

**DRAFT-BEVERLY COVID-19 EMERGENCY BUSINESS SUPPORT TASK FORCE**  
**Meeting notes from May 7, 2020**

Task Force Participants: Mayor Michael Cahill; City Council President Paul Guanci; City Councilor Estelle Rand; William Burke; Michael Collins; Denise Deschamps; Andrew Goldberg; Leslie Gould; David Goodwin; William Howard; Christopher Koeplin; Chief John LeLacheur; Richard Marino; Kevin Shin; Casey Soward; Richard Vincent; Gin Wallace; Michael Wheeler; Darlene Wynne.

Other Participants: Jennifer Oemig

Darlene Wynne provides an introduction to the first meeting of the task force, an official name to be determined. Since a number of members of the Economic and Community Development Council are participating in the call. Wynne asks that their names be read first to determine if there is a quorum. Deschamps reads the ECDC roll and there is a quorum. Wynne calls a meeting of the ECDC to order. Wynne then reads the list of other invited participants asking each person to confirm their presence on the call. She asks anyone else on the call to state their name if they would like to do so. Jennifer Oemig states her name.

Wynne reads language explaining alteration of public meeting laws due to COVID-19 coronavirus and reviews the meeting rules for participation. She notes they she does not expect votes to be taken at this meeting.

**Task Force Membership, Frequency of Meetings and Action Items**

The Task force could have a weekly meeting schedule. Subcommittees could also be formed to meet more frequently, each including a quarter of the Task Force members. She suggested the Task force might want to meet on Thursdays at 4:30.

Last week's meeting was on Friday but that is a busy day for Chamber. Wynne asks if anyone has an issue with meeting Thursday afternoons. Mayor Cahill suggests they he will poll members after this meeting to determine a convenient day and time.

Rich Vincent asks if we need a motion by the Committee to select a day and time. She instructs that a motion is not necessary since: (1) this is not a formal body and (2) a day and time has not yet been recommended.

Wynne and Deschamps had a call with Town of Danvers staff to advance the joint application for funding they planned to submit to the attorney general's newly created grants program to support small businesses. Unfortunately, the fund ran out of money before they were able to submit the application. However, the work resulted in the outline of a program and so the City of Beverly will look for other opportunities to access grant funds.

Another task identified last week was to work with Beverly Main Streets and the Greater Beverly Chamber of Commerce to finalize a survey and disburse to businesses. The survey went live last Wednesday and thus far, about 100 responses were received as of yesterday and as of this morning there are 200 responses. Respondents vary from inside and outside of downtown. Wallace fears concerns remain same, as they have been amongst businesses. Wallace will send responses to Deschamps who can share them with the task Force members to identify trends.

Wynne states that Wallace and Gould have been in contact with their respective memberships regarding the survey and the City plans to reach out to businesses as well, asking them about what they need to reopen in addition to any questions or comments they want to share Mayor Cahill notes that no one has dug into the survey responses as of yet. He invites Darlene to pull a summary up on the screen as provided by Wallace.

Wynne focuses on the question related to the status of the businesses and whether or not the business is closed temporarily, permanently closed, doing online orders, etc. (Per Question 10 of the survey). The majority of respondents state that the business is closed temporarily. Wallace notes that there are some businesses reporting increased revenue over the past few months such as the bookstore, a cleaning company. Mayor Cahill notes that the governor has slightly relaxed some limits on retail and asks if anyone on the call knows of any business who have been able to take advantage of that relaxation of limits. Bill Burke notes that he spoke to Carroll's Florists to ensure she knew about those changes. Wallace noted that the bookstore is back, Clay Dreaming is active as is Jackie's Tees and four or five retailers. Vincent noted that Nanci's International Jewellery is quite busy during this time [given the nature of their work]. Vincent also noted that the owner of Naughty Pearl had been considering relocation to the mall but on line sales of product and gift certificates have been encouraging and so he intends to stay on Cabot Street. The owner is looking for more single-ized customers.

Wynne returned to the survey to discuss general location of respondents [Question 2 on the survey]. More than half located in the downtown area with 10% in Cummings Center and 35% located elsewhere in Beverly. Question 5 in the survey speaks to the specific type of business owned by the respondent, which include restaurants with and without liquor licenses, retail, performance venues, personal service, cleaning/maintenance, non-profits, pet supplies, amongst other categories. Wallace noted that one respondent, who is wardrobe coach, identified in the category for "Other".

Wallace noted that the lack of guidance about what will be required upon re-opening relative to cleaning; PPE is causing concern, particularly as regards some businesses such as day cares.

