

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, July 21, 2020

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) For the past several months, focus has been almost entirely on COVID-19. New Jersey is in a good place now in containing the virus.
- b) NJ Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is preparing to implement a rental assistance program and the NJ Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA) is preparing to develop a small landlord assistance program.
- c) New Jersey is now a national leader thanks to leadership of Governor Murphy and NJ Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli. New Jersey is among less than a handful of states on track to tame COVID-19, according to CovidActNow.org, which tracks each state in four key areas: infection rate, test positivity rate, hospital capacity and contact tracing ability. Covid Exit Strategy, a national group of experienced public health and crisis experts, also puts New Jersey among the very few states that are trending better with the virus.
- d) COVID-19 testing is important; will continue with testing in Atlantic City. City officials and DCA Assistant Commissioner Kim Holmes will teleconference with Health Commissioner Persichilli to see if more COVID testing can come to Atlantic City.
- e) The state's low positivity rate and low rate of transmission is because of the large majority of New Jersey residents who are following the rules and doing their best to not spread the virus.
- f) The downside of this is business, for a time, shut down are the state, including Atlantic City. We needed to sustain lives and we paid a cost for that. Now it's time to focus on getting back in the groove with business especially since Atlantic County has sustained the highest economic hit in the state and Atlantic City is the city with the highest unemployment in the state.
- g) Believes that as the summer goes on, there will be an increase in tourism because New Jersey residents can't travel to many other places because of COVID-19 restrictions and because many prefer to take small trips right now due to the pandemic.
- h) Examining the weekly win reports of casino properties and those properties are taking a hit; although sports betting and Internet gaming have helped a little bit.
- i) Application period for DCA's COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program was earlier this month. The application was online. If people didn't have Internet access, DCA took applications over the phone. The application period closed on Friday, July 17 and DCA took more than 60,000 applications.
- j) NJHMFA is soon launching a small landlord assistance program. The New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA) is also working on a similar assistance initiative. The NJ Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) is expanding its microbusiness loan program to assist New Jersey small businesses, many of which are facing business interruption as a result of COVID-19. The expanded program is providing financing up to \$50,000 for micro

businesses and nonprofits with ten or fewer employees and no greater than \$1.5 million in annual revenues.

- k) May have heard about the Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group that first met on July 14. The group is approximately 41 members and includes officials from the City of Atlantic City, Atlantic County, and DCA, as well as representatives from businesses, educational and health institutions, faith-based communities, civic associations, labor, casino properties, arts and cultural organizations, legislators, public housing, state agencies, and community groups.
- l) Working group will use subcommittees. This approach will allow members to utilize their areas of expertise by breaking down into smaller, action-oriented subgroups to tackle issues to help Atlantic City. Subcommittees include economic diversification, workforce development, public health, community outreach, and community wellness.
- m) Wants focus on homelessness in Atlantic City and getting people out of homelessness. In order to make the city a tourist destination, need to focus on removing those barriers that are holding the city back. For example, need to change the aesthetics of Atlantic Avenue and Pacific Avenue.
- n) Thanks Matt Doherty, executive director of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) and Chamber of Commerce of South Jersey President Christina Renna for co-chairing the working group.
- o) Do not want paralysis of analysis; want the working group to do tangible concrete things that have results. Anticipates the group will carry out this work for several months.
- p) During the first meeting of the working group, there was a presentation by McKinsey & Company, which is helping the State respond to COVID-19.
- q) The McKinsey data shows that the economic challenges are poignant in Atlantic County due to the concentration of leisure and hospitality sectors. Leisure and hospitality accounts for 32% of the economy in Atlantic County compared to 9% in New Jersey as a whole. Atlantic City is the third most vulnerable economy amongst US metro areas due to COVID-19. For comparison, 35% of jobs are at risk in New Jersey due to COVID-19 while 49% of jobs are at risk in Atlantic County due to COVID-19.
- r) Historically New Jersey tourism has been resilient after a crisis, but COVID-19 is a unique experience in that Atlantic City entered the pandemic with greater economic challenges and has struggled to recover as quickly as the state as a whole. So far, Atlantic County's low-income workers in the restaurant, hotel, and retail industries have not seen the summer rebound experienced in neighboring Ocean County.
- s) The South New Jersey Economic review from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis estimates that Atlantic City and Ocean City could lose between \$2 billion and \$5 billion in real GDP due to tourism industry losses.
- t) Can see why need to stop community spread of COVID-19 because economy in region is dependent on leisure and tourism.
- u) On June 30, the Governor signed a short-term \$7.7 billion budget for July, August and September. The Governor will submit his next budget plan to the State Legislature by August 25. It will cover spending between October 1 and June 30, 2021 – the remaining nine months of fiscal year 2021.

- v) State Legislature is talking about having budget meetings and budget testimony. Once the proposed budget is submitted to the Legislature, the Governor can't change it, but he can line item veto it.
- w) State Legislature passed legislation giving the State flexibility to borrow up to \$9.9 billion in essential funds. Governor Murphy signed the legislation into law last week. A partisan lawsuit has been filed against the bonding; the lawsuit will be heard by the New Jersey Supreme Court on August 5.
- x) These are unprecedented times, which is why the Atlantic City Executive Council is needed now more than ever; need the partnerships that have been created on this council over the last 21 months to strengthen because working together is what will get us through to the other side of this crisis.
- y) Steve Perskie, advisor to Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small, asked about when casinos will open. Lt. Governor Oliver said an announcement will happen very soon.
- z) Dr. Barbara Gaba, president of Atlantic Cape Community College, asked about education in the fall. Lt. Governor Oliver said it will likely be a mix of in person and virtual learning.
- aa) Bert Lopez, president of the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, asked if DCA would extend the application period for the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program or if there will be a second round. Lt. Governor Oliver said the potential exists to extend the program; believes Congress will come to a consensus on next round of federal COVID-19 assistance and thinks next round will include mortgage and rental assistance.

