

CITIZEN'S RESPONSE TASK FORCE – BACKGROUND & TIMELINE

In their [Portsmouth Herald guest editorial](#) outlining the idea, they suggested the Task Force would help in three ways:

1. "Expand the information suggesting a task force to address the urgent need from downtown restaurants, retail and arts businesses who might otherwise go out of business, leaving the downtown with empty storefronts.
2. Improve the adoption and adherence of proposed policies, and
3. De-politicize what should be a factual-based discussion."

The Councilors approved the motion unanimously and the Mayor asked for volunteers to serve via an online application process with a deadline of May 26.

Timeline of Activity

- May 18: City Council unanimously approves the idea. Mayor Becksted sets a deadline for citizens to apply to serve on the Citizen Response Task Force (CRTF).
- June 1: City Council meeting, where the City Manager presents guidelines for Public Realm Use from City staff engaged in the Public Realm Work Group (DPW, Fire, Police, Building Inspector, Planning, Health and Legal) that includes permit procedures for restaurants to expand their operations into the public realm.
- June 9: First meeting of the CRTF. Discussion of multiple resident small group ideas.
- June 10: CRTF meetings hears public safety and access guidelines and assessment of parking inventory/demand. "We understand the dire straits our businesses are in - we need something bold to respond." The group asks restaurants what they want and need. The idea of the Foundry Place Garage rooftop pop-up is brought forward, with DPW starting to explore logistics. A decision is made to form two subcommittees: Downtown Street Use and Foundry Place exploration of a nonprofit arts & culture performance space with restaurant participation.
- June 11: City Emergency Management Team discussion of logistical issues. Foundry subcommittee holds on-site meeting.
- June 12: Downtown Street Use subcommittee meeting and full CRTF meeting - plan for Foundry rooftop still in development, many questions to be answered. CRTF co-chairs prepare report to present to the City Council on June 15.
- June 14: Downtown Street Use subcommittee meeting, garnering input from restaurants and retail establishments.

- June 15: CRTF Co-Chairs report to City Council. Council delegates CRTF project approval authority to City Manager and allocates \$100,000 (to come from CARES Act funds).
- June 16: Downtown Street Use subcommittee meeting and creation of informational flyer seeking input from businesses and residents.
- June 17: CRTF meeting - report back that 20 restaurants are interested in using streets/parking spaces. DPW seeks plan to mobilize logistics. Foundry “not viewing as a foregone conclusion, lots of due diligence needed.”
- June 18: Foundry subcommittee meeting on-site with neighborhood. Adds North Sturtevant, architect with JSA Inc. and Eric Reuter, sound engineer, to the team.
- June 22: Downtown Street Use subcommittee reviews plans for use of Worth Lot, Market, Congress and Penhallow Streets. Restaurant applications begin in earnest, knowing that space will be available. Need for agreement from adjacent businesses, consider continued curbside pickup zones and access for pedestrians. City Council Meeting, at which the Co-Chairs address neighbor concerns and consider tents/umbrellas.
- June 23: DPW placement of barriers on Pleasant Street. Foundry subcommittee meeting in the evening via Zoom with neighborhood.
- June 24: CRTF Meeting. Rent relief memo from Steve Marchand discussed, recommended for further review by the Economic Development Commission. Agree that Downtown Street Use Subcommittee will meet Mondays and Wednesdays at 3 pm and Fridays at 9 am to review proposals/plans for space allocation to restaurants. DPW placement of barriers in the Worth Lot.
- June 29: Foundry subcommittee meeting, assesses budget for infrastructure and staffing. Need entrance/exit plan, electrical inspection, address Health questions on social distancing, FD code review.
- June 29: Downtown Street Use subcommittee meeting, reviews Penhallow plan for Cure, Ceres Street Bakery; State Street for Fezziwig’s; Market Street for Portsmouth Brewery. Working with Mr. Kim’s. Worth Lot use by Friendly Toast, Maison Navarre and Cafe Med approved.
- June 30: Foundry subcommittee discussion of suitability.
- July 1: CRTF Meeting. Foundry subcommittee presents recommendation on alternative site to resolve numerous concerns arising over use of the garage rooftop, including neighbors’ input on sound, parking, etc.
- July 6: Downtown Street Use subcommittee meeting discusses Commercial Alley access and liability insurance issues.
- July 8: CRTF Meeting.