



ROANOKE

ROANOKE CITY COUNCIL COVID-19 COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

May, 2020

During May of 2020, members of Roanoke City Council held Community Conversations virtually with nearly 100 stakeholders in the City of Roanoke to talk about the effects that COVID19 has had on them. The conversations focused on the following areas: Large Business/Organizations, Small Business, Faith Based Organizations, Non-Profits/Human Services, Hospitality/Entertainment, Medical/Healthcare and Arts/Culture.

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Large Business/Organizations 5/13/2020 9am

Attendees

- Mayor Lea
- Bob Cowell – City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury – Community Engagement Coordinator
- Aisha Johnson – Economic Development Specialist
- Rob Ledger – Economic Development Director
- William Farrell – Berglund Auto
- Valerie Brown – WRABA
- Tina Workman – DRI
- Bob Wills – CFO Branch Engineering/Construction
- Amanda Allen/Alison McGee – Kroger Mid-Atlantic
- Vance Overstreet – Northwest Hardware
- Mike Hamlar – Hamlar-Curtis Funeral Home
- Jeff Meadows – Mast General Store
- Cameron Johnson – Magic City Ford
- Doug Mondy – Valley View Mall

Mayor Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 9:05 am

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Berglund Auto – Had to balance both creating a safe work place with a safe customer experience. Initially a challenge with securing PPE. Communication with employees, management, and customers has been key. Sales off about 50% but has increased with time to where service and sales are now off only about 10%-15%. Reopening is a bit stricter than previous (such as wearing of masks) requirements so will now have to adapt – masks, occupancy, etc. are examples. Working to meet the customer where they want to be met. Sales are still increasing even though service slightly off. Appears the economy remains strong but not sure how much of this may be driven by special deals or government supports.

WRABA – Small businesses impacted by the abruptness of the closure. Communication has been key with businesses to allow them to share what steps they are taking to keep their employees and customers safe. They want to open and maintain compliance with guidelines so people feel safe. They have fear of how they can safely reopen – this has prompted some to remain open only to pick-up in the first phases. Early on focus was on securing federal funding assistance – WRABA assisted in this.

DRI – Large events cancelled which impacted businesses early on – have struggled moving past that immediate stop impact. Small businesses are becoming even more creative but some have just closed and will stay so through the first phase. Restaurants mainly have moved to pick-up and curbside – some will open further in first phase. High level of fear and anxiety as they work through trying to find the

safest way to reopen/serve their customers and protect their staff. Communication has been key. Assisting in marketing of downtown and businesses. Use of websites and social media along with gift cards to keep promoting the area.

Northwest Hardware – They have remained open due to being classified as an essential business – enabled them to keep pace with last year’s sales but has increased their safety obligations for staff and customers. Have practiced safety guidelines from the beginning which has altered their approach but it seems to be working. They have seen some business increase due to fear of interacting with crowds in Lowes and Home Depot. They have been able to source materials others have struggled with (toilet paper, gloves, cleaners, etc.). They have lost a number of employees who did not feel safe working in current environment.

Branch Group – They picked up very early work preparing Carilion Clinic to accommodate increase in cases – this provided them with a bit of lead time to prepare their organization. They have done a great deal of telework. Work continues on engineering and construction without much interruption except in those instances when a job site was temporarily stopped for testing. Some work that was anticipated has not started. New work (bidding) is delayed – this will likely affect industry in 12-18 months. Field work continued which created some conflict between field workers and those that were working remotely. This has required an increase in communications and some management adaptations. Have seen some supply issues for product. Beginning to prepare for more complete recovery and how they return people to the office. Probably more communication going on (video, phone, etc.) but less connection. Also wondering how their offices will be affected as more people work remotely and this causes them to wonder how will the demand for office space be impacted (they build offices). Spending time trying to figure out what will change and how. Bob Wills’ experience in Texas is that pent-up demand is high and when reopening occurs it can overwhelm quickly.

Hamlar – State-sponsored projects are slowing which is introducing uncertainty. On the funeral home part of the business – they are classified as essential (trying to get classification as first-responder – they have has positive cases among their workforce). Focus on keeping his workforce safe. Guidance in his industry is conflicting leading to challenges. Questions about their ability to execute on expansion plans due to the financial uncertainty. Expresses concerns about being able to safely open to larger crowds.

Mast General Store – 550 employees a month ago – all stores are closed which has led to large furloughs – beginning to reopen but don’t want to be overwhelmed by pent-up demand. Were within days of opening in Roanoke but were unable to do so. 30-40 employees locally hired but then furloughed. They remain optimistic about future but will proceed slowly. Opening stores incrementally to learn along the way what works and what may need to change.

Kroger – As essential business they had a dramatic increase in business because of other business closures. Focus has been on contactless shopping which was in high demand. Also had to make changes in stores and operations to ensure safety of customers and employees. High volume of hiring to meet demand, many have come from impacted industries. Kroger has assembled a blueprint for reopening that shares the experiences they have seen during their time they have been opened.

Magic City Ford – Didn’t realize at first they were deemed essential. Practiced social distancing but wearing of facemasks were optional. Had to be innovative and take cars to the customers when getting repairs. They did sell 200 cars in April, which was unbelievable, but overall sales have been down about

25-30%. Magic City Ford has not had to lay off any full time staff. They donated 200 free oil changes to nurses at Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and donated 10 meals along with PPE.

Valley View Mall – The Mall was closed from March 25-May 15. Stores didn't want to pay rent during this time and with no anchor stores in place open it made it tough to attract people to the mall.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Kroger – Ensuring safety and making sure customers and staff feel safe – they have taken steps to change operations and physical arrangements to support. Have to keep this going for an unknown period. The high number of new employees and getting them oriented and trained has been a challenge and will continue to be so.

