



CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

outdoor ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BUSINESS SUPPLY FUND COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Meeting – <https://meet.lync.com/fallschurch-fallschurchva/ngoodwin/CM2RBJZZ?sl=1>
Wednesday, June 10, 2020 - 10:00 AM

NOTICE: The meeting for which this agenda has been posted will be held pursuant to and in compliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3708.2 and state and local legislation adopted to allow for continued government operation during the COVID-19 declared emergency.

All participating members of the EDA's Business Supply Fund Committee were present at this meeting through electronic means. All members of the public may view this meeting on the City's website at <https://www.fallschurchva.gov>.

1. **CALL TO ORDER at 10:02 AM**

Roll Call:

EDA Business Supply Fund Committee Members Present: Chairman Erik Pelton, Erin Messner, Mike Novotny

City Staff Present: Naomi Goodwin, Celeste Heath, Veronica Prince, Val Weiner, Becky Witsman

Public Attendees: Sally Cole, Letty Hardi

2. **DISCUSSION OF USE OF EDA FUNDS AND RESOURCES TO ASSIST LOCAL BUSINESSES WITH RECOVERY FROM DAMAGES SUFFERED DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC DECLARED EMERGENCY**

- Naomi Goodwin noted this is an emergency meeting in accordance with the Governor's meeting restrictions, convened only to discuss the EDA Business Supply Fund program.
- Naomi Goodwin then advised that no public comments had yet been received regarding this meeting.
- Committee Chair Erik Pelton opened the meeting by inviting members who believe they have conflicts of interest to state the conflict and their ability to still participate in a fair and unbiased manner. Chair Erik Pelton noted his conflict as his involvement in small businesses in the city. Erin Messner noted her conflict as a small business owner. Both pledged their ability to act fairly and in an unbiased manner on the matter of the business supply fund program.



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Chair Erik Pelton opened discussion on the use of EDA funds (\$100,000) and resources to assist local businesses with recovery from damages suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic declared emergency.

How to get feedback from businesses regarding what would be the most useful items to purchase to assist them was discussed. Options considered were: survey, online forum or a combination of the two. It was generally considered that using both a survey and an online forum would encourage the most participation and engagement with the local business community.

Input was sought from City staff present regarding using the combined consultation approach. Staff advised that:

- holding the survey first and then using the forum to prioritize options was suggested as being the most effective approach;
- up to 250 people could attend an online forum utilizing the City's online meeting platform; and
- inviting individuals to submit comments and questions electronically prior to the meeting and then having them read at the meeting would be the most workable means of enabling participation for a large group.

Chair Erik Pelton noted that there needed to be an emphasis on ensuring businesses received support as soon as possible with an approximately 10 day timeframe suggested as preferable for the survey and forum. Erin Messner suggested using the survey to determine if there was a need to hold the forum but it was generally felt that this approach could lead to a significant delay in businesses receiving support when this was the higher priority. Staff advised that the survey could be used to promote and gauge interest in forum attendance. Letty Hardi enquired if any feedback had been obtained from businesses to date that could guide the Committee and Mike Novotny enquired into the availability of any upcoming City of Falls Church Chamber of Commerce forums that could potentially be used as an adjunct to the Committee's processes. Sally Cole advised that the Chamber may be hosting a virtual event soon (possibly noon, June 16, 2020) and that if the event goes ahead that the Committee would be welcome to use it for their purposes. Staff were asked if it would be possible to draft the survey by June 16.

Survey design was discussed. A suggestion offered as an option was for provision of a list of 8 – 10 resource options whose usefulness could be ranked with opportunity to provide other resource suggestions and comments.



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Promotion of the survey and forum was explored. Avenues considered being:

- the City's existing websites and social media accounts;
- emails to:
 - City of Falls Church Economic Development Authority COVID-19 Emergency Grant awardees; and
 - local landlords.

Chair Erik Pelton drew attention back to Letty Hardi's previous question regarding input obtained to date on business needs and if there were any obvious urgent needs that they could address immediately. Erin Messner advised that arising from her conversations with local businesses that although provision of resources directly to them would be appreciated that there was perhaps a more strategic and influential approach that could be taken. Mike Novotny clarified that when he originally moved the motion that caused the creation of this committee that he was intending for it to focus on the building of consumer confidence in the safety of the City's commercial sector, with regards to COVID-19, as a marketing strategy that would support local businesses as they reopened. There was general discussion and agreement on this.

Accompanied by appropriate promotion, a three pronged approach was considered with provision of:

1. A checklist style poster or window decal;
2. Items aimed at the general public such as hand sanitizer stations, masks and signage; and
3. Supplies to individual businesses (of all types) that would assist with reopening (to be informed by the survey and forum).

Letty Hardi advised that the City is in the process of obtaining and distributing masks to the community and that the EDA would be welcome to contribute to this endeavor. There was general support for this if demand exceeds the City's initial supply with distribution potentially via community partners and/or the farmers market.

Sally Cole advised that she had received feedback indicating a greater need for provision of support to businesses regarding: how to deal with members of the public that refused to wear a mask and for moving to online platforms. Discussion also ensued regarding the provision of parallel pledge style programs by the Committee and the Chamber being seen as beneficial overall. The City offered to provide support by linking to the Chambers online promotion of the program.



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Motion: Erin Messner presented a motion that the EDA draft/create a checklist for businesses to self-pledge that they comply with CDC and Governor Northams Guidelines for safe reopening that we can make into a poster and display in business windows. The motion was seconded by Chair Erik Pelton.

Mike Novotny went on to say that the EDA will need staff help with this.

- **Unanimous approval by the Committee**

Staff will move forward with development of the checklist poster, survey and forum and meeting preparation along with exploring provision of outdoor public sanitizing stations (including: feasibility, cost and installation and location options for ~10 stations) and signage. Hand sanitizer feasibility study (including a map of possible locations) and drafts of the business survey and checklist poster are due by the next meeting. The Committee offered to assist with this.

Letty Hardi requested information regarding relevant procurement policies. Staff advised that advice is being sought on this and will be provided to the Committee when available.

Dates were set for two subsequent Committee meetings (Monday, 15 June, 2020, 3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. and Thursday, 25 June, 2020, 3:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.) and a public forum (Tuesday, 23 June, 2020, 12 Noon – 1:00 P.M.).

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Erik Pelton asked if there was any public comment or any other business to discuss. Naomi Goodwin advised that no public comment had been received. Letty Hardi thanked the all involved for their efforts and encouraged consideration of the use of floor decals on sidewalks to promote public health messaging.

4. ADJOURNMENT at 11:30 AM