

ATLANTIC CITY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Tuesday, August 18, 2020

Zoom Conference Call

1) REMARKS FROM DCA ACTING CHIEF OF STAFF AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER KIM HOLMES ON BEHALF OF LT. GOVERNOR SHEILA OLIVER

- a) New Jersey is continuing to successfully control the spread of COVID-19, which is very good news.
- b) This is thanks to the actions of you, your neighbors, and fellow New Jerseyans who have been heeding the call for physical distancing, face masks, hand washing, and staying home when we are sick.
- c) Taking personal responsibility is paramount. We must all be our sisters' and brothers' keepers and accept responsibility for the welfare of our fellow citizens if we are to tame this virus, especially since there isn't yet a vaccine or proven therapeutic. Taking personal responsibility includes getting tested for COVID if we show symptoms of the virus or come into contact with someone who has the virus.
- d) The City of Atlantic City has had COVID testing sites since early spring and should be applauded for standing up testing sites so early.
- e) The City's COVID testing will end on August 25th for the time being. However, the NJ Department of Health will begin conducting testing in Atlantic City. They will start with senior citizens residing in selected locations and will later expand testing to include all seniors so that this vulnerable population is served.
- f) Since COVID-19 emerged, we've learned some things about the virus – that it's safer to be outdoors instead of inside and that limiting the number of people indoors is critical. As a result, indoor dining in New Jersey is not allowed. The City of Atlantic City is adapting to this reality.
- g) Local business owners have been pleased with how fast the City has acted on applications to either begin or expand outdoor dining. Because outdoor dining has so significantly increased in Atlantic City, the State approved the City to hire about 30 seasonal public works employees who are helping to keep up with trash receptacles and keep the city clean.
- h) While outdoor dining and allowing businesses to reopen to at least partial capacity helps bring in some money, there is still considerable economic pain for business owners and their employees.
- i) For this reason, the State has set up a series of small business recovery programs.
- j) The New Jersey Redevelopment Authority (NJRA), which is affiliated with DCA, is administering the Small Business Lease Emergency Assistance Grant Program. The program began accepting applications on August 10 and will help subsidize small business lease payments with up to \$10,000 of grant assistance in NJRA's 64 target municipalities, which include Atlantic City.
- k) There is also the Small Landlord Emergency Grant Program, which will soon be available to assist small landlords and their tenants.

- l) The program, which is being run by the New Jersey Housing and Mortgage Finance Agency (NJHMFA), will reimburse small landlords for COVID-19-related decreases in rent revenue for the four-month period between April and July 2020. Landlords who receive assistance must pass along benefits to their tenants by forgiving outstanding back rent and late fees accumulated during this period.
- m) The grant funding is open to landlords of residential properties with 3 to 10 rental units. Applications must be submitted between 9 a.m. on August 19 (TOMORROW) to 1 p.m. on August 26 to be considered.
- n) Additionally, small businesses are being helped by the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) through its Micro Business Loan Program, which was expanded to provide financing up to \$50,000 for small businesses and nonprofits with ten or fewer employees and no greater than \$1.5 million in annual revenues.
- o) I encourage all of you to help get the word out about these programs so that people know about them. If you have any questions about the programs, please let us know and we'll be sure to connect you with the information you need.
- p) I also urge you to let your constituencies know that the residential eviction moratorium remains in effect in New Jersey until November 2, 2020.
- q) No one may be removed from their home for inability to pay their rent or their mortgage during the COVID-19 public health emergency under an Executive Order signed by Governor Murphy.
- r) For renters, it means they cannot be removed or locked out from their home as a result of an eviction proceeding, with rare exceptions for cases such as when a renter is endangering others.
- s) For homeowners, it means they cannot be removed from their home as a result of a foreclosure proceeding even if a final judgment of foreclosure has been entered and a sheriff's sale of their property has taken place.
- t) Both renters and homeowners can get help with their housing situation during this time by visiting njhousing.gov/foreclosure for a list of housing counselors by county or by calling 1-800-NJ-HOUSE.
- u) Lastly, the Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group continues to meet as a whole and in subcommittees to examine the post-COVID-19 recovery of Atlantic City, including continued efforts for citywide economic diversification, workforce development, and improved public health.
- v) The subcommittees have identified the challenges Atlantic City faces and will now zero in on short-term goals and long-term goals.
- w) The health and wellness subcommittee of the working group met with staff in the Governor's Office. They are so impressed with the work the subcommittee and larger working group are doing.
- x) We look forward to the concrete initiatives that result from this group and their collective efforts.

