



Mayor's Economic Recovery Task Force August 6, 2021 - Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Mayor Dan Carter, Scott Henderson, Jeff Robinson, Roger Bouma, Lucy Stocco, Dr. Peter Stoett, Sali Fitzpatrick for Keith Cowley

Staff: Warren Munro, Hailey Wright, Brett Murphy, Katie Cassin

Guest: Joyce Hancock, Joyce Hancock Designs

Regrets: Chair Tito-Dante Marimpietri, Ivano Labricciosa, Daniel Stober, Dustin Kellow, Nancy Shaw, Kyle Douglas, Stacey Hawkins, Debbie McKee-Demczyk, Keith Cowley, Glen Posteraro, Peter Saturno, Ihor Lysyk, Paul Ralph, Mary Cousineau

Meeting Location: Cisco Webex Meeting

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

1. Welcome

Mayor Carter

- Welcomed and thanked all Task Force members for joining.
- Noted that major announcements will be made shortly regarding large investments and employment opportunities that will involve north and south Oshawa.
- Described infrastructure changes occurring at General Motors. GM is on track to roll their first truck off the line in early November.
- Concerned that 150,000 people in the Region of Durham remain unvaccinated and that a section of Oshawa has a low vaccination rate. Solutions are being investigated in collaboration with Dr. Kyle, his team, and the Province of Ontario.
- Excited to see the return of post-secondary educational partners and a growing student body which will create good news for the local economy.
- Outlined issues that are being addressed with the Region of Durham. Next week, the Mayor's Office will release a Statement with the Regional Office regarding the downtown core, its challenges, and the steps being taken.

Hailey Wright, Director, Economic Development Services

- Advised that the City is actively promoting job growth and parcel acquisition within Northwood. A comprehensive marketing strategy has been undertaken for those lands. Exciting announcements around that growth are expected in the coming weeks and months.

- Announced that, as of next week, Economic Development Services will be fully staffed. On August 3, Katie Cassin joined the Branch in the role of Business Intelligence Coordinator, and Andrew Poray starts work on August 9 as the Economic Development Officer.

2. Review of Minutes

The minutes from July 9, 2021 were reviewed, and no changes were made.

3. Review of the August 6th Agenda

Hailey Wright overviewed the August 6th Agenda.

4. Deputation

Joyce Hancock – Joyce Hancock Designs

- Thanked Task Force members for having her as a guest today.
- Addressed the OshawaLovesLocal concept and suggested the following methods to create excitement in coming downtown:
 - A regular weekly section in local newspapers that would inform residents of downtown businesses (and perhaps other areas of the City that pulls in customers), their services, and what might be new that week. This would cover retail, dining, events, etc., and would be especially useful as business websites are not always up-to-date.
 - A standard, descriptive postcard or other marketing tool that all businesses would have on hand to provide to guests/shoppers who are curious about other local businesses in the downtown core.
 - In-store window signage that promotes OshawaLovesLocal.
 - Consistent graphics available to businesses to put on their websites for a unified look.
- Noted that parking downtown continues to be an issue and offered the following ideas:
 - That customers be allowed to park for over two hours in any one section; currently, the Honk App only permits up to two hours before a customer must move their car to another section.
 - That businesses share parking costs for their employees to park in the bigger lots which would free up on-street parking spots for customers.
 - That businesses share costs with their employees to facilitate their parking in the bigger lots and free up on-street parking spots for customers.

Mayor Carter

- Thanked Joyce Hancock for her deputation.

Hailey Wright, Director, Economic Development Services

- Advised that she and Brett Murphy will further discuss Joyce Hancock's items offline. Any additional feedback or ideas are welcome from Task Force members.

5. #OshawaLovesLocal

Patios

Hailey Wright, Director, Economic Development Services

- Announced that the patio video, featuring three patios within the downtown core, launched on social media this week. The video will be circulated along with the minutes for today's meeting to the Task Force members.
- Work is gearing up on ways to support the local message for the festive season.

Student Initiative

Hailey Wright, Director, Economic Development Services

- Advised that a directory of downtown businesses that would be of specific interest to students is being developed. The post-secondary institutions are participating in discussions exploring the various methods that students may access the directory. This campaign will be launched in time for the return of students in September.

Mayor Carter

- Shared that "Convocation Celebration June 2022" is being planned to celebrate student accomplishments and to thank parents and families who contributed to their education. This month-long festive event will take place in the downtown core, and the post-secondary education partners will be involved. Visitors will be introduced to all that downtown Oshawa has to offer, and the local economy will benefit.

Roger Bouma, Durham Region Association of Realtors

- Observed that more patios along Simcoe Street would draw additional visitors and benefit downtown businesses; he would be happy to participate in making this case to the Region.

