



Renewable Juneau

Date: April 13, 2020

RE: Economic Stabilization Task Force - Assembly Recommendations

To: Economic Stabilization Task Force

We are awakening to a new world as our society's practices, assumptions, and priorities shift due to the events of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential that Juneau's leadership approach this time in-between in a deliberate and compassionate manner, understanding that we have this moment to design a more equitable and sustainable community that is better equipped for an uncertain future.

For the past four years, Renewable Juneau has spent its time and energy addressing the use and growth of Juneau's renewable energy resources. While this remains our core focus, we have expanded beyond our normal scope of concern in this letter due to the unique significance of the coronavirus situation.

Renewable Juneau encourages the Economic Stabilization Task Force to keep the following principles in mind:

Follow public health guidelines: Continue to support the CBJ's fact-driven approach to using the best medical information so that we do not overwhelm our local health care capacity with new cases.

Focus on social priorities: The corona virus shines a spotlight on the least fortunate and most vulnerable in our community. Identify the local projects and local initiatives that can be undertaken to improve the situation for those with lower incomes in the community, in terms of affordable housing, utility and energy costs, child care, and transportation. Investing in these solutions will build us a stronger and more resilient community.

Assist small businesses affected by the coronavirus: Consider setting up an office to assist qualifying businesses to apply for local, state and federal assistance. With multiple loan programs being established, there is likely to be redundancy, confusion, and extra paper work in the application process. It might be helpful to have a one-stop small business aid shop, an area that the Juneau Economic Development Council can perhaps help facilitate.

Use existing plans and priorities as guiding documents: Juneau's Comprehensive Plan, Housing Action Plan, Economic Development Plan, Renewable Energy Strategy, and the recommendations of the Visitor Industry Task Force, all include measures and projects that advance the community's long-term vision. These documents were developed and vetted through a transparent public process. Advancing these plans will save time, plus coalitions and partners are already in place to help advance them. Furthermore, the absence of a normal cruise season could allow for certain projects to proceed at an easier, less congested pace. An example of this type of project would be the electrification of the city's docks so that when the cruise ships return, more ships can plug in, thereby reducing both air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.

Support community energy self-sufficiency and energy efficiency: The CBJ should continue to support and invest in programs that reduce energy costs for businesses, residents, and local government and keep more money circulating in the local economy. These include projects like providing shore power for ships, electrifying heating and transportation loads, and reducing

President

Margo Waring

Directors

Steve Behnke
Anjuli Grantham
John Neary
Andy Romanoff
Sally Saddler
Kate Troll
Doug Woodby

P.O. Box 22227
Juneau, AK 99802

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the energy costs for public facilities and operations. These projects and policies can create local jobs, save money, and increase the community's resilience. For example, Bartlett Regional Hospital is one of the larger energy users in the community and could benefit from energy efficiency upgrades. Also, new tax credits could be created for energy efficiency and heat pump installations.

Focus on supporting local residents and Alaska-owned businesses: Now we must bolster our local enterprises through shop local and "staycation" marketing campaigns. For example, once the need for distancing is over, summer Fridays can be promoted as 'Food Truck Fridays'. By closing down Front Street and adding music, locals will be encouraged to support the food vendors (which are all local businesses) that will be missing the cruise ship business.

Continue advocating for a fully functional marine highway system: Given the overall importance of the ferry system to Juneau and Southeast Alaska's economy, now is not the time to let up on a campaign to adequately fund the ferry system. With Governor's Dunleavy recent vetoes, it is imperative that the Assembly work to make our ferry system functional.

Support Juneau as Alaska's mecca for independent and small boat tourism: It could be a long time before mega cruise-ships return to Juneau in numbers we have recently seen. Juneau should aggressively promote and market independent tourism and small boat cruise operations. It's long been demonstrated by the Alaska travel industry that independent and small boat tourism circulate far more revenue through the community than big boat tourism. In this same context, we should consider reviving the "Sails to Trails" program that promoted the Alaska Marine Highway as a means for independent travelers to visit and stay longer in local communities.

Beware the boondoggle: In moments of uncertainty and economic strife, we are particularly susceptible to seeking short-term gains by welcoming the expansion of big business and industry. Too often such projects only create a momentary salve for the economic interests of a few. Focus on the long-term sustainability of Juneau, not short-term gains that leave disappointment and disruption in their wake.

Build local and regional food security: Transportation intensive global supply chains will continue to be stressed due to the pandemic and climate change and we must have local capacity to provide ourselves with food. Some ideas for achieving this goal are to: support and incentivize local and regional food production, processing, and distribution; strengthen local producers and the non-profits that support them; streamline processes to make underutilized, already-developed CBJ land available for food agriculture and cold storage; explore USDA grants for high tunnel hoop houses, along with other forms of intensive agriculture; recommend that CBJ incentivize residential and business composting so that we have the requisite soil to expand food production; work with other Southeast communities to improve our regional food supplies.

Thank you for considering our suggestions and ideas,

Margo Waring

Board President

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Directors

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