

Economic Recovery Forum

May 13, 2020

1:03 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Fund (remotely), County Manager Erik Martin, Arny Davis, Amber Smith (remotely), Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes (remotely), Morton Mayor Dan Mortensen (remotely), Mossyrock Mayor Randy Sasser (remotely), Larry McGee (remotely), Alicia Bull (remotely), Annalee Tobey (remotely), Maria Andrews (remotely), Cynthia Swift (remotely), Teri Zambon (remotely), David Woodrum (remotely), Angie Brown (remotely), Matt Matayoshi (remotely), Mary Kay Nelson (remotely), Suzette Smith (remotely), JP Anderson (remotely), Emily Hadley (remotely), Lara McRea (remotely), Alison Puckett (remotely), Candy Hallom, various members of the public and press (remotely)

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Morton Mayor Dan Mortensen stressed the need for local control in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the city already has laid off one employee in response to the shutdown. Mayor Mortensen said area restaurants are struggling. Mayor Mortensen expressed concerns about restaurants being required to track information about patrons.

Mossyrock Mayor Randy Sasser echoed Mayor's Mortensen's concerns about the shutdown. He said the city is considering abandoning a parks project that would require matching funds.

Chehalis Mayor Dennis Dawes said he feels the governor is not listening to anyone at the county or city levels regarding economic concerns. He said the cities and counties need to apply pressure on Gov. Inslee to force him to listen. Mayor Dawes noted the need for the various economic recovery groups to share the information in duplicity, rather than just sharing links.

Commissioner Fund discussed a NACo call that took place the previous day. Commissioner Fund said Employment Security has been fielding 100 calls per minute. She said the group is attempting to pay the 7 percent of requesters who have not yet received payment.

Mayor Sasser said the Mossyrock Action League has canceled the 2020 Blueberry Festival. Commissioner Fund said any unused lodging tax funds will go back into the general LTAC pot and that the various entities would have to reapply for 2021 funding. She noted that the county had left the fund with a bit of a funding cushion.

Commissioner Jackson left at 1:26 p.m.

Maria Andrews said the Packwood has canceled its Flea Market and Rod Run.

Alicia Bull said the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce said the STP bike ride and an upcoming Rod Run have been canceled. She said the Chamber is still putting together scholarships for area seniors. Alicia discussed the Lewis County Business Recovery Center's plans for a three-pronged approach to business assistance: providing services through a physical, mobile and virtual presence. She said work is

being done to provide grant funding. She said the group's website is set for a soft launch May 18. Alicia said disasters typically force the closure of 25 percent of small businesses. She said the fears are that the percentage rate will be higher for the COVID-19 pandemic due to the length of the shutdown.

Cynthia Swift of the East Lewis Chamber of Commerce said the Summit to Swamp Run and Bigfoot Archery event have been canceled. She said plans for the Labor Day Swap Meet remain unknown. She said the area was inundated with tourists when the lakes and parks reopened May 5.

Teri Zambon of the Centralia Downtown Association said the city has canceled Summer Fest as well as the June and July Music in the Park events. Teri said the CDA still had technology and storefront grants available. Teri said the CDA is going to provide funding for up to three hours of professional coaching to provide one-on-one business training on social media, website development, marketing, etc. Teri said the applications can be found at www.DowntownCentralia.org.

Annalee Tobey of the Chehalis Community Renaissance Team said the CCRT has been reaching out to area food establishments and other industries to identify their needs and challenges.

Commissioner Jackson returned at 1:41 p.m.

Annalee said the CCRT is developing posters to share across the county. Annalee said the amount available for the CCRT's façade grant has been increased.

Coronavirus Relief Funds from the feds to the state will be available soon. He said a group is identifying an allotment proposal to present to the Board of County Commissioners. He invited the various cities to reach out to him or Budget Services Manager Becky Butler to discuss planned allotments.

Alicia Bull said Employment Security alerted her that it had been breached. She cautioned businesses to be vigilant about any fraudulent unemployment claims.

Larry McGee of Lewis County Together discussed questions he has received regarding the need for PPE. He said Rotary is launching an effort to provide gift cards to locally-owned establishments.

Annalee said Lewis County Together toolkit has had 900 visits since its launch the previous week.

Matt Matayoshi of the Lewis County Economic Development Council discussed work the EDC is providing. Matt said Lewis County Farm Bureau has canceled its 2020 Farm Tour.

Meeting ended at 1:59 p.m.