

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

Friday, 02/19/2021 - 8 a.m., via Zoom Meeting

**Attendance:** Council President Jack O'Brien, Council Vice President Noni West, Councilmen Ben Bell, and Joe Frederick, Mayor Ron Strouse, and Borough Manager John Davis.

The **Minutes** from the February 5, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.

**Review Proposed Mission Statement.** With no questions or comments, Mr. Bell motioned to accept the statement as presented, seconded by Ms. West. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Discussion of Street Closure Plan.**

- Main Street - Can close both North and South concurrently with minimal impact.
- State Street - East and West is too difficult as one street closure because interested businesses are not contiguous, along with difficulties for other businesses and traffic. West State is fine on its own; East State only has a couple of restaurants, but the retailers do participate. Use of Donaldson and Printers Alley was discussed.
- Schedule for Closure. Ready to go, weather dependent, so really April is the time to start thinking about it. It will be Friday and Saturday, three-week rotation (left, right, and middle) and will skip holidays and event weekends. It will continue as long as conditions remain favorable.  
Cost is \$200 straight time which would be paid anyway and about \$200 overtime, so \$400.  
Because a schedule is provided and they have lead time, hopefully they'll do a nicer job.  
John will get Phil's input regarding restaurants' volunteerism - what they can/shouldn't do. The biggest thing is getting the stuff moved at the end on Friday nights. Restaurants are responsible for their own tables, etc.

Messaging to restaurants is important because they will know there is a community lifeline and that they can start planning. Messaging to community is good all around.

**Group's Mission.** Not going to preempt the responsibility of either CGA or Public Safety. We're trying to pull together the chairs of those committees to talk out the issues and see where we have opportunity to make changes that would be accommodating of those issues, and then present that back to the appropriate committee for them to study and come back with recommendations as appropriate. Do not expect any direct action to come from this working group.

### **Challenges:**

- Street Closures:
  - How often do you want to do this in a non-pandemic world?
  - Questions regarding LCB regulations and private v. public property.
  - Public safety issue which has to involve the Chief: crowds and alcohol.
    - › Will times change?
    - › Any restraints we want to put on things?
- Outdoor Dining, gets even more complex
  - Continue offering parking spaces/lanes for those set ups?
  - What are we looking for in terms of pedestrian passage?
  - What are we looking for in terms of insurance?
  - Are we looking for a fee? If so, incorporate lost parking revenue?
  - What are we looking for physically in terms of how these things are set up? In theory, we want them to be providing the safety features, not us; aesthetic issues.

This is an offshoot of the outdoor dining ordinance we have now, which is very oriented towards safety and is very conservative. Probably only 25% of the downtown restaurants could even begin to take advantage of it because of the sidewalk size. John will put together an outline and start to talk about this.

**Pickup Spaces.** All the businesses that have these spaces know it is a gift, know it is based on an emergency, and know that it could go away at any moment. When we say they go away, there's the distinct possibility that they will just go away. If problems arise, we're flexible enough to discuss it and then see how it goes. That is contrasted with outside dining and street closures, and that we have to be ready for what comes next.

When to take away those spaces is questionable and the importance of timing to do this was discussed. Right now it is a visible and physical expression that Council supports the businesses. Whatever the trigger is - whether it's the emergency ends officially or it's the seating capacity going to 75% or 100%, it gets discussed, we decide, and then they're gone. Need to remember this is a financial burden on taxpayers too.

**Public Education and Outreach.** Need to restore public confidence in shopping and dining. If we can show restaurants that we are working to enhance public confidence, that decreases their dependence on curbside pickup.

A discussion for the next meeting is how to use our existing channels of communication to keep our public informed about the health situation. People can do their own research online, but perhaps we can synthesize information particular to our community. Going forward, what should our Covid messaging look like? Everybody should look at our website and others and come prepared. We did, and still have, the mask campaign, so need to ask ourselves what's next and what can we do better.

Meeting adjourned 9:00 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Ament, Executive Assistant  
Doylestown Borough