2) REMARKS FROM ATLANTIC CITY INITIATIVES PROJECT OFFICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR INDIA STILL

- a) The Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) continues to build relationships.
- b) First quarter 2020 report is complete; will be distributing report to Atlantic City Executive Council later today.
- c) She and Elijah Langford, community outreach coordinator for ACIPO, are working with the Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group.

3) ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE FROM MAYOR MARTY SMALL

- a) State approved the City of Atlantic City's return to work plan. The City is putting the finishing touches on protective devices for employees; city employees will be returning to work soon.
- b) City trying to upgrade its fleet of police vehicles.
- c) Shares Lt. Governor Oliver's thoughts on Atlantic and Pacific avenues; talked about his program from earlier this year to revitalize these main streets and cut down on crime there; City is starting that up again since police officers are back on their normal schedule.
- d) Hot meals for seniors program will be extended for another month. Reached out to Tom Hannon, executive director of the Atlantic City Housing Authority, and he agreed to help the City with the hot meals program; will approve \$30,000 to the City for the feeding program.
- e) COVID-19 testing is available two days a week at the Showboat parking lot. The City is negotiating with the vendor doing the testing. When more information becomes available

about testing, the City will announce it. Would be irresponsible at this point to let testing sites go; the City can't take its foot off the gas especially with school starting up soon.

- f) Atlantic City is asking for more money to help with COVID-19 response and is talking with Senator Cory Booker.
- g) The City wants to be prepared since health experts say fall and winter will be worse for the virus.
- h) Important CRDA meeting today where year-round water park will be discussed. Mayor supports the project because it would be a family-friendly venue and provide jobs; will have Dave and Busters arcade feel in addition to water park and a retractable roof. We want cranes in the sky and shovels in the ground.
- i) Troubling times but believe the Atlantic City Executive Council and the new working group will help the city get through the pandemic and economic crisis.
- j) Getting so much support from the State and thankful for that.

4) INTRODUCTION OF DR. WILSON WASHINGTON, DIRECTOR OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES AND DR. KIFLE MIHRETE, HEALTH OFFICER: ATLANTIC CITY BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR ANTHONY SWAN

- a) Two people have joined City's health department: Dr. Wilson Washington and Dr. Kifle Mihrete.
- b) Both bring wealth of knowledge to Atlantic City.
- c) City of Atlantic City's return to work plan has been approved by State and City is moving to implement the plan; thanks CRDA for helping get plexiglass shields installed; waiting for thermometers, they are on back order; also working to control the number of people who come into City Hall.

5) YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SUMMER EMPLOYMENT: ELIJAH LANGFORD

- a) Vision 2000 program (collaboration of Joe Jingoli of Hard Rock Atlantic City and Revered Days of Second Baptist Church) has hired 200 city youth even in these difficult times. Youth officially began work last week, working beautify the city. Monday through Thursday will work and on Friday will attend workshops about college readiness, etc.
- b) Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City – approximately 150 youth are back at the club ages 6 to 18; participating in sports, fitness, arts and crafts, STEM, music, educational activities; for older kids they have activities to give them an idea about the different professions out there.
- c) August 5th will meet with the Atlantic County prosecutor, city officials and state officials to discuss ideas to move programs forward for youth.

6) GENERAL DISCUSSION

- a) Bert Lopez, president of the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, talked about the Mi Gente community emergency fund; have close to \$5,000 in the fund to help people who

have nowhere else to turn; the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County puts out information about food distributions all the time, encouraged Executive Council members to continue to send him information about food distribution events.

- b) Elizabeth Terenik, a senior project manager at Atlantic City Development Corporation and a leader of the Chelsea Economic Development Corp, said the Chelsea Economic Development Corp submitted the Chelsea plan to DCA for the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC) program; the plan focuses a great deal on youth development and neighborhood beautification and aligns with the Atlantic City Transition Report.
- c) Dr. Barbara Gaba, president of Atlantic Cape Community College, said ACCC will open for the fall semester; most of classes will be remote, some will be face-to-face classes. Since the Atlantic County area has been so hard hit by the economic crisis, the college will play an important role in developing higher level job skills.
- d) Donna Danielson, general manager of Tanger Outlets, said about 90 percent of the Outlets is open now.
- e) Joyce Hagen, executive director of the Atlantic City Arts Foundation, said the foundation is doing an online version of 48 Blocks since it can't do a physical, in-person version. It hopes to create a sense of community via online programming; really amazing what the creative community has come up with.
- f) Stephanie Koch, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City, is working closely with Atlantic City teachers; working to make sure kids are safe and well fed during this time, moving carefully and taking care to follow virus protocols, have AtlantiCare on speed dial should questions or concerns arise.
- g) Diane Sterner of New Jersey Community Capital said the organization is continuing to work with the Venice Park Civic Association on its revitalization plan; rehabbing housing there for workforce housing. Also, it has about 12 properties throughout the city that will begin to renovate and rehab. It is hoping to be able to contribute to several neighborhoods in the coming months.