Hamlar – Access to labor and continued funding for projects. At funeral home – how to manage expectations against safety guidelines (for example limiting the number of people in attendance).

Branch – Reopening the office – determining who comes in when and how to keep them safe – physical, operational and cleaning changes/protocols. Staff groups are working through this. Concerns with workforce and how they will balance if schools do not reopen. On the construction side – change orders will take longer due to closures and budget slowdowns – especially on state-projects. Slow process to get back up to speed.

Berglund Auto – The challenge of managing non-essential business against essential within same operation. Making certain everyone stays safe and feels safe is key. Need to keep this going. Need to ensure health protocol is adhered to by staff interacting with one another as they do when interacting with customers. Bringing back furloughed employees and getting them up to speed on the new protocols. Ability to replace inventory – supply concerns. This is true with new vehicles as well as parts. Auctions not working so difficult moving used autos which make valuation challenging. Likely have not seen full economic impact and some concern associated with what that might mean. As other businesses slow not sure how they will be impacted. Focus is on being flexible with their employees and communicate internally and externally as much as practical.

Northwest Hardware – Keeping employees and customers safe – they have been adapting to this through entire response. Difficult to keep this going for a long period of time consistently. Adapting to changes in customer preferences – for example delivery to customers – what can they sustain, what should they expand, etc. Key is adaptation and urgency to changes. Provided bonus to employees to help sustain commitment for their risk.

Mast General Store – Employee and customer safety. Listening to customers to determine best way to safely meet their needs. Make certain to communicate their safety practices. Looking forward to being able to open – hope to return to some new normal.

Magic City Ford – New customers will take a different approach – may start driving to homes to do businesses. There is no work in the body shop because people are staying home and not driving their cars.

Valley View Mall – There will be a challenge to get manpower and to keep things clean within the mall.

DRI – Meeting consumer expectations. Helping businesses evolve toward new normal and help communicate with customer base. Focus on employee and customer safety. Concerns about rehiring/hiring staff and helping them feel safe. Uncertainty associated with large events and how does that impact success of downtown businesses.

WRABA – Supporting businesses as they begin to figure out how to reopen. Hope to continue positive support of local businesses. Greatest concerns are with sustaining restaurants and how they keep safe – how do they afford to meet new requirements. Ability to host future events to bring traffic to the area to support businesses.

Roanoke Economic Development – Propose a series of plans for each industry sector – how to plan for a quick recovery/pent-up demand and a slower recovery and a very long recovery and finally plan for a resurgence of the virus – how will each of these scenarios impact the business and how best to prepare for each of these? Roanoke ED will continue to be a source of information and support – please check website.

Mayor closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting?

Hamlar asked the question about PPE and the ability to secure. Northwest hardware has ample supply of masks, gloves, sanitizer, cleaning products, etc. Vance can be reached at: (540) 808-8058.

Berglund – recognizes there is more need in the community. How best to help. Bob pointed them to the local United Way. <https://www.uwrv.org/community-response-fund-covid-19/>

Economic Development wants you to remember 4 things:

1. There may be an onslaught of people that will be coming to your facility – how will you deal with this and how will you recover quickly?
2. Plan for a slower recovery and how will you manage that.
3. Plan for a very long recovery time should that happen.
4. Plan for a resurgence of COVID-19 and how will you handle? What does that mean for your financing – be conservative with your spending and imaginative with your borrowing & preparing.

Helpful links:

www.roanokeva.gov/covid19helpforbusiness

www.bizroanoke.com

www.roanokeva.gov/starcitystrong

trevor.shannon@roanokeva.gov (Roanoke Emergency Manager)

Tiffany.bradbury@roanokeva.gov (Community Engagement Manager)

Mayor closed at 10:20

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Faith Leaders 5/20/2020

Attendees

- Joe Cobb, Vice-Mayor
- Bob Cowell, City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Lee Clark, Rescue Mission
- Captain Russell Clay, Salvation Army
- Keith Farmer, Straight Street Youth Ministries
- James Stovall, Hermitage Roanoke
- Joanna Paysour, Trinity United Methodist (Kid Soar) and Cave Spring United Methodist
- Marie Muddiman, Family Promise
- Karen McNally, Presbyterian Community Center
- Rabbi Jama Purser, Beth Israel Synagogue
- Rev. Serenus Churn, High Street Baptist Church

Vice-Mayor Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 10:05

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Salvation Army – Worship services being held remotely and will continue to do so until completely clear. Helping feed homeless that are currently housed at a hotel. Most significant impact has been reliance on technology versus in-person interactions. Helping to define a new future for alternative ways people may be able to participate, even when they return to in-person activities.

Straight Street – Remote services, feeding teens once a week, helping others with providing food and services, focusing on human trafficking prevention efforts, small groups may begin in June back in the building with appropriate protocol, may be able to reopen building in July. Miss group gatherings face to face. Able to maintain consistency – maybe even build stronger bonds with the remaining family members who might not otherwise be at the facility. Missing the in-school presentations and the value those represent. Need to get back to human (and physical) interactions – for mental health reasons.

Hermitage Roanoke – Significant changes in their operations with numerous restrictions regarding visitors, group activities, etc., focusing on alternative activities for residents. Beginning to plan for reopening – minor steps beginning next week, including outdoor small group activities. Absence of contact and interaction – isolation have been the greatest challenge. Trying to keep therapies going. Mental well-being has been a challenge. Technology and creativity have been implemented to address.

