



Meeting Notes Economic Development Task Group

May 14, 2020
6:00pm
Via Zoom

In Attendance:

City Council Members

Mayor Val van den Broek
Councillor Gayle Martin
Councillor Rudy Storteboom
Councillor Rosemary Wallace

Task Group Members

- Councillor Teri James, Chair
- Councillor Paul Albrecht, Vice Chair
- Colleen Clark, Executive Director, Greater Langley Chamber of Commerce
- Marlyn Graziano, Vice President, External Affairs, KPU, representing post-secondary institution
- Peter Fassbender, Consultant, representing the Nexus Blue Ribbon Panel
- Rob McFarlane, Client Executive, Vice President, CapriCMW, representing Mid-size Business and Langley City resident
- Shawn Bouchard, Vice-President, Quadra Homes, representing the development industry
- Stephen Richardson, Director, Development Services, Township of Langley, representing community knowledge and interest, and Langley City resident
- Njeri Kontulahti, Vancity Community Investment Manager, Vancity, representing financial sector

Staff

- Francis Cheung, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Langley
- Carl Johannsen, Director of Development Services, City of Langley
- Anton Metalnikov, Planning Assistant II

Discussion

Councillor James asked members of the task group if they had further comments regarding common issues, challenges and opportunities facing the business community as outlined in Attachment 1 (see attachment). Task group members noted that the list was comprehensive and most concerns heard in the community were included in the list.

The CAO noted that City Council has taken measures to lessen taxation impact to the citizens and business owners in our community. The overall total net increase has been reduced from 6.67% to 1.83%. This allowed the business and light industrial class rates to fall from 7% to 2.01% and 2.14% respectively. The Residential classed properties tax penalty will be reduced to 2% after July 2 and the second penalty date will be extended to October 1 at 8% for this taxation season, as the tax penalty for residential classed properties would have been 5% after July 2 and a further 5% after August 2. The Province also took measure by having one tax arrears penalty date of October 1 at 10% for Business, Light Industrial and Non-profit classed properties.

Councillor James presented the [Thank You from the DLBA](#) video and the task group commented that the video is well done and inspires hope.

Councillor James then invited City Council and task group members to bring forward economic restart ideas that would support various sectors of the business community and the following is a summary of the discussion.

SUMMARY:

Creating open/public space for restaurant use

- Allows restaurants to keep the same number of tables as pre-COVID while maintaining physical distancing
- Need for easily accessible highway use permits
- City can help identify and plan for potential patio spaces
- Being cognizant of people with disabilities in this process
- DLBA working on a letter to gauge interest from restaurants to see if they're interested in outdoor dining on patios
 - They'll need additional insurance, cleanup, etc.
 - Need to get feedback on how exactly this should be implemented
 - How would alcohol be regulated?

City role in providing business-relevant COVID-19 information

- Provide resources to navigate COVID-19 recovery on website
 - Helping people discover and navigate through all the various programs currently available

- Providing resources on city website so business can quickly find all relevant supports and whether or not they qualify
 - Links to information, ensuring it's updated so business owners are getting most accurate and complete information
 - Economic Development Website would be a good place to host COVID-19 information
 - Example: <https://bceda.ca/coronavirus.php>
- Importance of access to expertise
 - Larger businesses have resources to navigate this – but smaller operations are those that dominate Langley City, they're the ones who struggle, and they're the ones that need to be supported with access to information, resources, and contacts to help businesses help themselves
- Role to clarify accuracy of information – lots of senior government and regulatory agency guidelines to come out in short future – need to clarify and interpret these for local businesses
- Distribution of Regional Relief and Recovery Fund (RRRF)
- Reducing red tape and continuing to follow senior government developments and messaging to be able to quickly respond to business challenges and help them quickly take steps back to normal whenever possible

