

Somers Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC)

Meeting Minutes

6.30.20

Kibbe Fuller School

7:00pm

Present: Dave Marti, Jeff Golden, Brian Czpala, Dr. Paul Salva, Selectman Tim Keeney, Bill Shapiro, Anne Cournoyer, Allison Maynard, Chris Boucher

1. Review feedback from various town officials. Identify specifically: **I have simply used verbatim what the responding town officials stated:**

- what we as a town have learned thus far;
- what things went well;
- what things could be improved upon moving forward;
- what things did not work at all; and
- what things still need to get done

Ann Logan – Town Clerk

Positive:

1. **Solid direction from J.Roach and G.Reynolds in providing information, direction and response**
2. **Public Works T.Rolland and staff in providing/ordering and delivering in a timely manner counter shields, supplies, etc**
3. **The overall concern for citizens, answering questions, and providing direction and assistance was and continues to be a high priority and I believe it was accomplished**

Negative:

1. **Communications – there is no universal link to any ‘one’ Town of Somers social media, i.e. facebook, web, twitter, radio etc. I was posting information for the Town and struggled to gather information from the multiple of social media pages various departments maintain. Library, School, Recreation, Sr. Center, Town, Fire Department all maintain and post to their own site. There is no one coordinated central linked media. Please see attached flow chart I created for Social Media Communications**

Suggestion:

Incorporate aspects of your discussion and/or decisions into our Emergency Management hierarchy, social media and community response.

Kim Littig – Police Administrator

The Resident Trooper’s Office never closed, the only service that stopped for the first 3 months was fingerprinting services. We followed the guidelines of the State Police and have since begun fingerprinting services again on June 15th.

Our calls for service overall went down for the first 3 months and have been steadily increasing over the past month.

All of our officers remained healthy and were able to work their normal patrol schedule. We were also able to utilize our 2 SRO’s for additional patrol coverage as schools closed.

We had and continue to have plenty of PPE for our police officers supplied by Glen Reynolds and John Roache – thank you both for your hard work in keeping up and supplying us with that.

The weekly Director’s meetings headed by Bud Knorr were extremely helpful to keep us all informed about operations within the Town.

Our police officers recertification through the State of CT found 3 of our officers attending a week long class utilizing laptops and “ZOOM” – thank you Kim LaFleur for your assistance with that.

The downfall I would say is the “unknown” about this virus and the health risk that it could cause therefore pro-active productivity was lower than normal. I.e. motor vehicle enforcement is low and other police presentations on various topics planned for different groups and organizations in Town have been cancelled and/ or postponed indefinitely.

Thank you all for the continuing communications between departments – we found that very helpful.

Todd Rolland, Director of Public Works

The DPW never closed. We did We close our offices to the public, conducted our morning meetings in the shop, limited one person to a vehicle, and provide our folks with PPE (much provided by the Fire Department, thank you).

We continued to conduct spring/summer work and found it was a good opportunity to get some tree and road work projects done with the lack of School Busses and normal traffic.

All of our folks remained healthy and continue to do so.

All the distance meeting and open communications worked great, thank you to everyone that made those possible.

As far as planning for the future, we have accelerated our planned work for the summer. Our goal is to complete our bigger projects by September 1, which will put us in a good positioned for any unknowns of the fall.

As our buildings open back up to the public, we will continue with the enhanced cleaning and thus far it seems to be working well.

Vicki Clark – Director of Economic Development

Vicki has indicated that she has well over 300 businesses in the business directory but states that it has not been updated in many years. It is a goal of hers for this summer to update it, but presently, we would not have a record of those businesses that have either started a business or went out of business for the last five years or so. She does have a Facebook page with a number of followers and would be happy to put the recommended survey out to the Economic Development social media community.

We can perhaps get a business list from the tax office and cross- reference to reach more businesses.

Steve Jacobs, R.S Somers Health Department and Water Pollution Control

So far – I would say the businesses and residents have been very understanding and cooperative in compliance with the Governor’s orders.

Brian Czpala, School Superintendent

Dialogue with Brian was focused on communication and messaging to the student body and their families. There are approximately 1375 students and an email directory of approximately 4,500. The contact information gets purged regularly to ensure the information is accurate. August 1st graduating student’s information gets purged and Kindergarteners get added. The school uses School Messenger as a platform. Further discussion about the content of his messaging and the process by which the information gets reviewed and proofread was helpful to the group. And those who have had the pleasure of receiving his emails, enjoy the levity that is brought with each closing.