Trinity United Methodist/Kid Soar/Cave Spring United Methodist – Adapted to ensure feeding of those in need and moved more activities online. Cautious about reopening and ensuring safety of participants. Approaching reopening very cautiously. Response to worship and studies have gone well. But miss the liturgical and spiritual activities (such as communion) and when will that return and how? Many miss the rituals which compounds the layers of isolation, mental impact, grief, etc. Responding to

the “sprint” was one thing but how do we address the “marathon” of long-term impacts –maintaining resiliency.

Family Promise – Closed shelter program (as churches not available), focusing on supporting former families with food, finances, etc. to keep people housed and safe. Biggest challenge has been closing the shelter program. Other challenges have been the isolation that homeless individuals and families are experiencing. Concerned with best and safest way to reopen.

Presbyterian Community Center – After school program closed, summer programs cancelled, waiting to hear about schools in the fall and they will adapt. Building closed to public but they are responding to requests for food and financial assistance via phone. Lack of access to children who are in high-risk environments is a challenge as they cannot offer access to safe services. Trying to ensure school and cleaning supplies are provided to families. Not able to make the impact they typically might. They have worked very closely with Feeding America – unable to rely on the grocery stores now due to their own challenges. Loss of personal interaction has been worrisome.

Rescue Mission – Revised operations and health screenings to protect population, expanded services (such as day services, to-go meals, etc.) No guests, staff or volunteers have contracted the Coronavirus. They have quarantined new arrivals since beginning – limited capacity would prefer to address with tests versus quarantines. Volunteer pool reduced some (due to health risks) which has strained there service model and personnel. Starting to determine best way to bring volunteers back into the organization safely. Beginning to pivot to what is next – how to expand dining services, how to return volunteers, etc. Resources have become available from state and federal programs allowing more options, but concerned with increase in evictions and what they may result in. Concerns with domestic violence and mental health. Not sure they can provide normal summer activities. How do they handle intake as new participants arrive.

Beth Israel– Facilities closed since March with services delivered online, serving food, addressing mental health issues, supporting other charitable organization in the community, etc. Prepared to offer even more assistance in the community. Reworking funerals and other “life-cycle” services. Not anticipating reopening any time soon. They will be using online services for High Holy Days for the first time. Lack of in-person spiritual interaction and the need to rely upon electronics have been some of the most significant challenges. Actually been able to include more participants but unable to perform some of their basic service activities due to the lack of physical gathering (bringing out the Torah for example)

High Street Baptist Church – Closed facilities in March, using online platforms for service delivery. Stopped food pantry early. Focus on keeping congregation connected, even if virtually. Beginning to think about reopening but no definitive plans at this point. Biggest challenge has been to maintain contact and “see” each other. Tithing and giving have been a challenge so they have created digital means to do – good response from congregation.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Rescue Mission – Concern with how to keep safety practices going. How will they adapt and change based on what schools do in the fall. Housing stability in current economic situation. As community returns to normal hope community remembers that the most vulnerable in our community are likely to

have it even harder than normal and the demand for social services are likely to increase. Especially as temporary safety nets put in place for virus are removed.

Trinity United Methodist– Congregational spread risk is the greatest challenge – the church is open but the building is closed – could use resources from authoritative source to provide to congregants why the building is closed (worship) even while other businesses etc. remain open. Begin to think of ways the church can connect with the community (outreach) even if they cannot assemble together.

High Street Baptist Church – How best to communicate with congregation about how and when to safely return. They have begun steps to prepare the church for return. Help convey why only half of the capacity is necessary, distancing, etc. How will they actually conduct their services in a safe and faithful way.

Beth Israel – Has been sharing data with why remaining closed has been important – same will be true when it is time to open and how. Sharing that type of data across community would be helpful. Access to cleaning supplies and knowledge about how to do it are needed. Access to PPE would be helpful. Ways to safely connect people to opportunities for them to help. Access to outdoor spaces where small-group worship could take place.

Presbyterian Community Center – Challenges with ability to safely conduct emergency services consistent with safe protocols. Ability to make physical changes in building to accommodate services. Would appreciate more public conversation/announcements about the need to where masks when out in the community – how the community can help make it through this. Increase in vandalism in areas which are increasing costs.

Family Promise – How to reopen shelter program within church buildings – is this possible? What will need to change? How to make volunteers comfortable returning – how to keep them safe and help others stay safe. How to overcome the “deniers” and avoid safety being compromised. City could help raise awareness of the significance of all this and how folks can volunteer safely.

Hermitage House – Greatest concern is how to keep employees safe and therefore keep their residents safe. Help provide and disseminate information about safe opening and being a safe community member.

Salvation Army – Not planning on opening soon due to the vulnerability of their congregants and members. Concerned with the ability to control community spread due to folks not taking seriously. Would benefit from information being disseminated more widely about how important to practice safely – would prefer to Over-prepare than under-prepare.

Straight Street – Will use great care with reopening but will move slowly, especially in light of the younger ages of the population they work with. Will keep groups small when they do open. Balance keeping everyone safe while maintaining existing relationships.

Vice-Mayor closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting. Vice-Mayor closed meeting at 11:25

www.roanokeva.gov/faith, www.roanokeva.gov/communityresources,
www.roanokeva.gov/starcitystrong, www.roanokeva.gov/coronavirus,

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Small Businesses 5/14/2020 Noon

Attendees

- Trish White-Boyd, Council Member
- Bob Cowell, City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury, Community Engagement Manager
- Aisha Johnson, Economic Development Specialist
- Marc Nelson, Economic Development Manager
- Amanda Campbell, Zee's Salon and Day Spa
- Laura Mason, Bang Hair Studio
- Stella Carpenter, Liberty Tax Service
- Gary Jarrell, Valley Boiler and Mechanical
- Diane Speaks, She's International Boutique

Council Member White-Boyd Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 12:05

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Zee's Salon – Complete closure that they were not ready for – biggest challenge has been to support their staff and being patient regarding reopening and securing supplies. Her business model uses paid employees versus other business models with other salons. This helped ease the employees securing their unemployment benefits.