Expediting infrastructure development

- City should create and promote a list of shovel-ready infrastructure projects to senior governments
 - Need to provide and prove the readiness of infrastructure projects – make seniors governments aware that these are ready to go
 - Continue to lobby TransLink, Province, and Feds to get SkyTrain under construction to Langley as soon as possible
 - Significant spinoff economic benefits - can carry people, goods, and services, and stimulate land development and investment
 - Can contribute meaningfully to the economic recovery and stimulus
 - Gives contractors and businesses work opportunities
 - Give first chance to work to local businesses?
 - Create jobs
 - Reduces costs because businesses will be more competitive in bidding for contracts

Supporting land development and investment

- Need to continue to encourage new development
 - Expediting Development and Building Permits to create economic stimulus and jobs
- City continues to process Building Permits and Development Permits
- Work continues on OCP update
- Need to promote that we continue to be open to new proposals and investment

Supporting businesses through formal reopening process

- WorkSafeBC safety plans
 - Single biggest question received at the DLBA is “how do I produce a reopening plan in accordance with WorkSafeBC requirements”
 - Support this by coming up with templates – one for retail, one for restaurants, etc.
 - BCEDA has a template online already. Generic, not specific to sector, but is immediately available
 - WCB also has sector-specific requirements – we could synthesize these different requirements with the BCESA template to create sector-specific documents and provide them to relevant businesses in the City

Marketing & promotion

- “Get to know your Langley businesses and support them” initiative
 - Remind people local businesses contribute to community – promote the importance of supporting them
- Promoting safety downtown with a Safe Downtown campaign
 - Encourage people to walk and visit downtown
- Encourage restaurants to come together and host a couple nights over a couple weekends for drive-by pickup
 - Being creative to have people start going to restaurants again, rebuild customer base, and rebuild confidence and comfort
 - Saving the costs involved in food delivery apps
- Encourage co-promotion between businesses
 - Including handouts in takeout order bags, shopping bags/parcels, etc.
- Divert tourism budget to advertising and promotion of small businesses, coming up with slogans for reopening: Langley Safe, Langley Proud, etc.
 - Working with Discover Langley City
 - Messages of hope, positivity, and information
- Importance of social media
 - Importance of social media use that promote initiatives, business openings, business statuses, PPE availability/production by local businesses, etc.
 - DLBA social media interaction has tripled
- Examples:
 - <https://canada.constructconnect.com/joc/news/others/2020/04/lunchboxchallenge-supports-local-business-and-treats-workers>
 - <https://www.bclocalnews.com/news/i-love-mission-campaign-has-been-launched/>

Resident Property Tax Deferment

- Promote the availability of the provincial property tax deferment program

- We have a lot of seniors – the provincial tax deferment program is available
- Doesn't cost City anything but allows seniors to defer their taxes and take advantage of their home equity with low interest
- Ensure seniors know this program is available to help them get through this financial challenge – many don't

Making continued reopening of economy a goal

- Making reopening of economy a goal
 - Need to lobby levels of government that are able to, to open up
 - In this case, need to make special effort to protect the segments of population that are especially vulnerable
 - Need to continue to monitor infection, mortality, and recovery data to ensure that the opening of the economy occurs in a timely manner
- Emphasis not only on resuming business activity, but on creating jobs as well

Coordinating local reopening

- DLBA can identify who will be reopening
 - In addition to survey, calling all businesses who were closed to see who has plans to start opening up
 - Helps address the concern of whether we will have empty storefronts, because businesses that have low overhead and little inventory will start filling them (i.e. nail/spa salons)
- Challenge around confidence of employees and customers
 - Just because businesses might open, doesn't mean staff or customers will feel comfortable coming back
 - Young staff especially
 - How do we help businesses provide confidence of safety to their employees and customers?
 - Maybe City can promote businesses that have gone the extra mile to provide safety and comfort to customers and staff?
- Are businesses allowed to require customers to wear protective gear?

Child care

- Need to support child care in getting back in operation
- No one will be going back to work if they don't feel their kids are safe
- Reach out to daycares to find out what their reopening plans are, permitted capacities, etc.