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

- a) At the March 11th social services summit, one of the big takeaways from the meeting was the social services agencies appreciated getting together to talk about issues they face. They want to continue meeting quarterly.
- b) August 26 is the next social services summit; will introduce attendees to Dr. Wilson Washington, the City of Atlantic City's new health director, and Dr. Kifle Mihrete, the City's full-time health officer.
- c) NJ Stem Pathways Network is forming an Atlantic City cohort; looking to include stakeholders such as Ørsted, South Jersey Industries, Atlantic Cape Community College (ACCC), Atlantic City school district, Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City, AtlantiCare, and Atlantic City Electric.
- d) The goal of the network is to create a pipeline for local students into STEM industries.
- e) The Atlantic City Initiatives Project Office (ACIPO) is working to create a community asset map of Atlantic City to help with STEM projects. ACIPO is collaborating with DCA's Office of Local Planning Services to create the asset map.
- f) Code for America is an organization that tries to reimagine ways people can access government services. Sept. 12th is a day of action for civic-minded hacking. In Atlantic City, focus is on food insecurity; want to see if there is a better way of getting information to the public about food distributions and food banks because right now relying on social media, flyers and word of mouth.

3) ATLANTIC CITY BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR ANTHONY SWAN

- a) City is moving forward and trying to address issues as they come up. For example, there are approximately 80 short-term rentals that are licensed to operate in city; however, there are more like 800 operating in the city. Atlantic City City Council will be dealing with this on their next meeting agenda.
- b) City Hall will be reopening very shortly. Public Safety building will be opening first because have Plexiglass shielding in place.
- c) Atlantic City schools will be virtual to start the school year.

4) YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SUMMER EMPLOYMENT: ELIJAH LANGFORD

- a) Meeting on August 5 in Mayor Small's office that was attended by DCA Assistant Commissioner Kim Holmes, ACIPO, the Atlantic County prosecutor, and faith-based leaders, among others.
- b) Mayor Small presented at the meeting a youth program that he wants to implement soon.
- c) Mental health among youth of color; understand that we must do a better job of bringing these services to the community rather than young people going to seek the services on their own. Youth believe its frowned upon to discuss mental health and therefore don't seek out mental health services.
- d) Invited Stephanie Koch, CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Atlantic City, to speak about the organization's programming. Ms. Koch reported the following:
 - i. Last week of summer camp for youth 6-18 years old.

