Economic Stabilization Task Force Strategic Initiatives Work Session

Appointed by the City & Borough of Juneau's Mayor
Action Notes from June 26, 2020

Call to Order

The Economic Stabilization Task Force Strategic Initiatives Work Session was convened at the Elizabeth Peratrovich Hall at 12:05 p.m. by Co-Chair Linda Thomas. The Task Force expressed appreciation to Ms. Belton and Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska for providing the meeting room, technical support, and lunch.

Task Force Members Present: Linda Thomas, Max Mertz, Susan Bell, Theresa Belton, Bruce Botelho, Eric Forst, Ken Koelsch, Lauren MacVay, Laura Martinson, and Terra Peters.

Task Force Members Absent: None

Staff Present: CDD Administrative Officer, Brenwynne Grigg; and CBJ Finance Director, Jeff Rogers

Assembly Members Present: Mayor Beth Weldon and Loren Jones

Special Guest Speakers: None

Opening Comments

Task Force Role
- Identify funding gaps
- Provide recommendations to the Assembly to stimulate the economy, keep the community safe, and initiate strategies that facilitate long-term recovery
- Serve as a liaison with the State of Alaska's economic stabilization team

Potential discussion topics should be expanded to include:
- The City itself and processes
- Address homelessness
- Impact of school schedule on the workforce
- Broader issue of childcare
- Focus on 2021 and beyond

Additional comments:
- Workforce development issues are acute, began before COVID, and tie into national issues
- We should identify strategies to attract remote workers, recognizing this is a competitive issue and a unique moment in time
- Broadband is important

- To attract young families we need housing, education, and childcare plus arts and activities
- What are growth industries that would attract young people and opportunities
- Seniors are now the largest sector of our population, what encourages them to remain in the community, stay safe
- We need accessible and timely COVID testing

Financial Capacity of CBJ and Infrastructure

Mr. Botelho introduced the Infrastructure Report and presented arguments for why the CBJ Assembly should develop a project list for an infrastructure package to be voted on in an upcoming election in order to stimulate the economy.

- Infrastructure is a classic development tool to stimulate the economy
- Report drafted by Mr. Botelho illustrates municipal bonding capacity is available
- Can be augmented with reserves and other funds, including philanthropic organizations
- Projects are not identified at this stage
- Need to be mindful of the overall tax burden and debt
- CBJ should be ready for any state and federal stimulus programs
- City processes can move faster than a state bond package, which would be 2022 at the earliest
- Current mill rate is 1.2, which is a drop of .03 since 2010.
- Mr. Rogers comments:
    - As debt is added or retired, the mil rate goes up or down
    - Fund balance is available, however the CBJ has lost revenue from economic loss and state actions including changes on school debt
    - CARES funding continues to evolve; if the municipality can use CARES funding to replace lost revenue it will likely do that

MOTION: by Mr. Mertz to advance the Public Infrastructure memorandum to the Assembly with encouragement of early action and the addition of language supporting importance of job training to align with implementation. Mr. Botelho seconded the motion.

Hearing no objections, the motion was approved.

Homelessness

- The issue is very apparent downtown
- Support CBJ funding for Glory Hall; we need a purpose-built facility and other programs to help people at risk
- Ties with prior recommendation for non-profit grants to address needs
- Need to take advantage of lack of traffic; use strike teams to identify and assist people
- Who is aggregating information and actions
- Need to improve coordination between CBJ, Homelessness Coalition, other organizations
- Need to address immediate issues and develop a 5-year plan
- A campus approach or systems approach for long-term solutions
- Warming center and campground are not enough
- Anchorage is looking at converting four sites to housing
- CARES Act funding can be used to acquire real property

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Thomas, Ms. Peters, and Mr. Forst will pursue additional fact-finding on the homelessness issue to bring before the Task Force.

Education and Childcare

- Really want to see schools open, with kids in schools
- School district plan is expected to have three scenarios for different COVID-19 levels in the community
- Broad COVID-19 testing is critical to allowing the economy to function
- Need to weight safety factors; infection rate is low both in community and for kids
- We should anticipate changes to the schedule while we are waiting to get a vaccine
- Childcare is the single most important issue
- We need to develop programs for the 50% who will not be in school
- Facilitate a safety net that allows both parents to resume working
- School guidance and education delivery is evolving
- Need to join the initiative and understand gaps--including teens
- Invite school district to address the Task Force
- Examine actions in other communities

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Botelho, Ms. Martinson, and Mr. Koelsch will pursue additional fact-finding on the education and childcare issue to bring before the Task Force.

Workforce Development and Training

- How can we attract remote workers
- What are training needs for recovery and for the future
- Retaining UAS is a major aspect of workforce development
    - Regents are forming a committee to examine options
- Employment is a priority of Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
    - Vocational Training Resource Center is expanding distance delivery
    - Considering a construction academy
- FOLLOW-UP: Theresa, Laura, and Susan

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Belton, Ms. Martinson, and Ms. Bell will pursue additional fact-finding on the workforce development and training issue to bring before the Task Force.

Other Discussion

- Has a gap analysis been done to identify business opportunities
- UAS was positioned to address training needs in medical services
- There was an effort to increase value added/light manufacturing
- Communications/broadband support other initiatives
- What are the industry-specific needs
    - JEDC, SE Conf, McDowell Group tracking data and business surveys
- Expanding our federal research capacity was a JEDC initiative
    - Ted Stevens marine Research Institute, USFS Lab, NOAA examples

- US Coast Guard is a huge aspect of our community in terms of service delivery, payroll, and volunteers
    - UAS training program was developed for USCG needs
- Unemployment is profound and growing

Resume Action Items from June 25 Task Force Meeting

The Juneau ArtWorks Program proposal was reconsidered for recommendation to the Assembly. Ms. Thomas would like to see strong language in an ordinance tying this program to the COVID-19 business interruption clause.

- Artists have seen a year-over-year loss of income due to COVID-19
- Program could mirror the panel process for art review currently in place for other CBJ grants
- CCTHITA is implementing a similar program for their Certified Tribal Artist program
- Art program could be expanded to teach children who are at home during the school year

MOTION: by Ms. Bell to move the 2020 Juneau ArtWorks Program to the Assembly for consideration at the $500 thousand funding level. Ms. Martinson seconded the motion.

Hearing no objections, the motion passed.

Adjournment

The July 2 Economic Stabilization Task Force meeting is canceled, and meetings will resume on July 9. At 1:55 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.