PPE supply chain challenges

- Ask who in town can help provide and distribute this?
- Continue to lobby senior governments for PPE production and distribution

Miscellaneous

- Conduct survey to determine COVID-19 impacts on businesses and their owners
- Should entertain any measure that may stimulate the business sector
- TD Merchant Services has come out with a \$250 app that allows restaurants to bypass 3rd party food delivery apps
- Our entrepreneurial ability is what will pull Langley City out of this issue
 - We're in different boats going through the same storm
 - Encourage both cooperative collaboration and individual initiative
- Reach out to neighbouring communities to work together on opportunities for mutual support in reopening
- Sharing expertise and showing leadership, build trust and confidence in community with businesses, residents, and customers

Based on these ideas, the CAO offered to develop an Economic Restart Action Plan for consideration at the next task group meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,



Councillor Teri James
Chair
Economic Development Task Group



Councillor Paul Albrecht
Vice-Chair
Economic Development Task Group

Attachment: 1. Issues, concerns and opportunities heard from other communities

Attachment 1

| | <u>Common Issues, Challenges and Opportunities heard from other Communities</u> |
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| 1 | Change the way we're able to interact with customer |
| 2 | Start-up businesses fall in the gap between CERB and CEBA eligibility. Entrepreneurs who have invested in the hope of a spring launch or opening may have difficulty bridging to better times. |
| 3 | Reduced Revenue Challenge to maintain cash flow to pay recurring expenses |
| 4 | The daily stress of washing hands, physical distancing and worry of catching this is high. It is frustrating when others don't follow suit. Stress is a huge concern for all of us and has the potential to continue well past the 'life' of COVID |
| 5 | Have to lead management team through their daily stress mental health is important |
| 6 | Concerned for the sole proprietor who does not fit government criteria for assistance. There is a gap. |
| 7 | Has shown how resilient our people are - those that are working from home and those that are still having to report to an office. People are the core of our business |
| 8 | I have stopped planning for future events because there are so many unknowns. Planning for any events this summer is risky as many have already been cancelled. |
| 9 | In the cultural, arts and tourism, and sports industries have been significant with a near complete halt of most activities. Given the significant economic and social capital importance this impact a large part of people's economic security and cultural well being. |
| 10 | Moving our business online Important to stay connected |
| 11 | Programs and services supporting our most vulnerable have been paused or stretched to their limits in terms of capacity, People who were already in the margins before the pandemic are at high-risk of being left behind in our collective response |
| 12 | Virtual meetings lack of personal connection with individual customers and coworkers |
| 13 | Projects on hold. Costs continue. Revenues drop. |
| 14 | Continually trying to stay on top of best practices to keep employees safe and motivated. Safety and Productivity |
| 15 | Shop local is going to have to be a MUST. Support local |
| 16 | The lives of some clients will be changed permanently, with loss of jobs - poverty rates will increase, putting pressure on non-profit sector. We should be preparing as a sector for the increased need instead of reacting when it happens |

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| 17 | We have needed to reprioritize work to focus on highest value activities - safety, reliability, customer service. Need to continue to provide core elements of our business |
| 18 | Client numbers have dropped drastically. Will we be able to meet required targets? |
| 19 | Municipal economic slowdown impacts entire community |
| 20 | Business has increased. Clients have many questions about gov't programs. They need cash flow now. |
| 21 | My primary position is to support small business within a designated location BIA. The focus is the make Downtown a good place to do business Small business is part of the foundation and framework for economic impact and is often overlooked as such. |
| 22 | Devastated. We are not open, other than online sales, which we had to launch when this struck.... positive in that way, but not paying the bills. |
| 23 | Although we are an essential service business and have been open it's been hard financially and emotionally. I am concerned as to the other side. Clear direction from our community |
| 24 | Completely shutdown. No revenue |
| 25 | Transitioning & enabling as many employees as possible to effectively Work From Home. Keep business moving & open, keeping as many employees safe & employed as possible, and optimize customer satisfaction in this new normal. |
| 26 | Unfortunately my business has been completely shut down since March 14th, we also do not qualify for any assistance from any governments at this time |
| 27 | Working from home. Do staff have the resources needed to do their jobs at home |
| 28 | The unknown makes planning difficult |
| 29 | As an essential service provider ensuring our employees are safe while meeting the needs of the community |
| 30 | Harder to launch. Our start-up business will rely heavy on tourism, if restrictions would continue into the long term, it will have a huge effect on our business plan |
| 31 | Keeping People Safe, Nobody Gets Sick. |
| 32 | Mental Stress, Health |
| 33 | On line is a good way to assist, however not all clients we serve have the technology Or data needed to connect We are missing the ones who need us the most |
| 34 | Small business closures. Many business will not be able to reopen due to financial loss resulting with high numbers of people not having a job to return to |
| 35 | Staff and client well being. Socializing is important maintaining mental well being, need to remain connected rather than completely withdrawn |
| 36 | Staffing issues are now a concern. i.e. staff burnout, understaffed, health concerns. We have a good staff and we don't want to lose them due to burnout or Covid-19 fears. |