- ii. Conducted summer camp with extreme caution – proper hygiene, increased cleaning services, vacations prohibited during camp, have isolation rooms if kids feel sick, AtlantiCare experts a phone call away.
 - iii. The Boys and Girls Club’s Chelsea Club can enroll up to 75 children this fall.
 - iv. 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program will be expanded to Chelsea Club. The program helps with homework, etc.
 - v. Boys and Girls Club partnered with MudGirls to create a mural. Also partnered with the Leadership Studio. All of the club kids loved it and hope it returns in the fall.
 - vi. At Chelsea Club, building a STEAM lab; construction going on right now and hoping to do a soft opening at the end of September or early fall.
 - vii. Teens learning about graphics and getting Adobe certified; will be able to help local small businesses with graphic work.
 - viii. Looking to extend the STEAM training beyond teens and open it to adults; talking with casinos and other groups about this. Recognize that immigrants in the community have higher education degrees from their home countries; want to try to get them certified for those skills in the U.S.
 - ix. ACCC will be onsite once a week to move forward with cooking and hospitality training track.
 - x. Partnership with Merck pharmaceuticals to get youth exposed and potentially interested in the industry and health-related fields; some kids got certified in CPR through this program.
 - xi. All staff will get training next week on COVID-19, cleaning, and mental health for children.
 - xii. Club will open for full-day services as of September 8; will continue to open with cleaning; taking this day-by-day; think that extra education and cultural instruction is key at this time
- e) Rob Lee, vice president of community relations and governmental affairs for Hard Rock Hotel and Casino Atlantic City, spoke on behalf of Joe Jingoli, co-owner of Hard Rock, about the Vision 2000 summer employment program for at-risk youth in the city.
- i. Summer program goal was to identify 200 young men and women; right now at 189 youth.
 - ii. Cleaning up parks and abandoned lots, picking up trash, cutting grass, some landscaping.
 - iii. Mr. Jingoli wants to keep this ongoing and doing it on weekends during the school year; maybe become part of a team that helps the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) clean up the boardwalk.
 - iv. Summer program will end August 28 and hope to do a barbeque for the youth who participated.
 - v. If were to continue the program into the school year, it would start the middle of September.
 - vi. Youth work 8 am to 1 pm Monday through Thursday. On Friday, have workshops 8 am to 12 noon on financial literacy, goal setting, etc.
 - vii. Making sure kids have masks, gloves, appropriately social distancing.

5) CHOICE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT APPLICATION: THOMAS HANNON

- a) Thomas Hannon, executive director of the Atlantic City Housing Authority, reported that the Housing Authority submitted a Choice Neighborhood application to HUD.
- b) The application is for the redevelopment of Stanley Holmes Village and surrounding neighborhood.
- c) The first part of the application is for a planning grant to develop a neighborhood transformation plan. The Michaels Organization is the co-developer with the Housing Authority on this initiative.
- d) First component of the plan is housing. Next component is people; looking at the residents. Final component is the neighborhood and improving the quality of life in and around the neighborhood.
- e) The Housing Authority is expected to collect support letters from stakeholders in the neighborhood and city. Mr. Hannon will send support letters to ACIPO Deputy Director India Still so that she can distribute them to Atlantic City Executive Council members for review and signature.
- f) The Midtown Neighborhood Advisory Committee, of which Mr. Hannon is a member, is doing something similar with a neighborhood plan for that section of the city. AtlantiCare is leading that effort.
- g) The Stanley Holmes Village redevelopment and Midtown Neighborhood committee will cover 24 of the 48 blocks of the city.

6) ATLANTIC CITY UPDATE FROM MAYOR MARTY SMALL

- a) Tomorrow is the final day of the hot meals for seniors feeding program that the City of Atlantic City began during the COVID-19 quarantine. He thanked CRDA for funding the program.
- b) Next Tuesday is the final day of City-funded COVID-19 testing sites.
- c) City is in the final stage of fixing curfew sirens on the beach.
- d) City is moving forward with next cohort City directors and supervisors to enroll in the Certified Public Manager Training educational program offered by Rutgers. The program will begin in October.
- e) The City is looking into expanding the Neighborhood Coordination Officers program, a community policing unit in the city; looking forward to CRDA support.
- f) City wants to build out youth recreation.
- g) Reinstated the park and walk program for police officers on Atlantic and Pacific avenues. Police are walking these avenues until 12 midnight; talking about adjusting the hours of businesses to make it easier on police.
- h) Steve Young, a local civil rights activist, is planning another protest against police brutality on Labor Day weekend. City is working to make sure businesses are not disturbed. Mr. Young wants to paint Black Lives Matter on the boardwalk outside of Boardwalk Hall; city is on top of it.

