

# Town of Lovettsville

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Commerce and Business Development Committee

**FROM:** Rob Ritter, Town Manager

**DATE:** April 13, 2020 Meeting

**SUBJECT:** Potential COVID-19 Business Support Initiatives

### ISSUE:

Consider temporary support initiatives for the Lovettsville Town businesses while the Town, County, and State go through the COVID-19 pandemic.

### BACKGROUND:

The Governor has initiated a State of emergency until June 10, 2020 and on March 26, 2020, the Town Council adopted an Ordinance by declaring local emergency, designating Town liaison for emergency response purposes, and providing for continuity of government.

### ANALYSIS:

The Mayor and Town Manager made phone calls to commercial businesses to assess the impact of the pandemic on their the businesses, determine if they were aware of Federal assistance such as the Payroll Protection Program (PPP) and the Economic Injury Disaster Loan Emergency Advance, and get their input on potential measures the Town could take to assist them.

Following is a list of the situations the businesses are facing stated during the phone calls:

- Most had increased sales over January, February, and March from where they were last year.
- Most are now operating with 30%-50% lower revenue than were they were last year.
- All have had to change their service offerings, either due to market drivers or mandates.
- Some have either had to release staff and local employees.
- The rest had to shut down business completely.

During the phone calls, they also discussed the following potential Town initiatives to gather their input. This is an aggregate of all the potential initiatives, both brought by the Town and others recommended by businesses.

- Utilizing the remaining Tourism/Marketing/Branding line item budget (\$2,950) on a newspaper and Facebook ads, and two banners along Rt. 287 to advertise that Lovettsville is still open for business and to continue encouraging shopping local.

- A temporary meals tax holiday to increase possible consumer spend in restaurants the 3% we usually collect in meals tax.
- Suspending all late fees, similar to what we have done for utilities.
- Pushing BPOL (business licensing) to 30 days after the new IRS filing date. This would move the expenditures of renewing business licenses until August 15th.
- Town purchasing gift cards to use at upcoming Town Events.
- Small grant for commercial utilities.
- Concentrate all funding on a large Town event to kickstart the local economy when this is over.

Staff also generated a survey, using Survey Monkey, to send to 58 home-based businesses. Twelve responses were received for a 21% response rate. The results of the calls and survey are being presented to the Commerce and Business Development Committee in order to help the Committee develop recommendations for the Town Council's consideration at the April 16 meeting.

If committee members have any other recommendations, please share them and we will incorporate them into the process.

#### MOTION:

"I move to recommend the following support initiatives for the local Town businesses and to forward these recommendations to the Town Council to be discussed this Thursday, April 16, 2020 for possible adoption:

- 1.
- 2.
- ...

#### ATTACHMENTS:

1. COVID-19 Business Responses
2. Home-Based Business Survey Results
3. Potential COVID-19 Business Support Initiatives and Budget Impacts