The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the Las Cruces Economic Recovery Ad Hoc Board on June 18, 2020. The meeting was held via Zoom.

Members Present:
- Chris Schaljo, Chairman
- Debbi Moore, Vice Chair
- Michael Harris, Member
- Doug Cowan, Member
- Jolene Martinez, Member
- Sharon Thomas, Member
- Veronica Archuleta, Member
- Jane Bloom, Member
- George Miller, Member
- Brooke Montgomery, Member
- Ron Fitzherbert, Member

Staff Present:
- Griselda Martinez, Economic Development Director
- Francisco Pallares, Economic Development Deputy Director
- Paul Dahlgren, Director of Marketing & Communications, Visit Las Cruces
- Mandy Guss, Business Development Administrator
- David Maestas, Interim City Manager

Others Present:
- Jo Ann Garay

I. Call to Order: Chairman Schaljo called the meeting to order at 10am.

II. Conflict of Interest: There was none.

III. Acceptance of the Agenda: Board Member Moore moved to accept the agenda, second by Board Member Harris. Motion passes.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes: Not applicable for this meeting.

V. Discussion:

1. NM Safe Practices Promise: Mr. Dahlgren, Marketing Director at Visit Las Cruces presented. New Mexico Safe Promise is an initiative open to all businesses and individuals in New Mexico who want to demonstrate their personal commitment to following COVID safe practices. Developed by New Mexico Hospitality Association to encouraged COVID safe practices, help unify the state, and build consumer confidence. This would include using face covering in public, six-foot distance with other people, remaining
home when sick, washing hands frequently, following recommending hygiene practices, participating in any COVID-19 related training made available at the workplace. These are based on guidance from New Mexico Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control. This helps build a sense of community and self-accountability. 79% of Americans who claim to take a trip or getaway will research the location and how it is managing the COVID situation, which is showing consumers are interested in safety precautions are being taken. Better than half the travelers will be carrying hand sanitizer, following social distancing guidelines, avoiding crowds, and wearing a face mask. All destinations are involved in this effort in the state. Advertising via digital display, video, social medial, word of mouth, news releases, op-eds, interviews, other earned media. Initiative launched on June 8th, upward of 20,000 website visits and almost three-quarters were referred to the website through the referral links specific to Visit Las Cruces. (Video ad currently running in the state was shown.) Best way to get involved is make the promise, encourage other to make the promise, get the word out on sharing on social media, website, store fronts. Really discuss what the promise means with community members, staff, and customers.

Another initiative just launched as of Monday, geared specifically toward hospitality related businesses, hotel and lodging, restaurants, golf courses, tour operators, retail, spas, and salons. Free on demand series of trainings for owners and managers that aligns with COVID safe practices issues by the State. NMsafecertified.org for more information. Other modules will be added for other industries. Difference between NM Safe Certified Program and NM Safe Promise are that the NM Safe Promise is really open to anyone within any industry who wants to show their commitment to safety, and the Certified Program is currently open to only those hospitality related businesses and additional layer of accountability associated with the certification process.

Chairman Schaljo asked about Destination Analyst, and if the information was national or state specific. Mr. Dahlgren stated that information was from the State, but it was a national study. Board Member Cowan asked if there was data on what people are researching. Mr. Dahlgren stated he can request that information from the State and try and get more of the full study. Board Member Miller on the New Mexico State Promise, would it help to have teeth to it, like the New Mexico Safe Certification does. Mr. Dahlgren stated the site will give graphics for use to upload. Board Member Harris asked about a directory of businesses with Promises and Certifications. Mr. Dahlgren will check for that. Board Member Moore stated the Chamber is doing to try to do some directory type information of the Certifications.

