



**Economic Resiliency Task Force**

**June 10<sup>th</sup> , 2020 1:30 p.m.**

**ZOOM Meeting**

**Present: Co-Chairs:**

Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Warden  
Cara Finn, Director of Economic Development

**Middlesex County:**

Kurtis Smith, Councillor

**Lower Tier Municipal Representatives:**

Michael Dillulo, CAO, Middlesex Centre

**Employment Representative:**

Bill Pigram, Manager, Community Employment Choices

**Workforce Development Representative:**

Debra Mountenay, Executive Director, Elgin Middlesex Oxford  
London Workforce Development and Planning Board

**Manufacturing Sector Representative**

Karl Pfister, President, Armatec Survivability

**Small Business Sector Representative:**

Kathy Manness, CEO, Strathroy & District Chamber of Commerce

**Finance Representative:**

Todd Copeland, General Manager, CFDC of Middlesex County

**Agricultural Sector Representative:**

Joanne Fuller, Member Representative, Ontario Federal of Agriculture

**Regrets: Kelly Elliott, Councillor**

Demetri Makrakos, Economic Development Officer, Stathroy-Caradoc

**1. Welcome & Minutes**

Cara welcomed those in attendance; thanking them for their commitment to the Task Force.  
The minutes of the May 27, 2020 meeting were presented.

Motion by Bill Pigram to approve the minutes as presented; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Michael DiLullo; carried.

**2. County Updates**

- Phase Two re-opening for Middlesex-London has been authorized by the Province effective Friday, June 12th. Details of this announcement have been shared on the Invest in Middlesex page.

- Filming of the business appreciation video decided upon at the last meeting took place with all County Council Mayors on June 9th. Production is going smoothly and it is expected that the video may be ready to launch by week's end
- discussion has taken place between the Planning and Economic Development Department, along with some lower tier municipalities regarding County support for lower tier CIP development and specific COVID-19 relief programs. Cara is preparing a recommendation for County Council to consider allocating existing Economic Development budget funds for this purpose. The report will be presented at the June 23rd meeting of Council
- The Middlesex Strong campaign has been well received. Window clings have been ordered and will be sent to local businesses to display in storefronts across the County
- The Co-chairs are in regular communication with the MPPs and MPs to provide them with copies of the MERTF minutes. Subsequent communications regarding business needs were shared with Ministers McNaughton and Yurek (copied to Karl) and did not garner a response.

#### **Debra Mountenay**

- Office is staggering employees
- Creating a baseline of the workforce situation in the region pre-COVID-19
- Will be compiling research for comparison post-COVID-19
- In the midst of preparing a webinar series focused on employment. Details TBA soon.

#### **Michael Dilullo**

- Lower tier municipal CAOs working together on plans to open over the summer
- Inability to allow teams on fields has lead to organizations cancelling. These municipal assets still have to be maintained to the degree of public usability.
- Has organized a virtual business networking event for businesses on June 29th. Cara will be presenting about the Task Force and Middlesex County business supports. Todd will be presenting about CFDC offerings.
- Building department working on expediting applications for patio expansions due to Phase 2 restaurant openings.

#### **Cathy Burghardt-Jesson**

- Splashpads likely to open soon; swimming pools of greater operational concern

#### **Kelly Elliott (sent via email in advance of meeting)**

- Followed up on comments made at the last meeting re: lack of resources from our health unit in regards to COVID. As the County representative of the Middlesex-London Board of Health, she was able to encourage MLHU to create a website dedicated to businesses with resources: <https://www.healthunit.com/covid-19-resources-workplaces>
- Invited members of the Task Force to review and provide any notations on the site

#### **Kurtis Smith**

- Adelaide Metcalfe hosting virtual planning application meeting in early July
- moving towards hosting in-person Council meetings with virtual public engagement

**Kathy Manness**

- Phase 2 re-opening guidelines being met with excitement by many local businesses
- Patio enhancements a consideration
- BIA considering a new video campaign to entice tourists to take advantage of opportunity shop safely and enjoy surrounding natural assets. Has approached the County for advertising support.

**Karl Pfister/ Gudrun Haas**

- Have implemented pandemic emergency plan in partnership with employees
- Without inspection checklist being provided by Province, it is impossible to know whether or not they are covering all the bases
- Issues now being created due to employees requiring daycare that has either been unavailable or creates anxiety for workers considering summer plans as camps are less prevalent
- Government needs to convey value of employment to available workforce. As we turn the corner, we need people to want to come back to work more than collect CERB or EI

**Todd Copeland**

- Office has received 80 general inquiries re: Regional Relief and Recovery Fund; resulting in 20 in-depth consultations and 5 applications over the past three weeks. The first application was approved earlier this week.
- An additional full-time employee is being hired as well as two summer students and a social media/communications consultant
- New organization website will be launching soon

**Joanne Fuller**

- Farmers are still pivoting and getting their planting done. Planting is nearly complete in Middlesex County
- U pick guidelines have been approved by the province just in time for strawberries to be ready!
- Feeding Your Future Initiative is underway with the first Virtual Career Fair in the Middlesex and London area.
- 2 deaths in the Leamington area of Migrant Workers and workers that have tested positive with no symptoms. Our hearts go out to these families. Farmers losing crops now – which also poses a risk for the farmer with the workers getting COVID.
- Middlesex farmers feeling overwhelmed/stressed to keep their workers safe with the risks associated
- Ontario farmers are enduring a huge amount of stress while they dodge weather and COVID and outputs until the food comes out of the fields

- OFA is holding their AGM virtually this year in November and all the County Federations will hold their regional meetings virtually. Interesting for farmers.
- OFA is having discussions on diversity in farming and how to engage all on this topic.

### **Bill Pigram**

- Rotating two staff in the office daily; busy matching job seekers and employers
- Partnering with OFA on Virtual Job Fair focused on Agricultural jobs on June 18th
- Seeing COVID anxiety remain with some job seekers who have been provided offers, but who are worried about entering workplaces
- Watching to see what the situation is like when CERB ends

### **5. Next Stage Tasks and Projects**

- ✓ **Video Launch**  
Expected to take place by June 15th
- ✓ **Radio Campaign**  
Will continue for 3 months
- ✓ **CIP Support Recommendation**  
Report will be presented to Council on June 23rd
- ✓ **Letter to MPPs**  
It was requested that a letter be drafted for the Warden to formally request that the Province:
  - Provide transparency in sharing the COVID-19 Inspection Checklist to be used in evaluating business practices

### **6. Meeting Schedule & Adjournment**

- ✓ Next Meeting: Wednesday, June 24th 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- ✓ The meeting adjourned at 2:56p.m.