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| 37 | Technology and issues related to this. The ability to work remotely and service clients properly is impacted. |
| 38 | We have lost 50 % of sales We need money to be successful |
| 39 | Complete loss in all revenue for the foreseeable future forcing me to layoff 78% of my team (67 people) around the world. 38 of them locally. Extremely stressful times and just trying now to save the business. |
| 40 | Protect essential workers from the virus. |
| 41 | Need to reward resilience and anti-fragility in business. Cutting spare capacity and not planning for contingencies can provide short-term profitability and competitive position, but it has long term risks. |
| 42 | Keeping employees safe while still managing the business |
| 43 | Working from home. Build up home network |
| 44 | All revenue is seasonal to summer - may lose all majority of our revenue is from registration fees. No option to make up later in the year. |
| 45 | Anxiety for the future. Will we thrive as a community again? |
| 46 | Threatens future of our organization. Long history, 117 years, of quality summer camp could be wiped out without support |
| 47 | Learning new technologies to stay connected takes time from the day |
| 48 | Being able to pay bills. Do not want to be placed in a situation where I have to decide whether to close the business, as it will impact 10 people and their families. |
| 49 | Closure of office. Decline in clients |
| 50 | Disruptions with our clients business. Reduced overall sales |
| 51 | Everyone is feeling the stress of the situation. I am concerned about the mental health resources available to my staff who may not be able to afford paid services. |
| 52 | Financial uncertainty. Staying afloat as a small business with no revenue and rent that's due. |
| 53 | If we can stimulate the economy now with projects that can be done with social distancing, should we not be releasing projects to do that? This is important because we can help those businesses that are still functioning stay afloat |
| 54 | It has limited the way I can engage with the community. Many people require and enjoy the face to face interaction. |
| 55 | Major delayed business income. Most of our jobs (commercial) were stopped due to the essentials list |
| 56 | My revenue has decreased substantially and I am worried for the future. I want to keep my community healthy and fit and keep my employees |
| 57 | Planning this down time has actually allowed us to have more time to plan for day 1, although not exactly the best scenario, we have to look for the good |
| 58 | Takes 15-20% more effort to get things done, need to keep employees healthy |
| 59 | Calling staff back to work. Media fear, health safety/concerns, CERB benefit (they'd rather stay home and collect money than work in some cases), hazard pay |