- i) Mayor Small was on the Good Morning America 3 (GMA 3) television program in early August to represent the city.
- j) Snoop Dog, a rapper, entrepreneur and investor, has indicated he's interested in investing in Atlantic City real estate. He is scheduled to visit the city in October or November; will take him on tour of properties available. If Snoop Dog invests, can lead to other investors.

7) GENERAL DISCUSSION

- a) Dr. Rob Hargrove, president of the Fellowship of Churches of Atlantic City and Vicinity, informed the Executive Council about a statewide initiative to get people to participate in the U.S. Census. The local NAACP branch in Atlantic City and the Fellowship of Churches are hosting a census initiative Sept. 13 at Brown's Park in Atlantic City. Local organizations are trying to get participation numbers up because in certain parts of Atlantic County census participation is low.
- b) Michael Chait, president of the Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, said he is not sure that many businesses in the restaurant and food and beverage industry will survive throughout fall and winter if the coronavirus continues.
- c) Dr. Wilson Washington, health director of the City of Atlantic City, said much needs to be done with public health in the city, but it can't be accomplished without the support of stakeholders like federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), nonprofits, private groups. He said he's met with many of these stakeholders and is impressed with their commitment to the city. He said City-funded COVID testing will end, but the state Department of Health will step up to test seniors at senior high-rise buildings and seniors who have transportation issues. He reported AtlantiCare will help out as well since it has resources available. The City health department is looking to better collaborate with social services so can find better way to coordinate services for things like needle exchange and mental health, including the youth.
- d) Steve Callender, president of the Casino Association of New Jersey, said if there is no indoor dining by October, the industry will be in trouble. He said the Murphy Administration needs to look at how well the casinos have done and give businesses an opportunity to get more back to normal
- e) Rose Farias, deputy director of CRDA, said CRDA continues to support and actively participate in efforts to respond to and recover from COVID-19. She said from March to the present time CRDA has supported 11 new initiatives around food distribution and youth initiatives. Right now the total is \$1.75 million in CRDA funding for COVID initiatives. She said the agency will continue to support key community stakeholders throughout Atlantic City as the pandemic phases into different needs. She said initially it's been food distribution and it might turn into job skills development and youth development.
- f) Carol Ruffo of the Atlantic City civic associations said it's been a challenge to keep in touch with members during the pandemic. She expressed concern about the Labor Day protest coming up in Atlantic City. She said no one should be able to paint anything on the boardwalk because of the historical nature of the boardwalk.
- g) Liz Terenik of ACDEVCO and Chelsea Economic Development Corp talked about the empanada challenge that is meant to help restaurants in the city's Chelsea neighborhood.

The initiative has brought so many more customers into restaurants; some of the restaurants saw sales exceed this time last year.

- h) Bert Lopez of Atlantic City Electric talked about Tropical Storm Isaias and power outages. He said the push toward smart meters will allow remote metering and help electric utilities see who is out of power more quickly. Mr. Lopez, who also leads the Hispanic Association of Atlantic County, said there won't be a Latino Festival in Atlantic City this year due to COVID.
- i) Dr. Barbara Gabba, president of ACCC, said the college will open for fall semester. Most of the college classes will be online. The college still has a tuition assistance program. Students need computer access and wifi access; working with Comcast to get this done. ACCC is using CARES Act funding to help students impacted by COVID, i.e. transportation, childcare.
- j) Brian Jackson on behalf of Stockton University said the school is ready for students to come back in fall to do virtual and in-person learning. Students will begin returning around August 29.
- k) DCA Assistant Commissioner Kim Holmes said some city and state officials met with Melonie Johnson, CEO of Borgata. First Lady Tammy Murphy will participate in the next Atlantic City Restart and Recovery Working Group meeting in September.
- l) DCA Deputy Commissioner Rob Long said there is a lot that the City needs to do; imagine what job would be like if Executive Council members weren't all taking together; confident that will see better things in Atlantic City in the future.