



Staff Report

Administration

Report To: Economic Development Advisory Committee
Meeting Date: August 21, 2020
Report Number: FAF.20.124
Subject: COVID-19 Business Support and Economic Recovery Action Plan
Prepared By: Tim Hendry, Manager of Communications and Economic Development

A. Recommendations

THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee receive Staff Report FAF.20.124, entitled "COVID-19 Business Support and Economic Recovery Action Plan" for information purposes.

AND THAT the Economic Development Advisory Committee supports the development of a COVID-19 specific Business Support and Economic Recovery Action Plan to supplement and which be further enhanced and supported by the 5-year Economic Development Strategy.

B. Overview

This report provides an update to the Economic Development Advisory Committee members regarding the initiatives undertaken to support the Town's business community and residents in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its recovery process.

C. Background

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Town of The Blue Mountains formed the Community Recovery Task Force which has been responsible for the coordination and implementation of recovery and relief efforts to support and assist local businesses, the community and stakeholders in maintaining as much as possible, and reinvigorating our local and regional economies throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic and the recovery process.

D. Analysis

The COVID-19 Pandemic has had a significant impact on businesses throughout the Town of The Blue Mountains. Working collaboratively with local and regional partners, Town of The Blue Mountains has implemented a variety measures to help support local businesses, community organizations and residents through these difficult times.

Impact of COVID-19 on Businesses in The Blue Mountains

As a means of understanding the needs of businesses, the Town partnered with the Grey County Economic Development Department to promote two business impact surveys. The results, specific to the Town of the Blue Mountains are outlined in the following chart.

Grey County Business Impact Survey	Town of The Blue Mountain Survey #1 (April 2020)	Town of The Blue Mountain Survey #2 (May 2020)
TBM Business Response Rate	73 TBM Businesses	31 TBM Businesses
Impacts of COVID-19 are very significant and growing fast	50%	14% *13 additional businesses indicated that they shut down operations
Shut down operations	53%	42%
Laid staff off	31.5%	39%
Reduced hours of operation	19%	22%

COVID-19 Business Support and Economic Response

As an immediate action to support local businesses and to assist in economic recovery, the Community Recovery Task Force actioned a variety of items which are detailed below.

Action	Status
Launch of Explore Blue Website <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 106 businesses added to local business directory• 17,425 total website visits• Business resource and support page developed and updated regularly• New: 7-step re-opening checklist	Completed and Ongoing

Action	Status
<p>Business Support Video Development & Marketing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New videos created <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ You'll Love Where We Take You ○ Support Local Businesses ○ We are Stronger Together ○ Scenic Bike Ride of TBM ○ Riverwalk & Fishway Tour ○ Shopping Experience ○ Parks, Beaches & Trails Experience • Existing videos repurposed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Culinary Experiences ○ Arts and Culture ○ Thornbury Fishway – 3-part video series • Partner Content Leveraged <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Province of Ontario- Ministers Reopening Ontario Tour ○ Blue Mountain Village – Dream Today, Visit Later ○ Blue Mountain Village – Its All Right Here ○ Blue Mountain Village - Apple Pie Trail ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – Pathway 360 Experience ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – Indigenous History ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – Reel History Demo ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – Mary Ward 360 ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – The Apple Industry ○ Blue Mountains Public Library – The Ski Industry 	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Business Re-Opening Toolkits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 110+ toolkits distributed to TBM Businesses • Each kit includes: Reopening Guidelines and Protocols, Customer Experience Door Sticker, Business Support and Resource Sheet, 1 box of 50 Masks, Grey County Business Support Post Card, and 2 Physical Distancing Floor Stickers 	<p>Completed</p>
<p>Open for Business Signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40+ signs distributed to TBM Businesses • Four different styles of signs 	<p>Completed</p>

Action	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online Only, Curbside Pick Up, Curbside & Delivery, and Now Open 	
<p>Website Development Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with the Small Business Enterprise Centre to administer a \$5000 fund allocated into ten \$500 website development grants • Six of the 10 spaces have been filled and website development is underway 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Reopening Support for Businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town staff have been actively working with local businesses regarding their reopening plans • Providing connection to Public Health Unit Inspectors, and Provincial Ministries • Cross promotion of support services such as RT07 Online Advertising Program, Digital Main Street, Regional Workshops 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Continuation of Digital Main Street Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$5,000 allocated by Council to support local TBM businesses through workshops and coaching as part of the Digital Main Street Program managed by the Small Business Enterprise Centre 	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Community Safety Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwashing station installed in downtown Thornbury • Jersey Barriers installed on Bruce St South to increase physical distancing space • Automatic outdoor hand sanitizer units purchased for Thornbury, Clarksburg, and Craighleith areas • Community safety signage installed in parks, trails and beach areas 	<p>Completed and Ongoing</p>
<p>Deferral of Property Tax and Utility Payments</p>	

Action	Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Council approved waiving penalties and interest on both residential and commercial property tax and utility payments	Completed

Next Steps & Action Plan

With the Province now in Stage 3, nearly all businesses in The Blue Mountains have resumed operations. In addition to the significant efforts and progress in supporting local businesses, there is a significant amount of work and opportunity that remains to help ensure the recovery and resiliency of both the local and regional economies.

To position the Town of The Blue Mountains as a leader, Town staff will work collaboratively with the EDAC sub committee to incorporate COVID-19 specific Business Support and Economic Recovery action items into the 5-year Economic Development Strategy. Priorities will be focused on being well positioned to respond strategically to emerging trends as a result of COVID-19. In addition, efforts including infrastructure investment (attainable housing, transportation, servicing capacity, etc), business retention and expansion support, business workshops and coaching opportunities, and investment into community health and safety measures including open space / downtown revitalization infrastructure and hyper local marketing campaigns will be a driving focus within ensuring business support and economic stability of our community.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability
Objective #1 Retain Existing Business
Objective #2 Attract New Business
Objective #3 Promote a Diversified Economy
Objective #4 Support Value-Added Agriculture and Culinary Tourism
Objective #5 Improved Visibility and Local Identity

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners
Objective #1 Improve External Communication with our Constituents
Objective #2 Use Technology to Advance Engagement
Objective #3 Strengthen Partnerships

F. Environmental Impacts

N/A

G. Financial Impact

No financial impacts are anticipated as a result of this report.

H. In consultation with

Shawn Everitt, Chief Administrative Officer

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. However, any comments regarding this report should be submitted to Tim Hendry, economicdevelopment@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

N/A

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Hendry
Manager of Communications and Economic Development

Shawn Everitt
Chief Administrative Officer

For more information, please contact:

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