2. Current Business Development Initiatives During COVID-19: Ms. Guss, the City’s Business Development Administrator discussed list of initiatives, collaborative partners, communications ongoing with
businesses, CE Labs did a flash assessment technical assistance program
launching for microloans, and overall contact information to help
businesses. City received a phone call with many of the resource partners
including Chambers, SVDC, and Arrowhead, New Mexico Economic
Development Department. Different programs have been launched with
each. Greater Chamber launched Zoom Fridays; City is helping promote.
SVDC used as a referral source. Arrowhead put a two-minute video talking
about things to adjust to COVID and what they are doing now for recovery.
New Mexico Economic Development Department launched “Buy for
Tomorrow Today” website and the City helped promote that. Idea was to
leverage all resources, be sure businesses knew what resources were
there, and referrals to help them through the issues. The City has a new
software program for business registration that requires an e-mail which has
helped in disseminating information. The LiftFund will help 50 businesses
and 20 of them should receive loans which will be totalling approximately
$500,000. This is hoping 20 businesses are retained that might have gone
out of business without it, or able to expand and grow, and 20 jobs will be
retained in the community.

Board Member Harris asked the average amount of the microloans in
partnering with LiftFund. Ms. Guss stated it depends on what the need is.
Ms. Martinez stated the loans range from $2,000 up to $100,000. Ms.
Garay what are the specific requirements businesses need to meet to
qualify of a loan. Ms. Guss stated those program details have not been
figured out yet. Board Member Harris asked if there was any forgiveness
part of the program if they used it for PPE or certain metrics. Are they low
interest loans with a long payback period or any more details? Ms. Guss
stated that LiftFund will be the technical advisor with the details. Chairman
Schaljo asked the timeframe doing the assistance, what is the longevity and
is it sustainable to continue to do this in the long run. Ms. Guss stated they
had started to look at program for this assistance prior to the COVID but not
off the ground yet. The agreement with a six-month pilot program with
COVID recovery as the focus. Ms. Martinez stated the reason they
partnered with LiftFund is that part of their mission is to do loans that may
not be as profitable as a traditional loan. Also gain traction for other
opportunities to continue this partnership and expand to other potential
funding sources. Board Member Harris asked specifically what kinds of
technical assistance, doing businesses that are self-proprietorship or not
focused on the financial aspects and helping them, bookkeeping etc. Ms.
Guss stated business coaching, business plan, but more importantly how
does that look financially.

Chair Schaljo asked about contacting NMSU Small Business Development
Center and having them assist with this. Board Member Miller stated start
getting down to small businesses and to get them fully functional, back up
and running. And asked about nonprofits, and not being able to rehire many
people. Board Member Miller suggested something like Workforce
solutions that pays for salaries as people are interning until the company
takes over and if there was something like that in the works. Ms. Guss explained that right now there is not something like that in place. Board Member Thomas stated that Workforce Connections and Workforce Talent Collaborative are in the process of doing business roundtables and sector strategies and see what the actual jobs and what kinds of employees they need. Being sure the training programs actually fit jobs that are available in these communities. Workforce Talent Collaborate has done Arrowhead, and next will be International Business, health. Board Member Thomas also asked about more information on the institution the City is working with as she works with public banking. Ms. Guss stated it is LiftFund and they have recently expanded into our region, and she will send out information to the whole group. Ms. Martinez they are working with Arrowhead and a program that was launched for business accelerators. A big component to the business accelerator was with COVID in mind was to find new markets and expand e-commerce. Working with them to partner for Las Cruces specific business accelerator. Board Member Montgomery stated they have various accelerators that are five to six weeks long and pivoted them to address the needs of COVID for small businesses and entrepreneurs. These were in place before, the difference is now they have some professionals in the community along with us doing one-on-one consulting on how businesses can pivot or how to address the needs of their clientele and bringing in revenues on time. Focusing on having one just in Las Cruces for small businesses.

Board Member Moore believes this Board needs to think about how to connect those employees with the job opportunities within the community, and for the long term. She suggested that might not know who is unemployed truly until July 31st. Businesses and employees both need to be kept in mind. Ms. Garay stated that many small businesses do not know how to use the PPP and the EIDL port, and others did not feel they need it. It would help with 24 weeks as after July 31st be able to hire some employees back. Need to educate the businesses on how to leverage that PPP to make a profit for the business but also get the employees back. Board Member Miller stated opportunity missing is job creation, new jobs.