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| 60 | Conservation of cash resources. Need to maintain liquidity during tough economic times |
| 61 | Rapid changes to work |
| 62 | Sales declined. Less "paying" work for staff to do. |
| 63 | Struggle at first but now a month in learning work around. Business is stronger and more impactful with face to face dialect |
| 64 | Technology issues in working from home. Rural internet is unable to support multiple users |
| 65 | Funding - everyone is asking about financing, wage subsidy, revenue and cash flow are the lifeline of businesses and clients are necessary so if they stop their businesses we all stop |
| 66 | Rebuilding is going to be difficult. Clients will fear contact |
| 67 | Anxious |
| 68 | Cancellations revenue |
| 69 | Changing relationship with clients |
| 70 | Collaboration between all three sectors of the community is key. Grassroots leaders should be acknowledged and celebrated. |
| 71 | Connecting with client. Finding new ways to connect |
| 72 | Customers locked down and having difficulty paying bills. Limits cash flow |
| 73 | Gone exclusively online. Expanded our audience, offered opportunities to gain experience working online, forced to close physical space, lost of revenue |
| 74 | I cannot get together to have client sign forms. Need to come up with new ways to get them signed |
| 75 | I've had to completely change my target audience because of this. Customers needs have changed and so must our services |
| 76 | Isolation causes difficulties providing aid to those that need assistant - danger to our clients and our members wanting to help. Fear of untested clients puts our members at risk |
| 77 | Mental Health. It's creating unique challenges for the staff working, not working and our guest/customers attitudes have changed. A very pressing time. |
| 78 | Our busy season would be starting and we have no bookings and probably will not have for quite awhile |
| 79 | We need a cohesive and long term strategy. |
| 80 | Bookings cancelled. As a tourism business I rely on bookings |
| 81 | Communications systems must allow for employees to remain connected through the crisis. Employee engagement and connectedness remain critical to success in achieving objectives |
| 82 | Extra cost and loss of revenue and profitability |
| 83 | Fears over recovery. Will we weather this COVID closure storm? Will economy rebound quickly enough for us to be able to get back on track? |
| 84 | Laying off staff |
| 85 | Offline to online innovation. Funding to assist to innovate bricks and mortars to online e-commerce |

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| 86 | Our business has begun to stall, new orders are not coming in and some existing orders have been cancelled or pushed out into the future. This has impacted those that are aware but our staff will catch on quickly as the 'holes' in the schedule hit the floor |
| 87 | We need to prepare for return to work. Each business and community. #together. We must get economy moving. Growing poverty would / could be worse. So we need to move forward together. |
| 88 | Business volume is down significantly but we are running. Employees are very nervous having to come to work. Productivity is very low and not sustainable |
| 89 | First real pandemic of this size has provided an opportunity to assess preparedness. Sets up even more effective future response |
| 90 | I cannot serve the individuals with certain barriers that I was able to before Covid-19. This means that there are members in our community who need assistance but can get this help. |
| 91 | Personally having to isolate away from family since I am going to work every day and exposed to others. Affects my family and being able to be with them |
| 92 | The impact for me is I have closed both of my businesses as they are non-essential services. This is important because I have now lost all revenue coming in through both of my businesses and my two practitioners have lost income as well |
| 93 | We have seen an increase in our business activities because we are part of the food chain for logistics and warehousing. We have to keep up with the demand in order to keep the supply chain moving and to get the food into stores. |
| 94 | I operated a CrossFit gym. We have had to close. We have been able to move to online workouts to try to retain membership. It has been challenging. It is important to offer different channels like online however it is not the same. People need to workout in a different space than home. |
| 95 | Loss of business 50% decrease in revenue, laid off half of our employees |
| 96 | Layoffs |
| 97 | 75% of staff are on unemployment or CERB. Numerous issues, too many to articulate. |
| 98 | Community events are being cancelled (not just postponed). What will 2020 look like (socially) for the community? |
| 99 | Considering pivot to Virtual program delivery. Really different approach and almost the antithesis of what we promote as a core value of our program - being disconnected from technology to connect |
| 100 | Crowd restrictions. Our business will be impacted if crowds are restricted in numbers allowed into say one room or building at a time |
| 101 | Family stress |
| 102 | Fear. Everyone is uncomfortable and worry about getting ill or infecting others. |
| 103 | Having to lay-off staff and limit services. Impacts revenue as the services are provided by small business owners, many of them having this as sole income. |