Liberty Tax – Primary impact has been three additional months of payroll to carry that she had not budgeted for – she has had to provide extended hours compared to what she would normally do after tax filing deadline. Business has declined about 18% largely due to deadlines moving – she anticipates having the same number of filers in total. They have adapted by closing earlier than they would normally do during tax season and operating five days a week versus seven days a week. Limiting the number of clients to adhere to physical separation.

Bang Hair Studio – Self-employed within salon with exception of owner. Owners unemployment benefits are going toward paying the expenses that are accumulating even though revenues are declining. Cost of buying supplies has gone up significantly. When they reopen they will not be able to operate at full capacity which will continue to impact their revenues – 50%-75% revenues anticipated though expenses likely to remain near “normal”. Contemplating a business loan (through Federal programs) but concerned with ability to repay loan.

Diane – Normally anticipate after February business will increase – that did not occur. Very little business activity. Most employees are part-time – she continues to pay them to assist them. Business is essentially closed for business at this point. Overhead continues even though revenue has stopped.

Valley Boiler and Mechanical – Classified as an essential business due to the work they do for health care providers and industrial users. They have had to change their approach to business – assigned staff together and they stayed together – this permitted tracking and succession (avoided spread of virus). They had an employee with COVID – clinical diagnosis because they could not secure testing – this impacted two employees (self-isolation). Added complications due to their customer base (prisons, hospitals, etc.) now more complicated check-in practices. Scaled back their work-week but their demand has been increasing so they will need to change/expand. Some issues with securing payments due to cash flow issues with customers – concern with ability to collect. A bit of concern about the future as customers continue to struggle with cash flow.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Valley Boiler and Mechanical – They have secured PPE which they are asking be worn. They have been able to secure hand sanitizer via contract with Cintas (who they have a uniform contract with). Limiting access to their place of business. They are working hard to address safety concerns – especially the ability to maintain physical distancing.

Bang Hair Studio – When open – only by appointment. They had previously cancelled 6 weeks of work and working through that backlog with a lower capacity is going to be problematic. Concerned that it will only take one sick person (they will be checking temperature) and they may need to shut down. They are taking all the steps they can to avoid but no it could happen. Concerned about additional closures due to a new surge – could probably not survive an additional closure.

Liberty Tax – No way to recover her increased expenses (her work is seasonal), so that will be a loss she will have to incur. Taking her three months longer to earn the year's revenue. Safety concerns with customers and employees (both are higher risk due to age). Her staff is required to wear masks with clients (had some issues early on in securing PPE). Sanitation practices because each interaction takes longer. Their workload has increased as folks ask questions about stimulus funds in addition to tax preparation services. Adhering to guidance which has been provided for safe practices. After July will shift back to regular work schedule (one day a week).

She's Boutique – Challenge is lack of customers in downtown – so how best to get folks downtown. Getting customers to adhere to safety practices. Employees will use masks. Some of her employees are afraid to return to work. Some of her customers are also afraid to shop. They are doing a number of online promotions. They are ready to open. Concerned about viability of business due to lack of revenue.

Zee's Salon – Challenges to get people to return to work. Mental health concerns as they deal with the anxiety. Challenges in securing PPE and cleaning agents – they have some but not enough for long. Cost of supplies is also a concern. Challenges with getting customers to understand that business practices have changed and their level of service is different. Shortages of supplies/materials is a concern. Will need to be open more days to be able to accommodate the backlog and the schedules of employees.

Council Member closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting?

Zee's Salon is grateful for the help she (and her staff) have received from the federal government – it has been critical in keeping them afloat.

Liberty Tax wants folks to know they are open for business.

Bang Hair Studio – All levels of government have been very supportive and all are trying to do their best. State could have learned more on industry experts to help get info faster. Would have allowed them to avoid expenses they were speculating they needed.

Valley Boiler and Mechanical – Empathy for those that had to stop their business activity – they have been fortunate to avoid – they are taking it one day at a time. Appreciates the Council’s support and hearing from the other small businesses.

Council Member closed meeting at 12:55

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Medical/Healthcare 5/21/2020

Attendees

- Djuna Osborne – Council Member
- Tiffany Bradbury – Community Engagement Coordinator
- Bob Cowell – City Manager
- Dr. Nottingham – Friendship Manor
- Hal Irvin – VT FBRI
- Wendy Lucas – Lucas Therapies
- Dr. Lampros – Lampros Orthodontics
- Jeanne Armentrout – Carilion Clinic
- Dr. Deneen Evans – Mosaic Mental Wellness and Health
- Tamara Starnes – Blue Ridge Behavioral Health
- Ruth Cassell – Bradley Free Clinic

Meeting Called to order at 12:05

Welcome and Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Bradley Free Clinic – Loss of volunteer pool. Protecting safety of employees and clients. Using phone screenings, etc. outreach efforts continuing to ensure folks were able to access medications. Isolation and mental health concerns. Substance abuse and relapse issues – they have been working to manage but have seen a significant increase. Getting volunteers back will be a challenge – doing all they can to assure everyone they will be able to keep them safe upon their return. Have performed services in the parking lot so increased costs some – looking at creating an isolation room and addressing air flow issues which will be increased cost.

