



Date: April 27, 2020

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: John Keisler, Director of Economic Development 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Economic Relief Package Update—Hospitality Task Force**

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On April 14, 2020, the City Council unanimously adopted 25 individual actions related to a local [Economic Relief Package](#) designed to help working families and small business owners impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the projects approved by the City Council directed the City Manager to “Develop a plan with strategies for the recovery of the visitors, business travel, leisure tourism, conventions, and overnight room stays citywide and return to the City Council with potential programs to significantly increase local tourism when the ‘Safer at Home for Control of COVID-19’ Health Order is lifted.”

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update regarding the project, actions taken to date, potential fiscal impacts, and recommended next steps for City Council consideration.

### **Background**

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, the City Council directed the City Manager to work with the City Attorney, and all relevant departments, to evaluate the feasibility of implementing an “Economic Relief Package” for working families and small businesses impacted by COVID-19. After extensive discussion, the package of initiatives adopted by the City Council included two broad policy areas and nine more specific issues for consideration. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, the City Manager returned to the City Council with an [item](#) to review a report on the Coronavirus Economic Relief Package for Long Beach families and small businesses and provide input and policy direction to staff on economic relief strategies for working families and small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 emergency, as detailed in the report.

### *Hospitality Recovery Task Force*

In response to City Council direction, staff immediately began outreach to subject matter experts in the local hospitality and tourism industry in Long Beach’s entertainment districts to identify local operators of hotels, restaurants, transportation, attractions, and event spaces, to provide input about steps they are taking to: (a) make their businesses safe for workers and visitors, and (b) prepare their businesses for reopening after the COVID-19 emergency has ended. In addition to staff outreach, the Long Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), which contracts with the City to recruit conferences, conventions, trade shows, and other visitor-serving events at the Long Beach Convention Center, provided key insights about the range of activities and expertise that is needed to protect the health and wellbeing of visitors and workers in the hospitality industry.

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On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Hospitality Recovery Task Force (Task Force) met for the first time to review the City Council direction, discuss current efforts, and make recommendations about how to safely reopen the local hospitality and tourism sectors for visitors and workers. Task Force members attending the first meeting include:

- Andres Ingles, Thai District Restaurant Owner
- Bill Rouse, Long Beach Yellow Cab General Manager
- Charlie Beirne, ASMG General Manager
- Daniel Abernathy, Atrium Hospitality President
- Dan Salas, Harbor Breeze Owner
- Greg Guthrie, Hotel Maya General Manager
- Hitu Patel, Best Western and Roadway Hotels Owner
- Imran Ahmed, Airport Marriott General Manager
- Jimmy Loizides, George's Greek Café Restaurant Owner
- John Thompson, Westin Hotel General Manager
- John Rouse, Aquarium of the Pacific Vice President of Operations
- Jon Benson, Hyatt Regency General Manager
- Karen Englund, Renaissance Hotel General Manager
- Kurt Peterson, Unite Here
- Larry Black, Varden Hotel Owner
- Mark Frances, Queen Mary General Manager
- Mike Newfeld, Gaslamp Restaurant Owner
- Milton Duena, Economic Development Commissioner and Union Organizer
- Mooyon Kim, Holiday Inn Long Beach Airport Hotel General Manager
- Steve Goodling, Convention and Visitors Bureau CEO
- Sweitlana Cahill, Hilton Hotel General Manager
- Terry Antonelli, L'Opera Owner
- Todd Lemmis, Pacific6 Founding Partner

The above list of Task Force members does not include members of City staff from the City Manager (Special Events), Health and Human Services, City Attorney, and Economic Development Departments, who presented information, answered questions, and took notes from the group discussion; nor does it include business and community members that staff has contacted for input outside the Task Force meeting.

### **Equity Lens**

Consistent with recommendations from the Equity Toolkit, staff sought input from a diverse range of businesses in the hospitality industry. This includes perspectives from owners and operators of hotels, restaurants, transportation providers, event spaces, and local attractions, as well as representatives of workers and worker protections. Although the largest concentration of hospitality businesses is concentrated in the downtown area, which drives the highest numbers of visitors for both business and leisure, staff also solicited input from hotels and restaurants

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outside the downtown area. To address issues of gender, ethnic, and cultural diversity among Task Force members themselves, staff have also included input from multiple women and people of color that represent leadership roles in the regulatory agencies including transportation, environmental health, legal, and special events. Staff will continue to seek more input from a diverse range of geographic and demographic groups.

### **Next Steps**

The purpose of the Economic Relief Package initiative approved by the City Council is to develop a plan with strategies for the recovery of the visitors, business travel, leisure tourism, conventions, and overnight room stays citywide and return to the City Council with potential programs to significantly increase local tourism when the 'Safer at Home for Control of COVID-19' Health Order is lifted. Listed below are the anticipated next steps:

- Continue staff outreach to both Task Force members and other subject matter experts recommended by the City Council to identify best practices to ensure the health and safety of visitors and workers;
- Present Task Force findings to the City Health Officer and City Attorney for review and reconciliation with both City and State Health Orders;
- Prepare a gold standard plan to safely reopen Long Beach restaurants, hotels, attractions, transportation, and event spaces that addresses health and safety for both visitors and workers;
- Develop a communications plan to market and promote the plan to potential visitors; and,
- Report back to the City Council for final review, recommendations, and further direction.

It is anticipated by staff that there will be one more Task Force meeting at the end of April to review the initial report and that the City Manager will provide an update to the City Council about the progress of this and other Economic Relief Package initiatives at a public meeting in early May.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Currently, there is no additional fiscal impact to the City for the Task Force as work conducted to date has been performed by existing City staff from departments responsible for the support or regulation of hospitality businesses. There may be unbudgeted fiscal impacts if the City Council directs staff to expand current efforts or to implement recommendations from the final report. These costs are unknown at this time but will be included as part of the final report back to the City Council once ready.

## Conclusion

Thank you for your leadership during this critical time in our City history. Our residents and businesses are fortunate to have leaders that recognize the significance of the economic emergency caused by this novel public health crisis and will benefit from the collective action and collaboration of government, nonprofit, and private sectors. Please do not hesitate to direct specific questions regarding this effort to me at [john.keisler@longbeach.gov](mailto:john.keisler@longbeach.gov) or 562-570-5282.

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