Ms. Garay, Center Director for Small Business Development Center at Doña Ana Community College. They are one of 18 centers across the state who help persons to start or expand their businesses. They are offering live webinar trainings through the State office and with New Mexico Small Business Development Center at NMSBDC.org. Offering the different trainings and do not keep them recorded as there are different changes that are happening on a daily basis. They are offering consultations through phone and Zoom. And helping small businesses to walk through the EIDL. PPP flexibility act and changed from 75/25 which 75% to be used for payroll and 25% for payment on mortgage or rents, utilities, and interested on any loan that was incurred before February 20th. That changed it is now 60/40, so 60% can now be used for payroll. The 75% was hard to match. Extended forgiveness from eight weeks to 24 weeks especially for small
businesses that could not open; gyms, spas, restaurants. The portion not forgivable will turn into a 1% loan and extended from two years to five years and also help small business owner. Right now their biggest push is to get back to small business owners and help them apply for these loans to help them hopefully make a profit or stay open and bring employees back. Contact 527-7676 or sbdcinfo@nmsu.edu. Also stressing contingency plans for small businesses. Board Member Montgomery at the Arrowhead Center are entrepreneurship incubators.

3. Public Confidence During COVID-19: Board Member Cowan mentioned an article in the Las Cruces Bulletin that was helpful in sharing COVID data in population, infections, recovery, and then fatalities. The recovery rate and non-infection rate are high (90+ percentile) and this can be used to help. Don't minimize the real risk but maximize the successes. Board Member Martinez stated her concern is also to acknowledge some of the statistics and how they are disproportionately affecting people of color, people in poverty, people with diabetes, people with greater risk of illness. Also have to have a safety plan for families who are most at risk for exposure. So not only businesses are reopening, but also businesses have alternative plans for people most at risk. Board Member Harris mentioned people not in survival mode but who will not be accessing these services for other reasons; 30-70% will transition to telework, therefore less out to lunch. Believes there will be a big pivot in what kinds of businesses providing and kinds of services. Believes COVID is longer term at 24-36 months, and at least 14 months for a vaccine.

Chairman Schaljo stated this whole discussion topic is more so to make people feel comfortable going out. Let them know what business and industry is doing that is positive to help them feel more comfortable; entering with a mask, having sanitizing stations set up, talking about best practices and safe practices. Be sure to inform people. Board Member Cowan stated the purpose is an economic recovery. There are entities ensuring folks are educated to keep save, the PPE, etc. We want to reiterate we are utilizing those and offering alternatives. He has invested a lot on technology for people to attend services.

Board Member Cowan believes that to help those with less resources, need to make sure that those with some resources are able to get things moving. Board Member Moore stated for future presentations, MVEDA, Daven Lopez, did a consumer study. Maybe a presentation from the Health Department. Do a presentation from Tracy Bryan on the training piece. Board Member Montgomery being safe at church and noticed baptism was not addressed. Chairman Schaljo e-mailed a one page on the hospitality industry and what they are doing to make patrons comfortable. Board Member Harris asked if the City or County Health Department have ability to do enforcement or give rating to businesses which might help boost confidence. Mr. Pallares stated the City of Las Cruces does not have a Health Department; it would be the county. Chairman Schaljo stated the
Environment Department which is the State only is over things that deal with food and beverage and public sanitation or health, so no office buildings or a park etc. Board Member Moore stated the Certification with the state was to align with that and might help people feel safer and they receive a badge for the window. Suggested put cleaning schedule or what the business is doing up in writing so customers can see it. Board Member Thomas stated that in terms of wearing masks the County passed an ordinance that they were going to enforce, the City did not. Maybe ask the City for a certification. Ms. Martinez stated the only way to enforce something would be for it to become a piece of law through regulation. There was an extensive discussion behind the face covering in the form of an ordinance or resolution and based on that discussion it would be a great confrontation with the public and police would be the only enforcement. The certificate right now is only for hospitality related businesses. We need to create our own and making a broad effort including nonprofit and others have customers and clients.