BRBH – Getting staff up to speed on offering telehealth (this has increased costs) remotely. Securing PPE was a challenge and has increased costs they don't normally see. Telehealth has worked well – this has been in part due to the relaxation of some regulations. Concern that people are not seeking out services that may need – been performing outreach to be certain people know they are there and open to offer services.

Higher Education/Mosaic – Concerns with bringing students back safely. On-line classes have been mixed bag – professors that taught hybrid or on-line comfortable and others not. Challenges with students being able to access online services due to lack of technology. Business is new which has been a challenge. Population served is a vulnerable population which has been very difficult for some to connect via technology. Loosening regulations has been helpful. Costs have increased to maintain technology and managing paperwork remotely. For some clients (children for example) are not able to use telehealth – this has resulted in loss of some clients. Concerns with domestic and child abuse that

may be occurring but not being reported. Not likely to reopen until sometime in June at best. Those with mental health issues and developmental disabilities have been greatly impacted.

Carilion – Relaxed regulations have been helpful and hope many of them remain. Technology and access has been a challenge especially for their rural clients. Access to testing was initially a challenge this has improved now. This initially pushed cost up for PPE and practices. Costs and availability was a challenge and trying to avoid scams. Revenue loss has been a major issue resulting in furloughs and reduced hours. Costs with retrofitting facilities to accommodate influx of patients. Community support has been very strong and positive.

Lampros – Dental offices heavily impacted as offices had to close – affecting revenues, jobs and patient care. Many furloughs occurred. Significant expense in returning (PPE, etc.) Access to certain supplies has been challenging. Fewer patients will be able to be seen when reopen. Inability to perform telemedicine services. Some offices may not reopen, others have been able to weather the downturn. Securing new patients will be difficult versus performing procedures.

Lucas Therapies – Costs have been significant. Creating accessibility to teleservices (mobile hotspots for example) would be helpful – for example opening libraries for a time for such purposes in a limited capacity. Inactivity is contributing to physical and mental health concerns. Extension of telehealth insurance benefits needs to be extended – a unified front would be helpful. PPP was great help and SBA was very helpful.

VT FBRI – Initial impact associated with VT closure. People at VT who were considered non essential changed their work settings to work from home and lack of students to conduct research slowed or stopped much of the research they were involved in. Some research is continuing remotely. Have begun planning for next steps to ramp back up operations. The difficulty and expense to secure PPE has been a challenge. They have set up labs to perform test sample analyses – this has been very expensive but beneficial, serving multiple health districts. Preparing for safe return of students to VT.

Friendship – People are still confused about guidance about when they can gather, attend events, etc. Testing questions are quite common – when and how? Dissemination of information has been critical. Nursing homes have had challenges but the majority have had no issues. The lockdown of facilities has been very challenging for families and residents – isolation creating its own set of problems. Expects current restrictions in nursing homes to last for quite some time. Certain health care providers have been restricted from entering facilities so care has to be provided by employees of facilities – which brings its own challenges as well.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Friendship – PPE supply is good for reopening – this could change if cases occur in the facilities. Do have concerns over the quality of PPE they have access to. If there are more widespread outbreaks concerns over ability to retain/secure staff. Trying to determine how best to move back to some type of normal scheduling and services.

Lampros – For dental facilities challenges with reliable guidance for reopening – will require patience from clients as they work carefully through this. Need people to follow guidelines in the community to avoid further outbreaks. More community testing would help to reduce the chances of exposure. Need community members and patients that they are part of reopening as well so their conduct is critical.

BRBH – Financial challenges are the biggest concern – especially the ability of state and local government’s ability to fund them as their own revenues decrease. Increase in substance abuse and overdoses is of concern – including a resurgence of alcohol abuse. How to safely perform home visits. Addressing employee safety as they return to in-person services. Don’t want to miss people who are need of their services. Hope to be able to continue to have telehealth activities covered by insurance.

VT FBRI – Ability to continue to maintain relationships with research colleagues. Some decisions require long lead times (conference, returning students, etc.) which are challenging with quickly changing circumstances. Physical facilities, gatherings etc. may need to change – how? Ability to return research back to something resembling normal. Impact on communities if students are not present/returning.

Lucas Therapies – Costs of PPE. Need to expand hours to able to accommodate capacity with more stringent requirements/guidelines. Balance with home/work life as more remote work becomes the norm.

Carilion – Focused on three challenges – how to welcome back students safely, how to recall employees that are working remotely and/or balance with those that may continue remote work, and how to safely welcome patients back to their facilities. How to communicate to the community that their facilities are safe. Expanded hours are a part of the response. Need community members to do their part.

Mosaic – Self-care (safety and mental health) for employees, etc. how many services can continue to be online versus needing to be in-person, how does that affect their space needs? Uncertainty on so many fronts – especially associated with insurance reimbursements. What technology do they embrace/need for future services – reliability, costs, etc. Concerns with marginalized communities and access to testing and services.

Bradley Free Clinic – Testing is a big challenge –especially those that are uninsured. Concerns with reopening medical facilities with poor availability of testing. Physical facility is small which raises some concerns about their capacity to offer services and treat patients. Ensuring people feel safe accessing services. Concerns especially with marginalized communities.

Wrap-up Question – Any last things to highlight for City

Friendship – Testing numbers and lack of serious cases may provide a false sense of security – need to maintain public awareness. “Adopt a friend” to ensure people are not isolated.

Mosaic – Ensure access to funding and folks know about those resources. Need to help ensure access to technology for those that don’t have access – donate computers/tech

Bradley Free Clinic – Challenges with getting information out since there is so more out there. Creative ways to reinforce the need to maintain adherence to guidelines. Need to be certain other public health concerns are not disregarded.