Wynne turns to the survey questions relative to impact of health orders on business revenue and loss of employees. She notes that there are some positive responses with the majority stating they have not let go of any employees but keeping in mind the majority of respondents have 0-10 employees. She noted businesses are concerned that some employees will not want to return to particular work environments because they do not feel safe. Non-emergency

childcare shut down until June 29 so that is one issue impacting return to work. Mayor Cahill notes that no one should expect a major change in that policy until at least May 18 when the Governor's Task Force makes its report public. He also noted that, thus far, the Task Force had met with over 50 groups, including large organizations like those representing retailers and the golf courses. These organizations are presenting their own proposed plans for re-opening safely. The State is also in the process of submitting a COVID-19 testing plan to the federal government, which, if approved, would receive funding from the CARES Act. What the State is seeing as needed in order to open up, broadly, is wrapped up in that application. It is difficult to give people definitive answers at this point, as to what the re-opening will look like.

Wynne continues with the review of survey results looking at the percentage of respondents that have received approval of request or actual funding from various business assistance programs. (Survey question 15) Almost 60% of the respondents have received approval and or funding from the Payroll protection program

Wallace notes that LISC offered a grant to businesses for a short period. Beverly had two finalists, Jackie's Tees and Scottie Dog. Wallace was contacted by LISC and asked to answer three questions about the finalists. She is unsure as to the final status but they have received and document asking them for information about the bank account that would receive the award and notice of a background check. Six other businesses from downtown had applied.

Wynne noted that according to the survey (Question 16) not many owners have business interruption insurance. As to survey question 17, about 35% of the business owners have asked their landlord for rent/mortgage relief and about 16% have received it.

Chris Koeplin noted that Beverly Crossing has been offering relief to all tenants in some way such as longer terms to pay rent. Wallace thanks Koeplin for taking that step. Koeplin notes that he wants the businesses to survive. Andrew Goldberg is also trying to work with tenants. Restaurant owners and retailers are having a tough time. Goldberg Properties is helping to guide them through the process of finding and applying for assistance. They are also working with their tenants on rents. Koeplin notes that, at this point, he is still receiving strong response from tenants paying rent. Not many residential tenants missing rent payments or requesting relief. Koeplin notes that some commercial tenants are moving forward with their plans to open. At the Cotton Mill "480" is continuing to fit up but will need some relief. Sol is doing the same but may open with take-out only. The mayor asks if Sol is operating in Marblehead with takeout. Koeplin answers "yes".

Wynne returns to the survey and looks at Question 19 and the ability of/speed with which businesses to can re-open once orders lifted. Forty percent believe they can re-open immediately. Does this mean under modified operating procedures? Approximately 10% were not sure when or if they would re-open.

Twenty-six percent estimate that they will be able to re=open within a week. For the remainder it will take a while.

Wynne noted that one of the greatest challenges to reopening is getting the customers to come back (approximately 56%). Another 55% identified challenges associated with providing PPE and the cost of sanitation. Reconfiguring space is also a challenge (approximately 36%). Vincent asks Casey Soward he plans to reconfigure the seating. Soward replies that The Cabot is discussing its re-opening strategy. They may initially focus on film and are considering a July re-opening which is consistent with Hollywood release schedules. They are also looking at how social distancing would play out along with the ordering of concessions on line.

Vincent asks Richard Marino about what he is considering. Marino responds that they are still trying to calibrate their business. They have an entertainment aspect to their business and highlight romance, which are difficult to provide curbside. They have applied for PPP dollars but have not received them thus far. They are hopeful they will be able to open but might not do so until August. They have very limited seating capacity so are considering creating a ticketed venue. They are open to suggestions and looking at all options. Vincent asks Marino how this affects liquor sales. Marino states that liquor pays for the bands. They have always offered the music free of charge. Marino is concerned not only about his customers and their well-being but also about a bartender who would be exposed for long periods of time to the general public and the general public could not be required to wear masks when they are eating and drinking. Chianti's business model is difficult and they are still deciding as to whether or not it will work. Vincent asks Goldberg if he has had conversations with A and B Burger. Goldberg said he has asked them that question and at this point they are not sure what it will look like. Wallace notes that she has been tracking steps other states are taking to re-open and none are allowing seating at the bar or communal tables. There is often a limit on the number of patrons per table. Koeplin questions whether is it worth it to open for those eateries that are bar-based. Marino states that if a restaurant had a strong take-out business they may be able to justify re-opening. Koeplin notes that he sees restaurants interested in re-opening and using outdoor seating but requirements of a liquor license an issue.

Mayor Cahill stated that Mayor Walsh of Boston organized a group of mayors to participate in regular calls and these types of issues are being discussed such as working with the ABCC. Boston has already sorted out some issues with the ABCC and having restaurant seating in parklets or areas not contiguous with the building in which the restaurant is located. There will be limitations on the seating available indoors. They are all talking about these issues. It would be helpful for the task Force to talk about these issues in more detail and Mayor Cahill can bring them forward.

