

Economic Recovery Branch – Lee County Recovery Task Force

Meeting Minutes

3:00 – 4:30 PM | JULY 13, 2023 | COLLABORATORY | 2031 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 100,
FORT MYERS, FL 33901 | PUBLIC MEETING

Call to Order

At 3:00 PM on July 13, 2023, Chad Criswell and Dominic Cameratta, Branch Co-Leads, convened the Economic Recovery Branch meeting. The following members were present:

- Chad Criswell, Co-lead
- Dominic Cameratta, Co-lead
- Jim Magnus
- Donna Germain
- Lindsay Burch (on behalf of Frank Bonafilia)
- Bill Johnson, Jr.
- Kevin Barbot
- Jonathan Gabel
- Rob Wells
- John Lai
- Jay Johnson
- Ben Spence
- Ben Seigel
- Steven Weathers

Facilitator and Branch Support:

- Tessa LeSage, Collaboratory
- Robbie Heere, Hagerty Consulting
- Shanna Snider, Hagerty Consulting

Introductions

Tessa LeSage, Branch Facilitator, provided a review of the work of the Recovery Task Force (RTF) and its Branches. Ms. LeSage reviewed the timeline for the RTF, indicating the project

is nearly halfway complete and emphasizing the transition to Phase Two of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (the Plan) which includes identification and confirmation of Initiatives to align with Branch-specific Priorities.

Branch Initiatives Discussion

Ms. LeSage provided an example of an Initiative, the Projects that support it, and the method to understand the documents to be prepared by the Branch.

Mr. Gabel asked about the purpose of the Initiative to lower insurance rates. Members agreed that the Initiative attempts to address higher insurance rates deterring people moving to and living in the Lee County region.

Mr. Seigel inquired about the incorporation of incentives in the Initiatives. Members agreed to explicitly include incentives in the Initiatives. Mr. Johnson asked if the incentives would support businesses or individuals in the workforce. Mr. Cameratta discussed that young people may not stay in the region as they enter the workforce and showed support for Initiatives that incentivize the workforce to stay. Members agreed to support mixed-use zoning and facilities to incentivize business development.

Members specified that property, flood, and liability insurances are barriers to businesses and economic development and noted that health insurance and car insurance may not be as high. Mr. Spence suggested adding connectivity to address and support future growth.

Members agreed to support pre-disaster planning and pre-enrollment for a disaster-focused loan fund. Mr. Wells suggested marketing grants be leveraged from the tourism-based economy. Mr. Lai stated that this is the first time the business community has utilized funding within the immediate area to market local attractions.

Ms. LeSage summarized the Members' request to develop and implement a marketing strategy to support a diverse tourism-based economy post-disaster. This strategy could include providing resources for marketing, leveraging short-term tourism, and identifying conditions that warrant the use of reserve marketing funds. Mr. Seigel suggested using resources to leverage the tourism industry post-event. Members discussed the establishment of criteria to trigger the utilization of marketing and tourism dollar reserves. The Initiative would provide criteria for use and a funding source for post-disaster tourism recovery.

Mr. Cameratta discussed private property rights pre- and post-disasters for beaches and other natural resources. Mr. Johnson stated that natural resources include more than beaches and should be inclusive of rivers. Members agreed that finding incentives to

promote long-term access to public lands and include beaches in a resilient economy could be put forward as an Initiative.

Members supported the Initiative connecting targeted industry employers with workforce training and education programs and agreed to add the term “talent pipeline”. They also supported identifying targeted industry areas able to accommodate industry growth and taking transportation infrastructure into consideration. Mr. Siegel supported the idea that connecting employers to employees will make the economy more resilient. Dana Brunett, Senior Business Development Specialist, Lee County, was recognized as a subject matter expert and suggested creating an environment to bring in targeted industries, including identifying areas, infrastructure, and other needs to develop specific industries.

Branch Technical Briefs

Members did not request any technical briefs.

Questions and Next Steps

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for August 3, 2023, from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM.

Public Comment

No request for public comment.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Ms. LeSage thanked the members for attending and adjourned the meeting at 4:18 PM.