Carilion – Continued communications – get technology where it is needed for folks to be able to participate in telehealth, etc. Can community sustain what it has done through the crisis – collaboration?

Lampros – Community needs to keep doing their part. Clear rules/guidance. Keep helping each other out.

BBH – Resources and communication. Appreciate the interest of Council

Djuna closed meeting 1:45

Unified voice, precise information about what people need to be doing, access to technology, testing, PPE, staffing/volunteers, reaching marginalized populations, etc.

Mayor/Council Community Conversation Hospitality & Entertainment 5/22/2020

Attendees

- Bill Bestpitch, Council Member
- Bob Cowell, City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Robyn Schon, Berglund Civic Center
- Brian Wells, Hotel Roanoke
- Landon Howard, Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge
- Cyrus Pace – Jefferson Center
- Elliot Broyles – Roanoke Market Building
- Bruce Bryan – Spot on Kirk/Five Points Creative
- Larry Landolt – Tour Roanoke/Hotel Roanoke Spa
- Mark Baldwin – Blue Ridge Catering
- Tommy Page – NuFocus
- JD Sutphin – Big Lick Entertainment

Council Member Bestpitch Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 2:00

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Hotel Roanoke – Loss of nearly all business and revenue forcing furloughs of nearly all staff. Conference business gone for extended period of time. Hope to capture leisure travel as it opens up more. Hotel has stayed open entire time – just now able to offer some type of dining as entered into Phase I of Governor's plan. Doing some remodeling work while time is available.

VVBR – Hope for the best but plan for the worst. Visitor's center will reopen in early June. Staff (not furloughed) will return on June 11th. Anticipate things getting better late summer or early fall. Tournaments being rescheduled and some small events may still happen.

Civic Center – Concerts and sports were first to close will be the last to open. Beginning to reschedule events but will not be until 1st qtr 2021. Some smaller shows (targeting youth or elderly) just cancelled. Looking forward to Phase III of Governor's Plan. Business model is a challenge – it is built on full capacity of people moving close together – is this still able to occur in future? High number of furloughs (FT, PT and contract employees). Focus on cleaning and sanitizing and making capital improvements while activity not present. Trying to retain sponsors through various options.

Jefferson Center – All events cancelled – likely will not return until next year. Some small events may return. They want to keep people safe and want to be ready when people are ready to return. Struggling with how do they stay in business so they can return. Focusing on budget flexibility and adaptation. Looking for opportunities that perhaps may not have been possible in the past. Challenge in understanding guidance and how do they generate demand with wary people? Recent survey

indicates older individuals are no less likely to gather than other age group. No consistency in when people will feel safe gathering. They were doing well up until virus. Impact to the groups they support as well. Have to deal with the financial realities that a certain amount of business may not come back.

Market Building – Two business models (restaurant and retail and event space). They have tried to help tenants as much as practical to retain their business but difficult because they deal with very small restaurants. Revenue stream largely stopped from both models. Restaurants are beginning to reopen. Difficult time for restaurants – missing the spring and summer seasons. Foundation is on an ok financial position depending upon how long it lasts and the ultimate impact on tenants. Rental facilities are not likely to pick back up quickly due to the fear around events and gatherings. Starting to get 2021 events booked.

Spot on Kirk/Five Points Creative – Had great momentum going into virus. Financially okay for a few months. Don't want to lead in opening – they will be slow and follow others as they open. They have been able to maintain their sponsorships. Business still occurring just smaller and slower.

Tour Roanoke/Hotel Roanoke Spa – Were doing well leading into virus. They are opening spa next week. All business had stopped. Believes spa business will come back faster than tour business – in part because other businesses in Roanoke need to be operational for their tours to succeed. Concerned that some of our local businesses may not make it. Tour operators across the globe have had to reinvent their business models. Not sure how some of his business returns but he has the ability to adapt as needed. PT and contract employees not working but his one FT staff remains.

Blue Ridge Catering – Business stopped as special events stopped but have been able to adapt to offering meals to go. Retained a good part of their staff via federal loans. Buying time until gatherings return. Preparing for future and trying to determine best version of business model – maybe focusing more on small events/family events. Events are being rescheduled for next year. Been involved in the Take Out Hunger program. Collaborating with similar businesses across the Nation to learn how others are adapting.

NuFocus – Working in a challenging area normally, the virus has been even more challenging. June, July, August has been their focus on Henry Street – beginning to build momentum, but unable now. May look at smaller events spread over a longer time to reduce risk. Looking to position themselves to recover.

Big Lick – Able to move some events but had to cancel many of their signature events. This has impacted him as well as the charities they partner with. Assessing best practices elsewhere to try and find the best way to offer a safe and enjoyable event. Worried about consumer confidence – which is at best likely to return with Governor's Phase III. Staff has been furloughed until first event returns – maybe late summer. Media and marketing team has stayed in staff and has been very busy as they help businesses adapt to new circumstances. Public seems ready to return once they feel it is safe to do so.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Big Lick – Clarity on what the phases and what the guidance is and regulations – inconsistencies and being able to explain that to the customers.

NuFocus – Keeping people engaged and interested in Roanoke so they will overcome their fears when they are ready. Make certain people get quality information out to the public.

Blue Ridge Catering – Uncertainty and lack of clarity – how to put people at ease. Be adaptable and compassionate. How to slowly ramp up to larger gatherings. Keeping customers engaged – taking a creative approach.

Tour Roanoke/Hotel Roanoke Spa – Government maintain commitment to tourism and promotion of the community and the activities that are available. Changing market focus a few times in the near term. Maintain and reinforce commitment to the community’s brand.