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| 104 | Hearing that individuals feel very isolated and trying to figure out how to assist them |
| 105 | Increase work but staffing scared |
| 106 | It has closed my business and not allowed me to pay for my bills. |
| 107 | Lost revenue, learning to work at home, less people |
| 108 | The impacts in manufacturing will be felt for the next 12 months. We will need longer term subsidies |
| 109 | What tools is city bringing to the table? Financial support? Legislation? Access to rapid testing? |
| 110 | Pivot to provide remote workforce solutions. Our team went remote overnight, developed work from home policy as we helped organizations deal with this over the last 3 weeks |
| 111 | As a sector, we've experienced unprecedented Human Resources challenges with both staff and volunteers primarily due to risk of contagion People help people when it comes to supporting our community's most vulnerable citizens. |
| 112 | Connecting with vulnerable clients. They are facing many barriers to access our services right now |
| 113 | Devastatingly difficult recovery for all! It is my community. |
| 114 | Expect to have a greater focus on becoming more self sufficient as a country. This should create more local supply opportunities |
| 115 | Expenses without income. Insecurity |
| 116 | Hampered in attempts to support CoVID-19 federal needs Despite having all health Canada and CRA approvals to manufacture hand sanitizer ingredients difficult to obtain. |
| 117 | Having to work from home - balancing childcare. Staff balancing childcare |
| 118 | I am an event organizer and the two major events I organize have either been cancelled or postponed due to this pandemic. One event raises around \$17,000 for local charities and the other is a festival that brings a large amount of business to downtown Blenheim. |
| 119 | Lay-off staff. People are my business |
| 120 | Layoffs. Most of workforce hours are on hold for now. Their buying power has been severely restricted, and without creative minds, we can't grow right now. |
| 121 | Lose of staff, loss of products adverbial to purchase. Reducing our ability to service the community |
| 122 | One of my businesses has closed. And the other is tremendously stunned at what is going to happen next. Our business cannot rejig how we work. People need to feel safe in going out again, before we can start on our ways back to a new normal. |
| 123 | Recruiting Challenges Required to Run Business |
| 124 | Social distancing makes it difficult to open |
| 125 | Unsure of what the future holds. Need to make business decisions now to keep it sustainable. |

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| 126 | Fear. Many employees are uncertain or fearful of job security. Causing significant stress to mental health |
| 127 | Zero revenue. Client unease about our industry |
| 128 | Do not properly fit into the government wage subsidies to make it viable to retain staff |
| 129 | Need better internet outside of town. Doing business online from home plus family also online for school, work and entertainment=laggy internet. |
| 130 | Loss of employees. Employees on lay-off may not be able to survive on EI and seek other opportunities. Causing further stress to employers and recruitment costs |
| 131 | Clients will have employment needs. Some jobs may not be there |
| 132 | It is time to get our community back to work in as many sectors of business as possible with a focus on sanitation and respect for each other. Moral is much better with those who can work right now and others need hope that their time is coming soon. People understand risk and need normality |
| 133 | Try to get kids back to school in May. Children should not be out of school till September. We are social people and defiance will be inevitable. Kids can not be out of school for 6 months. Bad for morale |
| 134 | Seeing others open when I'm closed |
| 135 | Affordable housing projects including redevelopment of school sites put on hold. Demand for social housing and affordable workforce housing was already high, and will be likely to increase. |
| 136 | Business ordered to close. My doors need to be open for visitors |
| 137 | Changed the way we do business. No more walk-in traffic. |
| 138 | Changes to abilities to execute regular work priorities |
| 139 | Difficult to plan large social events. Planning and approval takes time and no certainty when to start |
| 140 | Difficult to work from home with small children |
| 141 | Employees are nervous but at this point continue to come to work |
| 142 | Essential primary care. Virtually based primary care and inter professional health care supports |
| 143 | Family stress. Not sure of future |
| 144 | Homeschooling while working full time is tough |
| 145 | I have no work. I've lost all my income. Govt support only covers part of it. |
| 146 | Loss of fundraised and earned revenue. Impacts our collective ability to support our community's most vulnerable as we respond to this pandemic |
| 147 | Our priorities suddenly shifted to survival mode. Business as usual will never be the same |