Wynne noted a question had been posed about the possibility of shutting down Cabot Street on certain nights, like Friday and Saturday nights, to encourage pedestrian activity or would the closure make stores/restaurants/ venues harder to get to.

Vincent noted that Gloucester used to shut down its main street. Mayor Cahill asked if Gloucester's main street typically accommodated two-way traffic. Vincent stated that the traffic flow was one way along a specific stretch. Mayor Cahill stated that the City could consider limiting traffic to one way at certain times. Leslie Gould stated that if steps are taken

to facilitate business in one area then it should be considered for other areas so as not to favor one over the other.

Wallace stated that the owner of the restaurant Bonefish Harry's has started to construct a patio behind the building in which he is located. Initially, he was told by the City the increase in seating capacity would require him to add five new bathrooms. Wallace reported that the City worked with him on this issue, coming to the conclusion that inside capacity would not be at 100% for quite a while no additional restrooms were required. However, it took him a year to get his building permit and go through the process with liquor licensing. Wallace is wondering how long it will take other restaurants to acquire the same permits if they want to follow the same path. Mayor Cahill stated that we would look at it together. We need to be nimble with quick action.

Wynne reported that she had a conversation with Jamie Metsch, owner of Good Neighbor and Field House. Metsch would like to sell more plants and food products but not enough foot traffic now in downtown Beverly. How do you get more people downtown? There seems to be more activity in Salem. He had concern about closing the street. Deschamps describes an email she received from Metsch, with his permission. In the email he mentioned the same items as conveyed by Wynne and also identified major challenges such as paying fixed overhead such as rent, insurance, etc. with 100% loss of revenue; attracting their employees back to the stores given health fears and enhanced unemployment benefits. Ongoing construction on Cabot also remains a concern. Assistance could include micro loans or grants between \$5-10,000 to help pay overhead expenses. Taking a break from construction on Cabot and enable businesses to use more sidewalk space, including for retail would be helpful

Mayor Cahill noted that with increased use of sidewalks by businesses reduces space available for people to walk by. Wallace noted that retailers need to consider themselves destination businesses because foot traffic is not going to come back soon. Maybe in six months. They will have to market themselves, have business models with on-line presence.

Wynne returned to the survey to discuss trusted and reliable source for PPE (question 22). Slightly over 50% said they did not have a trusted and reliable source for PPE. Question of how do we provide assurance to the public that it is OK to be outside and downtown. Over 12% expressed interest in relief from the permitting process. Many people requested a reduction in taxes. The City cannot do that. Right now, there is some leeway as to when taxes are due but cannot eliminate taxes. There is the possibility of looking at fees that could be waived on a case-by-case basis. The Mayor cannot do anything with property taxes unless the state authorizes the City to do so. We can see what is possible from City's point of view. We can look at examples of ordinance changes. Wallace noted three questions that were submitted by respondents: (1) modify ordinances to allow parking where needed for curbside pick-up; (2) eliminate mask and social distancing requirements for outdoor dining; (3) allow non-emergency visits to medical practitioners who may now only treat emergencies.

Wynne reviewed responses to question 24 on the survey, how can the City of Beverly best support me as I re-open. Over 60% responded that it would be helpful to receive direct communication. Approximately 52% said advocating for my business with state officials would be very helpful.

As to survey question 28, how the Chamber and Beverly Main Streets could be most helpful approximately 52% of respondents said that promoting my business on social media would be most helpful while 49% wanted an "Open for Business or "Shop Local" marketing campaign and 40% wanting sharing of best practices. In addition, just over 50% were interested in researching and sharing of grant and loan opportunities. Approximately 31% wanted to be connected with businesses for the collective purchase of PPE. Mayor Cahill stated that the City has trusted resources for PPE and he can connect them with the businesses that do not have PPE.

Wynne concludes the discussion of the survey inviting Task Force members to reach out to her with any questions about the survey. Wallace recommends that survey results not be shared with the public until the survey has concluded. Wynne will provide a summary of the survey results once it has concluded. Those results will inform the decisions of the Task Force.

Gould requested a link to survey results and an updated copy of the responses. She also noted that most businesses have not factored into the budgets marketing and other increased costs resulting from the pandemic. She also noted that Gloucester has cancelled their fiesta and fireworks. Also, be mindful that there are businesses outside of main street with retail and restaurant activity so if something special is planned for downtown then it needs to be planned for around town.

Wynne notes that she appreciated hearing the more conversational discussion of the current conditions. She turns the conversation to the draft outline of Task Force action items and next steps. She welcomes comments on the draft outline. She will assemble comments and share with the group next week. Next week staff will process the results of the business survey but do not really need to go through the survey as in this meeting. Maybe next week dig into the ordinances more. Talk about some longer-term action items. City will also share Wallace's information from Salem. Wallace suggests future efforts including sourcing or connecting businesses with one another to obtain PPE; look at signage and sanitation; new rules on spacing on sidewalks; potential job fair for those people who have lost their jobs or who do not feel same returning to a certain type of job, offer technical support or advise to businesses about sanitation. This technical support could come from the restaurant industry since they need to comply with a wide variety of standards. Wallace continued that other communities have more local delivery services.