Spot on Kirk/Five Points Creative – Maintaining optimism – while remaining realistic and practical. Uncertainty is greatest challenge. Keeping arts community strong and unified. Concern that support for arts and culture from the government will be lost.

Market Building – Consumer confidence (income and health fears) are the largest challenge – confusion on regulations and guidance from the state and federal government hasn’t helped. Support for outdoor dining has been helpful.

Jefferson Center – Accessing marketing will be challenging as the Presidential election picks up and crowds the space. Continued and deeper polarization makes a unified approach more challenging and even makes gauging the market demand a challenge. A unified voice on how to proceed would be helpful and would support local consumer confidence.

Civic Center – Financial stability is greatest challenge. Uncertainty of future is challenge. Length of impact is worrisome. Artists and athletes may have to change some of their practices to make markets work for smaller venues (most venues in the country are actually smaller). Supporting local arts and entertainment is critical as they fill the gaps. Been impressed with all the creativity and support in the community. Determine what is happening on the national landscape and how will impact locally and consumer confidence will be key as we proceed.

VVBR – Getting the word out about what is open and available. Folks looking for outdoor opportunities with families and small groups. Not getting inquiries regarding small groups, events and large gatherings. Next phase of reopening will be key. People want to stay safe and they want assurances local businesses have taken steps to keep them safe.

Hotel Roanoke – Need to secure successes and need to highlight those to the community and outside world. Help tell the story. Staying safe while opening. Back to growing the business. Securing some supplies a bit of a challenge. Maintaining patience.

Council Member Bestpitch closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting? None offered

Council Member closed meeting at 3:20

Mr. Bestpitch also followed up with Sunny Shah who is a hotelier & Diane Hailey who owns Roanoke Boutique Hotel. Here are their insights:

Sunny:

1. Occupancy for March and April fell by 80%, all hotels in area down to single-digit occupancy
Referrals from ARCH, BRBH, and Family Service had raised occupancy to 90% for May
Ramada evacuated on May 22, doesn't expect guests to return. Bank has helped with mortgage payments; no furloughs; cash reserves have covered taxes and other costs

2. Hotels have remained open as essential businesses with almost no guests
People are scared to travel, including business travelers. Doesn't expect occupancy to increase very much after only two more months or so

Diane:

1. CDC guidelines for hotels are important but open to interpretation

Example: she thinks her property provides "increased ventilation" due to ceiling fans in each room, but there is no precise definition.

Guests are opening windows because they know increased ventilation is important, which she understands, but concerned that ARB won't allow screens in historic properties, which allows insects to fly into rooms.

2. Biggest challenge ahead is overcoming people's fears

Good communication to explain how she is meeting CDC guidelines for hotels will ease guests' fears, such as making sure people know that hand sanitizer and disinfectants are readily available. She is willing to help others understand how to interpret CDC guidelines if asked.

Additional information:

www.roanokeva.gov/starcitystrong

www.roanokeva.gov/coronavirus

www.roanokeva.gov/communityresources

www.roanokeva.gov/COVID19helpforbusiness

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Human Services/Non-Profits 5/27/2020

Attendees

- Michelle Davis, Council Member
- Bob Cowell, City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Karen Pillis, Family Service
- Linda Hentschel, Family Service
- Anne Marie Green – Council of Community Services
- Pamela Irvine – Feeding Southwest Virginia
- Ron Boyd – Roanoke Local Office on Aging
- Annette Lewis – TAP
- Maureen McNamara Best – LEAP
- Abby Hamilton – United Way of Roanoke Valley
- Robin Haldiman- CHIP of Roanoke Valley
- Christina Hatch – Children’s Trust
- Jackie Smith– Community Youth Program
- Cheryl McNally – Community Youth Program
- Kim Butterfield – Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Xavier Duckett – Humble Hustle/Imagine Me Mentoring
- Donna Robinson - Cafe

Council Member Davis Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 9:03

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

CHIP – Home visiting has been very challenging – have had to adapt to virtual visits but still needing to determine safe ways to make limited home safety visits. Have seen increased stress and anxiety among families needing to adapt to the situations. Also needing to be flexible with staff that are dealing with similar issues and anxiety.

Family Service – Staff adapted well in delivering virtual services but clients have struggled with this transition. Clients struggle with sharing information virtually from home as many of the stressors they are addressing are based in the home. Domestic violence cases have been particularly challenging as less contact is possible. Inability to access students (usually done in the schools) has been challenging – virtual connection has limitations. Services offered are not promoting relationships

Children’s Trust – Shifted to emergency visits only (in-person) following safety protocols. Interviews are challenging in this environment. Family advocacy services still be offered. Mental telehealth services are provided – this has worked well with some who are more comfortable virtually. CASA volunteer training was moved to a virtual platform. This has been critical as a result of high number of CASA

referrals. Some staffing challenges due to the need to be able to attend court proceedings in person. Home visits have been challenging as they have moved virtual. School outreach has not been possible. Promoting campaigns via social media.

TAP – Remote work though facility has remained open – performing health screenings. All services still provided with exception of tax clinic and child care. Providing virtual services when able. Emergency service needs have been the greatest challenge – prior focus has been on moving folks toward self-sufficiency that has now shifted to more emergency services. Domestic violence hotline calls have increased. Costs for emergency services were unexpected – they have secured some grant funding and funders have relaxed some guidelines to help.

