

Economic Recovery Branch Meeting

Meeting Minutes

3:00 PM-4:30PM | MARCH 23, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON ST, FT MYERS | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

On March 23, 2023, The Economic Recovery Branch Meeting convened at 3:03 PM with the following members present:

- Dominic Cameratta, Co-Lead
- Chad Criswell, Co-Lead
- Ben Spence
- Rob Wells
- Donna Germain
- Ben Siegel

Facilitators and Branch Support:

- Jon Romine
- Tessa LeSage
- Ilani Fernandes
- Robbie Heere
- Harrison Newton

Introductions

Dominic Cameratta, Branch Co-Lead, welcomed the team and provided Branch members with his background and experience in Lee County. Branch members introduced themselves.

Review of the Recovery and Resilience Planning Structure and Timeline

Ms. LeSage presented on the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and Branches including the RTF seeking initial priorities when they meet on March 24th.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ms. LeSage reviewed the main responsibilities of the Branch and members, including the development of the community engagement plan, initial branch priorities, and the branch action plan. Branch support staff also reviewed the requirements of Sunshine Law.

Initial Branch Priorities Discussion

At 3:19 PM, Ms. LeSage opened the discussion on initial branch priorities. The following topics were discussed by members:

Initial Branch Priorities:

- Identify partnerships and incentives supporting the workforce, such as affordable housing near jobs:
 - Investment in housing solutions that effect overall economic growth;
 - Housing choices for families;
 - Improving transportation system;
 - Housing located closer to jobs;
 - Incentivizing workforce and affordable housing to support economy;
 - Lowering costs of housing;
 - Mechanism to lower costs of housing to be closer to jobs, loss of productivity;
 - Business needs to be able to access workforce pipeline;
 - Develop solutions in supporting labor market; and
 - Supporting a well-rounded workforce.
- Identify short-term actions that support the rapid recovery of businesses, including access to financing and marketing the tourism-based economy:
 - Residents' ability to re-establish businesses;
 - Funding opportunities for reopening business;
 - Review existing economic plans and identifying key metrics and data needed to track recovery;
 - Assess current economy inflows and outflows;
 - Supporting and sharing information with small businesses in their recovery (from RTF members);
 - SBA loans for businesses in short term;
 - IRS tax deduction post-disaster loss;
 - Assessment of businesses and analysis of economic loss to measure economic progress;
 - Loss of tax revenue and economic hit of affected areas;

- Longer survey of data to incorporate pandemic and hurricane losses;
- Access to capital for business in short term and long term;
- Loans similar to PPP that help businesses;
- Improvements of process for SBA disaster loans; and
- Awareness marketing and public campaigns through the Visitor Convention Bureau and Visit Florida.
- Rebuild more public access to natural resources:
 - Build infrastructure to support tourism season;
 - Economic benefit of access to economic drivers;
 - Commercial redevelopment of coastal and beach areas;
 - Consideration of tourism, attractions, and economic drivers; and
 - Access to drivers for tourism and the economic impact of those places.
- Prioritize industry-sector growth to build a resilient economy:
 - Business retention and development, new sector development, investment attraction, and local economy self-reliance;
 - Role of fishing industry in local economy (from RTF members);
 - Gap analysis of industries with the goal of diversifying sectors;
 - Conducting a sector-by-sector analysis post storm to develop a competitive and resilient economy;
 - Prioritizing resilient industries in a hurricane prone area;
 - Quicker recovery leads to a faster economic recovery.

Ms. LeSage reminded the Branch that the outlined priorities will be reported to the RTF. The discussion on initial priorities ended at 4:12 PM.

Branch Community Engagement Strategy Discussion

Ms. Lesage presented opportunities for community engagement in the Recovery and Resilience Planning process including, On the Table (OTT) community dialogues, public meetings, public workshops, social media, online surveys, regular Branch meetings, and Town Hall events. Public workshops will occur in April to engage Subject Matter Experts (SME), including county and municipal experts, to provide information.

Branch members agreed about the importance of talking with other branches since work is interconnected and initiatives will be collaborative. Additionally, opportunities to collaborate amongst community organizations were agreed upon to make it easier to obtain funding.

Mr. Criswell asked about the website survey being shared amongst members to share with their networks to increase the number of individuals reached. The survey will be shared on the Resilient Lee website for individuals to access.

Next Steps

Branch members discussed the schedule of meetings. Members discussed that Wednesday afternoons would be the best days to accommodate schedules for the members.

Public Comment

No public comment request.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Mr. Romine thanked the Branch Leads for their participation. Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM on March 23, 2023.