6. Task Force Accomplishments, Recommendations and Proposed Report to Council

Hailey Wright, Director, Economic Development Services

- Advised that the proposed report to Council would encapsulate the accomplishments of the Task Force to date and the recommendations moving forward. Presenting the report will provide the opportunity to receive Council endorsement to move initiatives forward. The infographic will depict accomplishments, recommendations, and what staff have committed to as part of their work plans.
- Recommendations to Council will comprise items that have been recognized by the Task Force as important initiatives that the City should be championing; other pieces will fall within Economic Development staff priorities such as the development of the new Economic Development Strategy, Plan 20Thirty, etc. She will circulate the complete list to the Task Force for review and feedback, and she will write the report if the Task Force agrees this is the direction they would like to pursue.

7. Roundtable – Members' Updates

Mayor Carter

- Advised that the Mayor's Community Clean-up days are scheduled in the downtown core for August 14, September 14 and October 18. Community members and groups wishing to participate are asked to notify the Mayor's Office.

Dr. Peter Stoett, Ontario Tech University

- Commented that the Victoria Street Pedestrian Walkway could be used for the Convocation Celebration June 2022 and/or other outdoor events. The Regent Theatre is also available for events.
- A fundraiser walk is being organized between the north and downtown campuses.
- Fully supports more patios along Simcoe Street which would attract students to the downtown.
- The north campus vaccination centre will be kept open until late September.
- Although the majority of classes will still be online this fall, there will be many students attending classes on both campuses.

Roger Bouma, Durham Region Association of Realtors

- Provided an update on real estate in Durham Region, indicating July sales were down approximately 22% over June of 2021. The year-to-date sales are up significantly this year after last.

Jeff Robinson, J.J. McGuire General Contractors

- Advised that J.J. McGuire would be happy to participate in the Convocation Celebration June 2022 initiative.
- There is concern about a fourth COVID wave.
- There are still worldwide material shortages that are impacting the industry.
- There is much activity around Thornton Road. It is hoped that construction will begin in January and opening will occur the following January.
- A productive meeting regarding wetlands was held last week that involved CLOCA and Warren Munro's team.
- Confirmed that GM should begin truck manufacturing in November as work is ahead of schedule.

Sali Fitzpatrick, B.D.C.

- Confirmed that many businesses are still seeing shortages of materials.
- Issues are arising for those businesses who did not qualify for programs such as wage subsidies and CEPA loans; some start-up businesses didn't qualify for any program.
- They are starting to learn through financial statements how companies were impacted by COVID: where they were pre-COVID, where they landed post-COVID, and how projections look going forward.
- Businesses who have done very well have been seeking advice on further growth options.

- There have been many inquiries for land and commercial/industrial space, and numerous real estate transactions are occurring.
- Suggested that businesses also have access to the downtown business directory being created for students.

Scott Henderson, Trent University

- Advised that the campus vaccination clinic scheduled for August 28 will be open to both students and the community. Students will also be offered tours of the revamped campus and spaces.
- With smaller classes than other educational institutions, students will be favouring attending classes in person rather than virtually. A significant number of remote options remain available, particularly to reach international students.
- The student residence is nearly half-full.
- Getting international students here is proving difficult due to issues with obtaining visas, recognition of foreign vaccines, and 14-day quarantine periods that are at the students' own expense.
- Many events are being planned to engage students during Orientation week, with some possibly being catered by local restaurants.
- Working with the Robert McLaughlin Gallery on developing strategies for attracting students downtown.

Lucy Stocco, Tribute Communities

- New home sales are fairly strong for both low-rise and high-rise, and prices have softened somewhat.
- For construction, supply lines and pricing remain a challenge. Pricing for materials has not stabilized, but they are not escalating as much as they have been.
- They are playing "catch-up" due to COVID supply lines and the strong sales last year.
- The Region Planning Department is suggesting that the population in Durham will reach 48% high density; if they proceed on this assumption, there may be problems and shortages in other areas.

8. Other Business

Mayor Carter

- Working with the Pickering Markets and welcoming them to the city.
- MTO will shortly begin a two-year project at the 401 interchange at Simcoe and Bloor.
- The GO expansion continues at a rapid pace.
- Concerts and events are being booked, and the Oshawa Generals will be returning to the Tribute Communities Centre this fall.

9. Action Items

- Hailey to circulate #OshawaLovesLocal Downtown Patio video to Task Force members.
- Economic Development Staff to discuss downtown parking concepts to enhance visitor experience when attending events and shops in the Downtown.
- Economic Development Staff to discuss and explore, in partnership with the Region of Durham, restaurant patios.
- Hailey to circulate list of Task Force accomplishments, recommendations and staff priorities to the members for review, comment and approval to form the foundation of a report to City Council.

10. Next Meeting

The next meeting, originally set for September 3, will be rescheduled for September 10, 2021. An updated meeting invitation will be circulated to reflect the new meeting date.