



NORTH COUNTY ECONOMIC RECOVERY ADVISORY BOARD

Findings and recommendations

Prepared by the office of Snohomish County Councilmember Nate Nehring
May 13th, 2020

Background

The North County Economic Recovery Advisory Board is one of five regional advisory boards in Snohomish County. The Advisory Board is under the umbrella of the Snohomish County Economic & Workforce Recovery Task Force. This Advisory Board was organized by Snohomish County Councilmember Nate Nehring to represent needs for economic recovery in the aftermath of COVID-19 in County Council District 1.

MEMBERSHIP

Nate Nehring - Councilmember, Snohomish County
 Barb Tolbert - Mayor, City of Arlington
 Connor Cummings - Financial Advisor, Edward Jones
 Dan Rankin - Mayor, Town of Darrington
 Darrick Smale - General Manager, Seattle Premium Outlets
 Debbie Barger Smith - Realtor, Windermere Real Estate
 Jay Downing - Board Chair, Stilly Valley Chamber of Commerce
 Jeff Ellingsen - Ellingsen Farm Inc.
 Jennifer Ferguson - City Administrator, City of Stanwood
 Jesica Stickles - President/CEO, Marysville-Tulalip Chamber of Commerce
 JJ Frank - Executive Director, Marysville YMCA
 John Clingen - Owner, Marysville Chick-Fil-A
 Jon Nehring - Mayor, City of Marysville
 Josh Vonjentzen - Board Chair, Granite Falls Chamber of Commerce
 Julie Vess - Executive Director, Stanwood Community and Senior Center
 Kam Bradley - Owner, Absolute Drywall
 Kevin McKay - Director of Marketing and Programs, Senior Aerospace AMT
 Kirstin Tyner - Branch Manager, Homestreet Bank
 Krista Morehead - Owner, Hanky Pies Coffee
 Leonard Kelley - Secretary/Treasurer, Snohomish County Labor Council
 Mandy Kruger - Executive Director, Stilly Valley Chamber of Commerce
 Matt Hartmann - Mayor, City of Granite Falls
 Matthew Rosenthal - General Manager, Holiday Inn Express and Suites Marysville
 Mike Impola - Owner, Cornerstone Homes
 Sara Hyatt - Owner, Hyatt Construction
 Shaina Holbeck - Board Chair, Stanwood Chamber of Commerce
 Shawn Yannity - Stillaguamish Tribe
 Tom Lane - Owner, Dwayne Lane's Auto Dealership

Methodology

A number of meetings and a survey were used to collect data and discuss challenges and ideas to form the findings and recommendations presented in this report. The following meetings and surveys were conducted:

- North County Economic Recovery Survey (questions and results included)
- Meeting of the Advisory Board on April 28th, 2020
- Sub-committee to discuss communication strategies on May 7th, 2020
- Sub-committee to discuss bulk PPE purchasing on May 7th, 2020

Findings

The following findings were challenges/observations identified by the Advisory Board:

- Lack of a clear timeline on re-opening
- Need for clear guidelines for safety and health requirements upon re-opening
- Need for more advanced notice on re-opening timelines and requirements
- Lack of resources (specifically for small businesses) including personal protective equipment (PPE), child care, sanitation equipment
- Identifying the interdependence of different industries and the challenges with industries opening at different times
- Need for streamlined permitting at the local government level to get residential construction moving quickly/make up for lost time
- Lack of consumer confidence once things are opened up
- How can Chambers be most helpful in response
- Marketing support for small businesses
- Need to open up recreational opportunities to help small businesses
- Certainty on the demand for products (specifically in aerospace)
- Apprenticeship programs are hurting
- How will housing market be affected after re-opening
- A reliable workforce after businesses are able to open/hire again
- Taxes and fees will be difficult for businesses attempting to recovery with limited revenues
- Regulations and regulatory burden will make recovery challenging for existing businesses and discourage new businesses from opening post-COVID

Recommendations

Based on feedback from the survey and meetings and follow-up conversations with multiple sub-committees, we make the following recommendations:

- Identify a streamlined communication method to businesses
 - Blast emails were identified as less than helpful due to the workloads individuals are facing
 - One central website for information including:
 - Timelines for opening
 - Requirements upon opening
 - Resources to help employers
 - Short videos to share information and updates, use social media
 - Have Chambers, Cities, Health District link to central website
- Set a more firm timeline for re-opening
 - Businesses need more certainty to plan for their re-opening
 - Timeline needs to have more specifics
- Guidance/Requirements need to be provided sooner
 - If businesses are needing to abide by certain restrictions/regulations, they need time to plan for that
 - Information coming out sooner will allow them time to plan to be ready for when they can open
- Bulk purchasing/purchasing co-op for PPE and sanitation equipment
 - Employers are having difficulties making PPE and sanitation purchases
 - Establish a purchasing co-op or stockpile that businesses can access
 - Chambers can assist with distribution to businesses in their communities
- Share success stories of businesses who have been creative
 - Preparing and sharing short videos or articles of businesses who have adapted to restrictions and limitations
 - Sharing ideas with other businesses may help with challenges they are facing
- Reduce the tax/fee burden on businesses where feasible
 - Most of these burdens exist at the state level. Need to advocate for relief at higher levels
- Explore regulatory relief at the state and local level to support business recovery
 - Reducing barriers for existing and potential new businesses will help expedite recovery

Appendix

North County Economic Recovery Survey Responses

What needs does your business/organization have as we look toward an economic recovery?

