



## Arlington Economic Development Recovery Task Force Minutes

Date: Tuesday December 15, 2020

Time: 2:00-3:00 PM

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://town-arlington-ma-us.zoom.us/j/96211802074>

Meeting ID: 962 1180 2074

Passcode: 776846

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Present: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager; Jennifer Raitt, Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Ali Carter, Dept. of Planning and Community Development; Natasha Waden, Department of Health and Human Services; Pat Martin, Department of Health and Human Services; Ashley Jean, Department of Health and Human Services; Rachel Zsembery, Arlington Redevelopment Board; Janet O’Riordan, Old Schwamb Mill; Erik Kondo, Broadway Athletics; Sarah Morgan-Wu, The Object of Stories; Beth Locke, Arlington Chamber of Commerce; Tim Haley, Ellenhorn; Tom Formicola, Arlington Center for the Arts; Emily Shea, Kickstand Café; Alyssa Clossey, Support Arlington Center; Leland Stein, Regent Theater; Michelle Casey, Marchelle Salone  
Guest: Len Diggins, Lucia Millite, Jackie Maurer, Nicole Siegel, Steve Brown, John Rossman, Wayne Nielsen, several guests by phone.

### Minutes

1. Ali proposed setting aside set agenda items to discuss the decision made the previous day to roll back to Phase 2, Step 2 along with other communities in the region, which was met with full agreement.
2. Adam Chapdelaine explained that municipal leaders across the region that he meets with regularly are trying to push the Governor to accelerate rollbacks of the reopening plan. Their concerns are motivated by general public health concerns regarding the high level of community spread of COVID-19 and also by reports of very low hospital capacity in the region. Arlington joined with seven other communities in the region rolling back to Phase 2, Step 2 and more communities are expected to join. Natasha Waden explained that a recent uptick in cases has pushed the Town to take this step. She also explained that a

general lack of cooperation with contact tracing indicates that COVID-19 community spread is much more pervasive than the numbers even suggest. She went through the updated regulations in detail. After Natasha's report, Ali opened the meeting to questions from participants.

3. Discussion and Q&A:

- a. Jackie Maurer, Upbeat Cycling: Jackie expressed sympathy for the efforts that the Town is making to curb the spread of COVID, but this specific effort, she explained, puts Arlington businesses at a competitive disadvantage. By reversing the reopening process through a rollback to Step 2 of Phase 2 only perpetuates the unfairness of the reopening process itself, which she believes was flawed. She asked if this decision was based on local COVID-19 testing data. Her research through the Massachusetts Independent Fitness Operators organization (MIFO) shows little spread in health clubs. COVID is spreading in homes, not gyms, and she suggests more stringent accountability on the community for household gatherings rather than penalizing gyms.
  - i. Adam said it is challenging that the rollback is a little uneven with this regional approach. He explained that leadership in Belmont, Winchester, Cambridge, and Lexington are also considering signing on to the rollback. The Town will work with the Health Department and the Arlington Police Department (APD) to step up enforcement on private gatherings. Natasha described the town's contact tracing efforts and how Arlington does it in-house and are not relying on the State's contact tracing program. They are finding that people are not reporting their contacts, and we are really at the mercy of people behaving and comporting themselves in a way to not spread COVID-19.
- b. Erik Kondo, Broadway Athletics: Erik commented that the reopening plan was flawed and this rollback unfairly targets industries in Phase 3, Step 1. The reopening guidelines, he explained, were not based just on science but also on political power.
- c. Vince Piraino, Graviton Crossfit: Vince described his efforts to keep his business safe. The rollbacks, he explained, inform public opinion about what is and is not safe to do. With this rollback the Town is identifying gyms as unsafe spaces, which is not fair in his opinion when compared to indoor dining at restaurants.
  - i. Adam acknowledged that the reopening guidelines are not perfect. In town we are doing our best to work with the mixed messaging coming from the State and we are trying to reinforce more consistent messaging at the local level to stay away from people outside of your home by way of this effort.
- d. Steve Brown, Cambridge Strength and Conditioning: Steve expressed that he thinks it's unfair that restaurants can be open but gyms cannot.
  - i. Adam said he anticipates a broader regional of statewide rollback soon.

- e. Jackie Maurer asked what metrics we would be evaluating to reopen gyms.
  - i. Adam said lower transmission rates of COVID and increased hospital capacity.
- f. Alyssa Clossey commented that it seems inconsistent that kids' sports are ongoing through the Town but that gyms must close.
  - i. Natasha explained that private youth classes are allowed to continue under the local rollback, but she sees how it can be confusing and that there are lots of people involved in youth sports decision-making.
- g. Vince Piraino commented that it needs to be messaged to the public that businesses are not at fault and their noncompliance is not the reason behind this rollback.
  - i. Beth Locke commented that the Chamber can put out information that businesses are safe and Alyssa Clossey said she will share that messaging via Support Arlington Center as well. Ali said she can work with the Marketing Working Group and the Town's leadership to spread that message as well.
- h. Wayne Neilsen, Cambridge Strength and Conditioning: Wayne asked that in the future square footage and other safety amenities like air purification and circulation be considered in addition to just use when evaluating rollbacks or reopening decisions
  - i. Adam and Natasha agreed that was a good suggestion and would consider how to apply those factors into future decisions.

Next meeting: Tuesday January 12, 2021 at 2 p.m.