

BUSINESS RECOVERY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

RENT DEFERRAL

- Defer rent for all city tenants during the course of the State of Emergency in Pinellas County. Consider offering these tenants extended lease terms commensurate with the amount of time the rent was abated, as permitted by law. This includes all City held leases, license agreements, and use agreements including vendors at the Beach, library tenants, and others who operate out of city owned facilities or serve city properties.

GRANT PROGRAM

- Establish a grant program for Clearwater's small businesses most effected by the pandemic. This could include a combination of direct cash grants or assisting with fees for need of professional services.

PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

- Defer development application and building permit fees for minimum standard development applications and Level I staff level approvals until a Certificate of Occupancy is obtained until a date certain (say September 1, 2021);
- Continue to hold regular DRC and CDB meeting remotely in order to ensure the development review process continues and does not become overwhelmed and backlogged;
- Extend all deadlines in any building permit or Development Order for the duration of the state of emergency and an additional 6 months thereafter pursuant to Chapter 252, Florida Statutes. The City should automatically invoke it for the benefit of those applicants who do not know their right to an extension;

- Develop a short-term variance process in the Community Development Code. Pinellas County and most other jurisdictions allow for variances based on specific hardship criteria whereas Clearwater does not. The variance requests would have to be approved or denied by the Community Development Board (or a special Board of Adjustment) and the staff would review the variance application to recommend approval or denial of the variance request. The variance system would sunset at a certain point (say September 1, 2021);
- Encourage more use of private plan reviewers to review building permits pursuant to Section 553.792, Florida Statutes. This would include site permits which are now eligible to be reviewed privately. The discount for using private plans review should be 66%. If the applicant chooses to use private plans review for the building inspection only and not the site work, discount should be 50%. The permit fees would stay the same.
- Require city plan reviewers' comments to be raised by their initial review so that no pre-existing issues can be raised other than newly created issues once the final review has occurred and the comments have been responded to by the applicant;
- Consider expanding outdoor dining policies to aid with social distancing upon reopening of dining facilities;
- Waive the permitting requirements for a period of time against sandwich board signage. This be helpful to many restaurants reopening with a limited menu that will be subject to change daily based on what is available;
- Allow for businesses to display "Grand Re-Opening Signs" for a period of 45 days;
- Require Parks and Recreation impact fees and the City's portion of Traffic impact fees be used in the area that created the impact of the development.

BUSINESS TAX RECEIPTS

- Waive or defer business tax receipt fees for a certain period of time. Businesses would still have to register and obtain a BTR but there would be no associated fee;
- Long term, consider reforming the Business Tax Receipt process altogether as it is unique to Clearwater and could serve as an impediment to investment.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

- Waive code enforcement liens for first time offenders that do not have any repeat violations who have come into compliance or come into compliance by a date certain (say September 1, 2021). This would mostly impact single family homeowners and small businesses and would not apply to people with multiple violations/liens.

PARKING

- Consider free or reduced parking for employees working on the beach in city owned spaces

CHILDCARE

- Having access to safe, childcare options is a workforce issue. Consider opening city facilities for childcare services and assist childcare service providers on space and staffing issues to ensure they are following the recommended guidelines for reopening.

PROVISION OF PPE

- Consider acquiring PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and allocating it to businesses in need of it to re-open. Purchasing items such as sanitizer stations, masks, face shields, oximeters and thermometers, would provide significant assistance to re-opening businesses safely.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- Collaborate with the VSPC, CVB, and TDC on coordinated marketing efforts to market Clearwater and the Beach as safe and family friendly destinations to tourists. Begin preparing the campaigns now to be ready to implement when safe and appropriate
- Prepare the Beach for new safety and public health standards including providing hand sanitizing stations and enforcing social distancing with Beach cabanas and accessories.

CRA

- Extend all deadlines for CRA grants for a date certain and provide additional funds for additional CRA grants. Expand CRA grant application process to include current businesses enhancing accessibility to persons who have already invested in downtown.

SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE

- Work with Amplify Clearwater and other stakeholders to develop a small-business concierge service of professionals that caters specifically to small business owners and provides a contact to help make connections to funds, relief, and programs. Provide other resources, including online resources, to access incentives and relief programs.

UTILITIES

- Defer or abate utility payments for residents and businesses impacted by the pandemic for the length of the local State of Emergency.

MARKETING

- Establish an effective and coordinated marketing campaign that is a unified effort of all marketing agencies county wide.
- Develop shop local campaigns, events (such as Blast Fridays) and incentives for shopping and dining in Clearwater to roll out when appropriate;
- Have the Mayor film a “Support your City’s businesses” PSA message.

CITY PROCUREMENT

- Establish a temporary sheltered market for small businesses wishing to do business with the city of Clearwater. For insurance that may be required beyond general liability, fund the expense of the insurance. Amend payment terms for Net 1 (rather than Net 30). Challenge all large businesses/institutions within the city to establish a similar sheltered market purchase program for local businesses

HEALTH CARE

- Continue support of local hospitals and other health care providers in their efforts to deliver critical health care services to the community, including care for those impacted by COVID-19. As appropriate, support efforts to promote COVID-19 testing and tracing for our community, and encourage ongoing efforts to promote health and wellness for those who live in and visit our city – including social distancing, good hand-washing and other measures as appropriate and encouraged by state and federal health officials.