Feeding Southwest – focused on “disaster mode”. Had to cancel events they depend upon. Determining health risks to employees and health and how to best protect them as essential services continued to be delivered. Some loss of volunteers. All after-school programs were shut down then had to rapidly pivot to feeding sites. Inventory and financial resources were lost quickly but have been restored through new partnerships, funding opps, etc. Adapted partnership models to meet new needs. Entering new markets with direct distribution.

CCS – Guidelines about how to use funds (federal and state) lacking has caused struggles in coordination and disbursement of funding. Received PPP funding but returned it due to the inability (based on funding) to convert loan to a grant. 211 was overwhelmed initially – volunteers helped restore capacity. Main calls initially were health related now more focused on food, evictions, and access to service. Continue syringe services and drop in center by appointment only.

LEAP – Shifted markets to low then no-contact. Their diversity of programs has enabled this to work. Able to keep incentive programs in operation even as they shifted to virtual shopping. Technology challenges in some instances. Strength of relationships enabled them to quickly pivot. Food-based businesses are struggling with ability to adapt and thrive. Illustrated need to think more comprehensively and build more resiliency into food system.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Family Service – Access to schools and access to homes along with keeping employees safe. Ability to staff up if experiencing an increase in demand.

CCS – Community housing resource center – ability to work remotely due to density of employees in small office space. 211 working remotely and may become permanent. Use of appointments for other services for the future.

LOA – Staff burnout. Securing enough PPE for staff and clients. Getting volunteers back in service. Need to adapt. Long-term care ombudsman services.

Extension – How to conduct hands-on learning, access to schools, how to reach clients (beyond virtual), technology challenges for those trying to secure their services

CYP – Interaction with schools and how to coordinate/collaborate, especially after-school. Transportation of students to/from their facilities. School may not be able to be same partner as in past.

Children’s Trust – The increase in demand for services as children begin interacting with them. Maintaining cleaning protocols long-term. Fund-raising within the community – impacts of economy.

Café – Coordination with schools – uncertainty makes it difficult to plan. Fundraising and local impact of economy. Ability to do fundraising events. Limited staff resources and challenges in securing volunteers.

United Way – How to safely return staff back to the office. How to safely provide services in the community. Difficulty to plan with so much uncertainty. The entire safety network system is functioning at lower efficiency – in part because constraints (policies and procedures) have not adapted to circumstances.

LEAP – Ability to maintain safety for community, employees, vendors, etc. Would benefit from a regional perspective as well as local – for guidelines, answering of questions, etc. Too many decisions seem to be left to each household, each organization, etc. Staff burnout. Be able to sustain operations and payroll through the winter. Uncertainty

TAP – Concerns over funding and having enough resources to meet growing need. Ability to secure PPE for clients and staff. Ability to keep facilities clean and safe. The Census results and whether it will represent an accurate picture of our community and its need – this is a decade long impact.

Council Member Davis closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting? None offered

Council Member Davis closed meeting at 10:23

Mayor/Council Community Conversation

Arts & Culture 5/29/2020

Attendees

- Anita Price, Council Member
- Bob Cowell, City Manager
- Tiffany Bradbury, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Jim Sears, Center in the Square
- Doug Jackson, Arts & Culture Coordinator City of Roanoke/Roanoke Arts Commission
- Brooke Tolley, Opera Roanoke

Council Member Price Provided Context and Purpose and opened meeting at 2:33

Introductions

Question 1 - What impacts have been felt during response to COVID-19?

Opera Roanoke – All events were cancelled due to inability to host audience. Also cancelled fundraisers. Revenue loss. Challenging to pivot to online format – this has been slow. How best to interact with audience? \$10,000-\$12,000 per month to operate and no current revenue – limited fundraising.

Doug Jackson – Focused on the City’s role as a funder of arts organizations. This is programmatic funding not operational funding. Trying to help organizations to try and figure out how to pivot their offerings. Delays associated with public arts projects.

Center in the Square – Adopted to providing a great deal more virtual information to help children that are learning from home. \$220,000 per month to operate but currently have no income (for-profit businesses tenants are not currently paying rent). Other income comes from box office sales which are not occurring. Some fundraising continues but limited. Worried about the ability to sustain under these conditions.

Question #2 Reopening Challenges

Center in the Square – Preparing for reopening (physical and signage). Will reopen when able and will limit the size of the gathering. Cleaning protocols developed. Anticipating a long time before recovery. How to translate virtual “viewers” into revenue?

Opera Roanoke – Future is impacted for the foreseeable future – a great deal of uncertainty when people will be able to safely gather for a performance. The safety of artists performing together is a great concern. Need to re-think how to fundraise – most of their funds come linked to a performance. How does this happen when you don’t have live in person performances? Normally would be renewing subscriptions (and make donations) at this time. They haven’t even been able to announce the new season at this point. They are a member of a national organization that they rely upon as a resource to aid in preparing for next steps. Also dependent upon the Jefferson Center as their venue. Pivoting to a new way of service delivery brings new costs at a moment when they have no revenue – makes this a challenge. Some aspect of virtual will likely follow on into the future.

Doug Jackson – Organizations are working closely with their Boards in developing financial planning scenarios. Certain there will be some organizations lost as a result of financial struggle. Worried that this will result in a loss of momentum in the community’s arts and culture environment. Scenarios will continue to get updated. Can CARES funding be used to help sustain organizations? Some facilities are trying to assess what physical changes may need to take place? The reach of online has been global – could this be leveraged in some way for the community?

Council Member Price closed by asking any questions for Council that can be shared at their June 1 meeting?

Opera Roanoke – New opportunities/needs for partnerships. How to sustain and leverage this type of collaboration. Assessing their social media analytics to find opportunity. Finding it good to tell the community’s story – this is a new area for them.

Council Member Price closed meeting at 3:05