

April 9, 2020

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz
Municipality of Anchorage
632 W. 6th Avenue, Suite 840
Anchorage, AK 99501

Re: Mayor's Economic Resiliency Task Force (ERTF) Recommendations

Dear Mayor Berkowitz:

On behalf of the Mayor's Economic Resiliency Task Force, Co-Chair Julie Saupe and I are pleased to present the following recommendations the ERTF have developed at the request of the Mayor for actionable items for his consideration. These recommendations are offered in no particular order:

1. When addressing economic concerns & relief programs reference non-profits along with small business. Advocate for funding of non-profits with federal/state relief funds.
2. The Municipality administer \$10,000 grants to micro-businesses and non-profits in Anchorage for the purpose of aid and economic relief from the impacts of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The aim of the grants should be on small businesses and non-profits which might face barriers to Federal Aid and/or are simply running out to funds while they wait for other sources of assistance to arrive
 - a. That Mayor Berkowitz announce the grants at a Small Business briefing aimed at addressing impacts and challenges facing small businesses and non-profits in Anchorage
3. Advocacy at State Level: Advocate that SOA money be allocated to local governments, similar to position AML is already advocating.
4. That the Municipality provide information on the federal relief funds available (PPP, EIDL, etc) and State level programs (AIDEA) in works for small business/non-profits
 - a. Share information about where people can turn. Provide accurate, updated information from banks.
 - b. Recommend that the Mayor exempt stimulus funds from municipal garnishments. Send to collections for 30-90 days instead of garnishing funds
5. Highlight information on the various Muni fees that have been waived or deferred to ease economic conditions small business and non-profits are experiencing. Provide list of actions that have been taken thus far to include clarity on property tax extensions and eligibility.
6. Recommend that ML&P/AWWU/SWS waive utility costs for non-profits until federal funds arrive.

7. Offer guidance for business that are either essential and/or open as exemption and provide guidelines on how to operate responsibly to help remove stigma of risky behavior
8. Expand the list of essential workers who can get childcare. Provide funds to help childcare providers re-open or operate effectively.
9. Provide clarity to Construction industry on what types of construction are considered critical. Open up private construction and prevent permitting hold ups.
10. Highlight community programs, such as the downtown gift card project, designed to help local businesses
11. Address unemployment issues: benefits and new polices and provide resources for legal/mental health issues related to unemployment
12. ERTF proposes the Mayor fund and distribute express unemployment funds to the Anchorage workforce aimed at mirroring and speeding the new expanded Federal Unemployment benefits
13. The ERTF encourages the MUNI to seek reimbursement from US Treasury to cover costs of rapid unemployment dispersals
14. Develop informational resources re: various programs for the workforce (Unemployment Claims, SNAP and health care access) in languages other than English. Include these resources on one website with different categories for workers, employers, and nonprofits
15. To ensure Food Security for all in need:
 - a. Recommend the Mayor and the health department do an analysis of food worker and food establishment regulations in Anchorage and loosen regulations as appropriate to increase access to food and provide food security to those who need it
 - i. Provide training on food safety practices to food delivery volunteers, food delivery workers
 - b. Consider variances to Cottage Food Laws:
 - i. Allow cottage foods to be sold over the internet, by phone or mail.
 - ii. Allow cottage foods to be sold directly to restaurants, retailers and wholesalers. Both currently not prohibited by MUNI. Some overlap with SOA laws as well
16. Provide regulatory relief to allow food distributors to provide donated food to restaurants and food wagons for them to prepare and provide meals for first responders and healthcare providers, which current rules do not allow
17. Support the health department with an informational campaign for universal masking
18. Support educational efforts the difference between PPE masks and masks / cloth coverings for the public
19. Highlight businesses and individuals that have retooled and/or stepped up to make PPE:

- Anchorage Maker Space
- Alpine Fit LLC
- Castable Ceramics
- I-Style
- The Launch Company
- Dowland-Bach
- Perfectionist Auto (not a manufacturer in the traditional sense, but doing the work)
- Jasmin Smith project to distribute masks/gloves to businesses

20. Let people know that there are safe ways to volunteer.

21. Census: Highlight that it is more important than ever to fill out the Census.

22. We want to support the muni's work to expand COVID testing with an idea to get an end date for businesses, so they have a goal to work towards.

The economy is largely dependent on consumer confidence. Any economic activity is a product of consumer confidence in leaving their house and participating in that economy whether that is through going to work or going to local businesses and making purchase and business's confidence in being able to provide their services safely. In the case of a health crisis like the one we're currently navigating; the economic recovery is tied to the public's confidence in their ability to engage in the economic activities in a safe manner without getting sick. So, movement toward an economic recovery should be tied to assurances from the government that it is safe to conduct those economic activities. In order to ensure the safe opening of the economy it is clear that certain health benchmarks need to be met and communicated to the public. Testing has played a critical role in assessing the spread of COVID-19 thus far. Tests are playing a key role in healthcare response and emergency response but are also a tool being used to track the necessity of the economic shutdown. As policy makers plan for the end of this crisis, and the opening of businesses to normal operations, they must be able to accurately gage the risk and stage of spread and communicate that stage to the public. Widespread testing is critical to being able to accurately gauge appropriate economic responses and ensure consumer confidence. It also allows for a more prompt and accurate understanding of current situations and enables fast and flexible health and economic responses.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. The ERTF stands ready to answer any questions or expand upon any of these recommendations upon your request.

Sincerely,



Bill Popp
President & CEO
Anchorage Economic Development Corporation
ERTF Co-Chair



Julie Saupe
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