2. Identify immediate needs as of today: Individuals (high, medium and low risk), and businesses (create spread sheet and identify all the registered businesses and contact information, put them into sectors (see below) so that we track them throughout each phase. **Discussed above.**

Recommend some additional marketing effort by DSS so that all residents know what services are available to the community. **Continue to tag on to School emails to share information along with increased communication via social media.**

Sectors are as follows: Retail, accommodations, sports, restaurants, bars, manufacturing, professional and financial, personal services and small business, construction and development, arts, churches, entertainment venues, and services operations and non-profits. **Once we review what documents and records that we have, we can begin to categorize our business community and keep closer tabs on the impact that Covid-19 is having on them.**

3. Emergency Plans/Crisis Communication Plan

- Facebook

Everbridge – From Glen Reynolds - Our dispatch center, in Tolland, is able to send out emergency notifications immediately. Road closed due to accident, tree and wires down, flooded roads etc. To be able to send non-emergency messages the town would need to buy into the advanced model. It’s around \$5,000.00 to get in on it and from what I’m being told rather labor intensive. Meaning we would need to use it a lot for it to be a benefit. Another issue is that residents would need to sign up (opt in) for messages. So we would be relying on them to sign up to be able to get the messages.

It sounds like Jeff Golden is familiar with the program and I think they bought in to the advance program to be able to use it for OT jobs. Unless they can do it because they do their own dispatching as opposed to ours who is a regional dispatch center and can’t commit someone to be able to do that for all their clients.

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- Virtual Press Conferences with Selectmen and/or EMD
- Town Website – It was recommended that the town website have a dedicated COVID-19 section right at the top where all updated information goes. Allison Maynard made a really well received suggestion about letting people know what businesses and services in town are open and what they are able to provide etc...
- Radio Station
- Mailing for those that are not connected to the internet **Special edition of Somers Connect (Town has agreed to absorb the cost of the mailing)**

- Economic Development Facebook page
- Reverse 911
- Text
- Email

A good portion of the meeting was dedicated to communication. It was agreed that town officials seem to be working in Silos and within their area of expertise, they are doing a great job reaching all those who subscribe to that particular area ie. Seniors, Library, Recreation, Selectman’s Office etc.. There was agreement that there should be a more effective communication strategy that handles public relations, social media and the like to ensure that the town is speaking with one voice possibly through a single point of contact.

Recommend having a Covid-19 section on the town website for public comment and recommendations regarding the town’s response thus far.

Recommend creating a survey monkey to send out to businesses and to also post link on social media/website to invite individuals to take part in survey to share their specific experiences and the impact the pandemic has had, along with what assistance they may need to recover.

Recommended Survey questions:

1. Where did you hear about the survey ?
2. Rate the town’s response to COVID- 19
Satisfied
Not Satisfied

Comment: _____

3. If you have reached out to the town for any assistance related to COVID -19, did you receive it?

Comment _____

4. Do you still have unmet needs that the town can assist you with?

Comment _____

The sooner we identify the town’s verified unmet recovery needs such as food, health and medical needs, rent and mortgages, utilities and banking assistance, mental health, crisis counseling, the sooner we can complete an Impact Assessment and then, as a town, advocate for resources and funding at the local, state and federal level. **(Discussion for later meetings)**

4. Record keeping/Timeline of Events – Memorializing this entire pandemic and the Community’s response is essential. Assign this responsibility. **While this committee is doing this at a high level, each effected department so begin a chronology from day one so that they can all be compiled and prioritized should the information need to be utilized in the future as part of the Pandemic Emergency Plans in the event of a resurgence, 2nd wave or different strain of Covid.**

Meeting adjourned 8:32pm

Committee Members:

- Chris Boucher, Recreation Director**
- Anne Cournoyer, Chair**
- Jeff Golden, Captain Enfield Police Department**
- Dave Marti, Local Business Owner**
- Allison Maynard Director of Social Services**
- Paul Salva, MD**
- Bill Shapiro, Attorney**
- Glen Reynolds, Emergency Management Director (Liaison)**
- Tim Keeney, Selectman (Liaison)**