

COMMUNITY SUPPORT WORKING GROUP

Friday, 03/19/2021 - 8 a.m., via Zoom, Amended Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Council President Jack O'Brien, Council Vice President Noni West, Councilmen Ben Bell, Larry Browne, Joe Flood, and Joe Frederick, Mayor Ron Strouse, and Borough Manager John Davis. Paul Boger of Mind Your Design and Discover Doylestown was also in attendance.

Governor Wolf announced the opening of indoor capacity to 75% beginning April 4. We do not believe this will eliminate the desire for street closures for outside dining by the public. Going from 50% to 75% really doesn't have a lot of impact for some of our restaurants because of the social distancing six foot standard - they don't have enough space.

Along with 75% capacity change, there are some relaxations on drinking. John strongly recommended to retain the same closing hours as the street closures and make it clear to participants, that as far as the outside dining, we expect it to be dining. This will have to be monitored pretty closely.

Curbside signage in good weather seamlessly converts from pick up zone to a seating area or a pedestrian area to permit a seating area. Those signs could only be consolidated or removed if we were to simultaneously end a lot of the outside daily dining.

Paul agreed with John. He's talked with many restaurants and they've made it very clear that they're still relying on takeout, and that will continue even if in-house dining is extended. In addition to not having the needed capacity, they also feel that people in the community won't be comfortable with indoor dining yet, which is why the takeout push has continued. There's a strong desire to see outdoor dining return and they're asking when it will be back.

Should stay the course right now, wait a month after the 75% capacity goes into effect, and see what happens. John has a good database now and can reach out to the restaurants at anytime.

Covid Public Communication/Messaging. John sent out a reminder about hospitality funding and some info was sent out to the public regarding rent relief. John continues to push out the County's update which is mostly focused on vaccinations. Ben noted the importance of masking still today.

The status of vaccinations remains unchanged - stuck on 1A, as we have been for awhile now. The teacher roll out seemed to go pretty well, but a puzzlement remains from all five surrounding counties as to the Governor's confidence that 1A will be done by the end of May.

The **Minutes** from the March 19, 2021 meeting were approved with the amendment to include Joe Flood as having had attended the meeting and Mayor Strouse did not. (Browne-Frederick)

Street Closures. A message was sent to the restaurants that this will be a weekly arrangement and dining was emphasized. The start date will be April 9, beginning with West State Street; holiday weekends are skipped; and, the end date will be probably be Thanksgiving, weather permitting.

Paul said having a schedule gives a level of consistency which makes it easier for the restaurants to get used to and promote. He thought that retailers are really hurting and they may not participate in the beginning, but once they see it happening, interest will increase. It was agreed we should talk to the retailers so they don't feel excluded, perhaps starting with someone friendly, like Glenda, who could talk with the fellow retailers and get better feedback. Retailers from South Main St., Ashland, Oakland, and Broad are more likely to be interested right off the bat. The reach out should be maybe two weeks before.

For the next meeting, John and Paul will come up with kick off material to do a public roll out of the restaurant zones and sidewalk dining. We can do a big kick off for the street closures the week of March 29th, maybe get some media involvement and try to do a big splash.

There's no interest in closing Printers Alley.

Old/New Business. Ben emphasized that we can't lose focus on public health messaging right now. It was agreed that just putting the mask up message out again by itself does not have much impact anymore; we need to combine that message with something else for the current public mindset. People are interested in vaccine information now. We'll have the street closures announcement and could use that as the vehicle to message all of this.

Ben reported that he looked into embedding some of the search parameters into URLs as discussed at the last meeting. He said the County has a full mechanism for that and the creator of URL has to put the capability into it – he just can't go in and edit it. He has a call into the County and will continue trying to contact someone about it.

Nonprofits. Ron reported that the cultural institutions' programming for the rest of year will be different from past years: events are virtual or, at best, hybrid. They're engaged in recovery, but have a long way to go. We should have the conversation here first and then invite a representative from the nonprofits to a future meeting for their input.

Noni asked that the group also do a session with social nonprofits as well, for example, A Woman's Place. This discussion should be on the next meeting's agenda and then go from there.

Lastly, John advised he received an accounting from the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors of the federal relief the Borough is to receive, \$800-\$850,000, in two installments, one within 30-60 days from now and one in a year. This is less constrained than other federal funding with a lot of options and John and Caroline are still sorting through eligibility requirements. Council will have questions and challenges as to how to use the funds. This will be something for the Finance Committee to dig into, but it's definitely a good problem to significant.

Meeting adjourned 9:06 a.m. (Flood-West)

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Ament
Executive Assistant