Board Member Cowan asked for clarification, this Board is not implementing cumbersome regulatory actions from State entities. He thought the mission was to help with economic recovery and to make recommendations to the City Council to help businesses recover. Board Member Moore stated her preference would be to get governments and agencies on a grass roots campaign about being safe in our City. Should enforce ourselves, peer pressure is a powerful tool. Chairman Schaljo agreed. Board is more about economic recovery not putting burdens on the economy. Board Member Miller agrees with the campaign, wonderful idea for marketing, but if not a consistent buy-in from the community. Be careful with social compliance for the safety features recommended by the Health Department. Board Member Montgomery stated in moving forward defining when we want something to be regulatory mandated or if just suggesting to do something for the feeling of safety and to increase safety of our community. Chair Schaljo stated this is not a regulatory Board, more of an informational Board, brainstorming to give recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor on best ways to invigorate and reopen the economy. As far as Health Department, Environmental Department, sanitation and regulatory provided by the State and by the Governor, those are implemented. Need to focus on what to do in Las Cruces to build the economy back and make people feel comfortable about going out. Ms. Martinez confirmed the purpose the tis Board is to advise Mayor and City Council on the reopening of the economy. Board Member Martinez believes worker protections are a big part of consumer confidence, advising the City on how to support worker protections, like buying small businesses PPE or providing tax incentives for businesses who operate with safe practices, these would be ways to protect workers and families. Chairman Schaljo stated the State Health Department can be contacted for PPE gear if a business is unable to provide that. Board Member Thomas suggested discussing a certification via the City. Chairman Schaljo stated a certification would be totally different for each business, i.e. food and beverage, nonprofit, etc. See if
there are certifications the City could piggyback off of. Board Member Thomas was looking at a broad campaign of working with the City promise and encourage businesses. Letting the public know we are working on this, working together, keeping each other informed. Mr. Dahlgren noted the idea behind NMHA sort of doing it for the entire state would be that it sort of has that unifying effect for not just the City but the actual entire state. The Promise is a bit more broad and no strict accountability associated with it. Board Member Cowan stated already have an organization that businesses can sign on to, we could recommend as available. Making recommendations for businesses as part of a team. He loves the idea of a slogan to the campaign. Catchy slogan help people to buy into this thought and a positive thought would help folks looking at the successes to start focusing in on. Board Member Moore stated the certification videos are in place, and perhaps consider really identify Las Cruces Safe, or something that is very down to us or Las Cruces Promise.

VI. Future Discussion:
1. Topics to be discussed: Chairman Schaljo stated transportation to be one of next weeks discussion points. Continue public confidence, and Las Cruces Promise. Board Member Harris suggested a discussion on how businesses can leverage the PPE and EIDL loans and getting that information to the community. Mr. Pallares stated the City has echoed the message from our partners, and the Chamber has been pushing for the loans and doing webinars etc. Board Member Moore stated the Chamber will continue to do more information. So far they have done 12 seminars on COVID.

Chairman Schaljo mentioned a report to the Council from this Board. Mr. Pallares stated the report could be sequential to the City Manager and then the City Manager can provide it to the Mayor and City Council. Believes that since this is finite Board, constant communication on findings would be beneficial. Board Member Cowan believes meeting together in a public place would be a huge plus. Chairman Schaljo summarized topics:
a. Transportation.
b. Public confidence and Las Cruces Promise, with certificate for door.
c. Worker’s support and protections.
Board Member Moore moves topics of transportation, continuation of safe practices and consumer confidence, and worker’s support and protections, and Board Member Harris seconded. Motion passes.

VII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:14 p.m. Board Member Martinez motioned to adjourn.

Christopher Schaljo
Chairperson
Approved: Christopher Schaljo