about the ones that come later, and how can we assure their survival?
- Do not be more strict than the state
- Arlington Chamber of Commerce a good resource

5. May 18th revisions to Governor's orders

Ali will provide an overview of when we can expect a release of the Governor's orders and what we anticipate the changes will be.

- a. Reopening will occur in phases, not all at once
- b. Advancing phases will occur when public health benchmarks are reached
- c. Reopening will be reversed if another wave of infections occurs
- d. For the foreseeable future, things will not go back to the normal we know prior to March 2020; there will be a "new normal."

6. Next steps. Next meeting Monday May 18th at 2 p.m.