

## COVID-19 • Rural Islands Economic Response & Recovery Webinar • April 9, 2020

### ACTION ITEMS SUMMARY

Today's meeting will begin with a brief presentation by Bowen Island, Gabriola Island, and Mudge, and De Courcy, and Salt Spring Island. They're going to be talking about key actions and initiatives these past 10 days, most effective communication tools that have been utilized, any advocacy or coordination with local government to move forward with the response, and also share a personal reflection or good news story.

#### **A. Rod Marsh – Chair, Bowen Island Community Economic Development Committee**

- a) Have conducted 3 Bowen Business Digital Meetups focused on financial health. Our philosophy on Bowen is Restarting, Recovering and Thriving. We had 80 participants on our first call, 60 on our second and 50 on our third.
- b) We are fortunate to have a fantastic facilitator who is a contractor on Bowen
- c) Bowen has a municipality on the Island which has been beneficial during this COVID time; this has resulted in a very good response to this emergency in many different ways
  - Municipality website added an Emergency Operations tab
  - Council immediately began meeting by Zoom
  - Staff have been provided to assist in keeping essential businesses open including the General Store, the Bowen Building Centre and others which has reduced stress on business owners and employees
  - Maureen Nicholson, a Councillor, launched a FB page called Flatten the Curve intended to be a daily call out for anyone who needs help on Bowen
- d) Editor of the local newspaper has been providing updates about which businesses are open or closed, and sharing information about various neighbourhoods
- e) Health Centre Foundation has initiated Zoom town hall meetings focused on health matters; presenters are health care professionals
- f) Initiating a Zoom Business Drop-in based on type of business to allow for more discussion and sharing of information
- g) Have encouraged businesses to participate in BC Chamber and Canadian Chamber surveys; Canadian survey is being linked to Stats Can; Canadian Chamber has initiated a Canadian Business Resilience Network;
- h) Planning to work with a local landlord to set up a resource person with a computer and access to internet as a place for people to acquire information directly

#### **B. Julie Sperber– Community Economic Development Officer for Nanaimo Regional District Area B (Gabriola, Mudge and DeCourcy)**

- a) Partnered with local investment co-operative to initiate micro-loans as financing bridge while people wait for Provincial and Federal programs to start; \$30,000 fund; Chamber is paying the interest; about \$12,000 has been loaned in amounts between \$500 and \$2,500
- b) *Couch Fest* directed to the performers, online events where performers can sell tickets for \$5-\$10, all proceeds to go to the people doing the shows
- c) Posting signs at places like hardware stores and ferry terminal geared towards trades people
- d) Making weekly phone calls to retailers

- e) Monthly newsletter has become weekly
- f) Weekly Zoom meetup with a guest speaker geared towards businesses
- g) Gabriola has created the Gabriola Emergency Response and Recovery Committee; 22 individuals from different organizations along with elected officials; this group meets weekly for 2 hours
- h) Maintain an updated hours list of local businesses and share with residents via newsletter, social media and bulletin boards in high traffic areas
- i) Providing form letters to businesses that they can modify and send to their MPs and MLAs
- j) Discussions beginning with commercial property owners about the school tax initiative to encourage them to pass on savings to their tenants
- k) Farmers' Market beginning on May 19 but participation is limited

**C. Jessica Harkema – Executive Director, Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce**

- a) Primary role of advocacy, particularly to upper levels of government regarding non credit support, grant subsidies, etc.;
- b) Letter to MLA Adam Olsen and live FB talk with him viewed by 710 people; similar letter to Elizabeth May who reached out personally to some of our local businesses and then took their issues to the Minister of Finance
- c) Participating in the Canadian Chamber of Commerce calls and posing questions to top people in a variety of areas
- d) About to launch a survey to about 600 businesses using Google Docs and Constant Contact
- e) Have initiated a Business and Farm Response Recovery Task Force
- f) Five southern Gulf Islands are collaborating

**ADDITIONAL UPDATES**

**A. Rob Pingle – Salt Spring Market Society**

- a. Disconnect with community regarding in supporting a farmers' market as they deem it to be a market for tourists
- b. Some farm products being sold on localline.ca but the organization is currently overwhelmed and unable to keep up with demand

**B. Yael Wand – Salt Spring Arts Council**

- a. Communicating with funders and opportunities are available
- b. Communicating through social media and distributing a Newsletter every second week
- c. Launched new FB page called Salt Spring Island Cultural Connections for artists and performers to share what they are doing and encourage support from others

**C. Natasha Vaz – Bowen Island**

- a. Platform called Eventbrite (free) could be very useful for artist to earn money through donations or ticket sales

**D. Jeff Knutson – Island Savings Salt Spring Island**

- a. Island Savings will have their COVID \$40,000 loans platform open by April 9<sup>th</sup>
- b. <https://www.islandsavings.ca/covid-19/financial-relief-for-businesses>

**E. Francine Carlin – Rural Islands Economic Partnership**

- a. COVID-19 INFO HUB launching week of April 13<sup>th</sup>
- b. Islands Gift Certificate Directory 'soft launch' by May 30<sup>th</sup>