1. Back to work. Too early to tell but once we're allowed back to work we'll be able to see how many sales are going to hold together, how much home prices have adjusted, will sales begin happening again immediately or will there be a lag, etc.? Review and Permitting of land development projects timely for current season project starts by June.

Our needs are somewhat limited. As an essential industry we have been able to keep normal working hours but have been conducting business virtually through phone calls, WebEx, etc. Our clients however, have been impacted. Specifically business owners need to have clear guidance on how to use government recourses to bridge the gap of financial needs. Receiving information about government programs that we can pass on to our clients who may benefit

We need to do everything we can in our community to eliminate the fear our citizens have, from fear of the virus to fear of losing your business and/or employment. Release the sign people!

* Ways to support our local businesses as they try to rebuild after this COVID-19 shutdown. *Ideas for local government on how to assist those who have lost income through this time or may have also lost their job.

Need to fill open capacities resulting from depressed aerospace market

Allowed Social Distanced face to face commerce for Low-Density retailers like us.

A scientific timeline for recovery. What to expect from the government over the next year.

City, Count and State inspections to move smoothly and education of employees and other trades to allow for maximum productivity while remaining safe.

Available work force, available supplies to farm and a profitable market for farm products.

Up to date information on programs and resources, continued support from local government, constant effective communication.

Working in the public without fear of virus contact, Revenue stability.

Up to date information on programs and resources for our members as well as continued support from local leaders as well as continued on-time communication from SBA and Economic Alliance.

Bringing business and tourism back to Northern Snohomish county to fill our hotel once reopened.

A clear strategy for reentry into open commerce

Get our staff back to work

What ideas do you have for how local and/or state government can help to address those needs?

State government can deem construction "essential" and allow work to begin again. Local government can support Master Builders and others who are communicating this need to the governor. Local government can continue providing inspections for any work that is currently deemed "essential". Deadlines, such as permits, vesting, etc. may need to be extended.

Several system ideas for return to business for not just my industry but several others.

Let people work having a safe environment and help get the farm commodities to the table.

Technology and innovation. I believe effective communication is going to come in the form of methods we haven't capitalized on yet. Zoom seems to be working well for meetings. Facetime and text can also be very effective. Also, knowing what resources are available and easily accessible, and or who to contact with questions about programs and fact checking information is important as well.

More frequent Zoom meetings with allotted time for question and answer sessions. Informational videos made for the public in order to simplify programs and verbalize the resources that are out there. Example: videos made by Suzi Levine have been helpful in reiterating UE process in calming manner and help to make a visual touch point with the public. Videos work best for those who interpret information best by auditory or visual means.

map which industries will have bigger impacts and can provide a natural boost to other industries.

Advocate to the Governor to let businesses go back to work and keep our citizens safe at the same time.

Create a three phase recovery plan similar to Utah's, which covers the current Urgent phase, then Stabilization and followed by the Recovery phase. Sample shown here: <https://issuu.com/goed/docs/utah-leads-together-plan/2?ff>

Cost pressures, including taxes, may be daunting for the foreseeable future. Tax relief or deferral should be explored.

Our State needs more aggressive direct investment incentives to attract new business. Other States offer direct support not available under Washington State constitution.

* tax breaks or rebates * cuts in fees * reducing regulations * extending permits * extending terms on payments to government agencies owed by businesses or citizens who have lost income or been negatively impacted by this shutdown * no utility shutoffs or late fees * local community grant programs or larger state grant programs for citizens and businesses negatively impacted

Local government needs to communicate the appropriate ways to do business in this new environment, the community needs to hear that we will not have our economy ruined and that we can survive and move forward. Communicate and utilize science

to make informed decisions. A careful and pro-active assessment could be made for many different businesses to allow those businesses to go back to work.

If we were to receive a news letter, email or flier with updated information on certain programs this would eliminate the need for us to do our own research as it would be coming directly from a reliable source.

Continue processing applications, and submittal reviews.

How do you see your business/organization operations changing as the economy begins to open back up?

Too early to tell but once we're allowed back to work we'll be able to see how many sales are going to hold together, how much home prices have adjusted, will sales begin happening again immediately or will there be a lag, etc.?

Training and educating on how safety and production will work together.

Again, technology and innovation. making meetings and events more accessible and interactive with virtual attendance.

discovering new ways to communicate. Further connect the community to businesses and businesses to resources. Creativity is key.

I think we will be doing more business as we do now.

Our chamber is doing videos and utilizing technology to connect with members. Our meetings and events need to be accessible virtually as well as the information we put out as we continue to offer current and on-time resources to members daily.

it will be a slow start and travelers have to feel confident to once again travel as we return to a normal state of business

Ensuring sustainability with workforce and resilience of financial operations

Putting more CDC recommendations on what we can and cannot do.

We will need to increase business outreach to assist small business owners with opening back up, increasing their customer base and financial stability.

Most likely will be a measured ramp up as consumer confidence recovers.

Contraction and diversification strategy.

Implementing more standardized physical distancing in offices and on job sites. Strict stay at home and "send home" policies for anyone with any sickness. using video and tele-conferencing for internal and external meetings where it makes sense. Some extended work from home options particularly for more vulnerable employees who might be more at risk.

I would continue to offer "safe" houses with specific guidelines for showing homes, work with Buyers and Seller using Facemasks, if needed, gloves and so on.

The biggest change is the ability to meet with clients and other members of the community face to face. Our branch will do more and have already been doing electronic communication and use technology to enhance our relationships. As the economy opens back up we will be able to provide more in person communication.

Costs will increase and revenues will be reduced.