Wallace stated that she just learned that the State announced that golf courses are allowed to open today.

Mayor states that Wynne will take edits/comments about the draft plan. Also, if there are other people who the Task force members think should be participating in the task Force please let Darlene know. Hopefully the owners of Field House will be able to join us in a future meeting. We have a larger employer join us but we are starting with smaller businesses. We will have businesses outside of the downtown.

Gould offers to suggest some businesses for city's review

Andrew Goldberg states that he also participates on Salem's Task Force and he offers to be a liaison if one is needed. Wynne notes that Planning Department staff can also be in touch with Salem. She mentioned that Salem has access to funding that Beverly does not such as CDBG funds, which they are using to help fund both their housing and business assistance programs. Darlene and Denise have been working with Danvers. The Greater Beverly Chamber has also been working with Danvers.

Darlene expects need for rental assistance to come down the line when the eviction moratorium is lifted. Bootstraps expects that in summer and fall, if the moratorium is lifted, the community will see greater need. The City will be able to access CDBG CARES funding as a non-entitlement community. The City can apply for business support, rental assistance, and public assistance like food insecurity. The State is encouraging applications to be submitted jointly with mini-entitlement communities who has programs already in place. There is a question as to what would incentivize a mini-entitlement community to join in submitting an application with Beverly. Therefore, there may need to be some a partnership some other agencies like United Way that are already administering programs in other communities such as Chelsea and Everett. As of now it seems like there will be a great deal of flexibility in targeting funds but the application has not been made public yet.

Wynne opens it up to comments or observations. Wallace states that she would be happy to be part of a group that looks at outdoor dining. Marino would also like to participate in that group. Marino added that he does not know what scientist will say in the future about the need to social distance but on an optimistic note, when the economy has struggled in the past North Shore residents like to stay close to home and shop locally. Mayor mentions the challenge of getting people to come in to restaurants and coffee shops. No international tourism this summer. Need to promote the local businesses to the community. Mayor will do everything possible to promote local businesses as long as they employ safe practices. A group of mayors will be reaching out to the Governor re outdoor dining. Therefore, it would be important to put together details in the next few days so they can be conveyed to the Governor. ABCC questions another important issue. Wynne will connect via email on that point with Wallace and Marino

Wynne offers a last call for comments and questions. Gould mentions than although restaurant re-opening at the forefront of people's minds other types of businesses such as hair and nail salons, doctors' offices and others are also deeply affected and will need our promotion as well.

Wynne states a related question about at what point can you open a salon for one client at a time and when does that make sense?

Councilor Rand asked where the Beverly Board of Health thinks about different tactics to re-open safely. Members of the Task Force are not experts on science. The Health Department needs to be included in conversations about new ways to open safely. Burke responds that it was the intent of inviting him to the Task Force meeting today to hear the dialogue. The Health Department has to enforce what orders are issued by the Governor. There is a long history of the Health Department working with businesses and the restaurant industry. They are currently actively enforcing face-covering requirements. They are also tracking the number of people testing positive and conducting contact tracing. David Goodwin, of the health Department, who is also on the call, working a lot of compliance of non-essential businesses, The Health Department will do all they can, once guidance evolves, to help people comply.

Wallace asks about enforcement of the order requiring customer to wear masks. Is enforcement up to the business owner or are the local police and health departments working on enforcement.

Mayor Cahill stated that it is not fair to ask business to enforce public health orders with their customers so the City has had a police officer accompany a Health Department official when going to stores. They were not seeking to fine customers just to encourage compliance, which is now widespread. William Burke agrees. Burke stated that efforts by the police and health departments with spot checks have paid off. Just a few businesses received fines. The intent of the visits were to educate, inform and get compliance. A fine is a last resort. Some people have medical conditions that prevent them from wearing a mask so there needs to be awareness of these situations. However, you cannot ask the person for the details of their illness. The general public seems to be on board with face coverings as a long-term solution to get and keep things open. Governor's order stated that businesses could deny someone service if not wearing a mask but not responsible for getting them out of the business.

Chief LeLacheur joined the meeting.

Wynne reviews next steps: Wrap up the survey and share draft of survey work plan. Have discussions over the next few days to talk about outdoor dining and personal service and how we can re-open. Will send out meeting notes and information Wallace shared regarding Salem. We will meet again next Thursday around 4 PM.

Wynne asks for a motion to adjourn the ECDC meeting. William Howard offers a motion to adjourn. Richard Marino seconds it. The ECDC meeting adjourns at 11:51 AM.

Wynne thanks everyone for his or her time. The Task Force meeting concludes.