

## Notes

### Mapping Our Road to Recovery

#### ***Part 4: Working together towards a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future***

Wednesday, June 24, 4:30-6pm

This session's recording can be found here: <https://youtu.be/7Z1Hd5HNUkl>

#### ***Part 4 Working together towards a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future***

**Partners:** Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, Town of Collingwood, On the Bay Magazine/The New Classical 102.9FM, Municipality of Meaford and the Municipality of Clearview. It is great to see and acknowledge a growing number of partners as the series unfolded. Many thanks to all of them.

These sessions have been organized and created by a Design Team that started meeting initially to do some planning for the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay. Then the pandemic happened and as a group they decided something different was needed and this *Mapping Our Road to Recovery Series* was born.

#### **Members of the Design Team Include:**

**Susan Cook, Nancy Griffin, Yvonne Hamlin, Rosalyn Morrison** - (Institute Board members) – and

**Jodie Kennedy**, Marketing and Communications Manager, Mike Jackson GM

**Andrew Palmer**, Project Manager, Greenland International Consulting Ltd.

**June Porter**, Chair, Joint Municipal Physician Recruitment and Retention Committee, Southern Georgian Bay.

**Jeff Shearer**, Publisher, On the Bay Magazine and GM, The New Classical 102.9FM

**Brandon Houston**, Founder, Collingwood Foundry & CEO, Switch Video

#### **Facilitation Team -**

**Liz Rykert** is a systems change facilitator working on complex problems and is a volunteer.

**Marilyn Struthers** is a long-time resident of Grey & Bruce who works with emerging practices in the social sector as a facilitator, researcher, funder, and organizational development coach.

**Christy Deere**, Owner and Brewmistress, Collingwood Kombucha Company and freelances as an Integral Facilitator®

The session opened with Rosalyn welcoming all participants including members of the panel. She reviewed the purpose of the meeting and what we hope to achieve.

The purpose of the session was to explore **themes and action items** from some of the **Recovery Task Force plans** across the region and determine how we might align objectives, pool resources, and accelerate collective action towards creating a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable future.

**Key themes** from the first three sessions of the series include:

**1. Arts and Culture Strategy**

Roz reported on how 40 people have indicated an interest in helping to build the strategy and three co-chairs have stepped forward: Susan Cook, Stuart Reid and Dean Hollin. They are meeting with the support of new Design Team member Brandon Houston via Zoom on July 8<sup>th</sup>.

**2. Pooling resources in a Social Investment Strategy**

Roz noted people can step forward to get involved in the creation of a Social Investment Strategy. Marilyn Struthers has produced a Primer on Social Investment and it will be available on the Institute's website.

**3. Getting communities more connected around recovery across the region, connection between communities and between sectors, including governments, non-profits and charities, business and philanthropy**

Roz indicated that we are hoping the leadership group made of people who have participated in this series will assist in finding new ways to convene opportunities for collaboration and sharing of information across the four sectors: government, business, charities and nonprofits and philanthropy.

**4. Importance of Data to see who is doing well and to track progress**

Roz reviewed how this is our opportunity to identify some key actions moving forward for both the Institute and our communities to create a more **resilient, inclusive and sustainable region**.

**Revised Format of Session 4:**

We responded to feedback on the previous three sessions where 4 or 5 speakers presented perhaps too much information to absorb in one sitting, and participants were not as engaged as they could be. So, we designed a format that had the hosts and facilitators asking questions to both the attendees on the chat and the panel members. We kept presentations to a minimum and developed a set of questions which guided a conversation among panel members as well as invited response in the chat from attendees. The approach was used both for the opening question as well as the main content. Feedback was positive from panelists and design team members and we generated a much richer response from attendees.

### **Number of Participants and Range of Communities participating:**

There were 46 registered participants who came from Town of Blue Mountains, Meaford, Wasaga beach, Collingwood, Clearview, Annan, Grey Highlands, Owen Sound. We also had people on the call from Calgary, Auckland, Port Elgin and Kitchener.

Of the 46 participants registered **32 requested to be engaged in any follow-up** action planning.

### **Opening Question:**

In the last session several speakers talked about how their organizations are now working differently as a result of COVID and they are thinking about what practices they want to retain going forward.

The panelists and attendees were asked: *What have you noticed about how you are working in your community or organization differently? Perhaps how you connect or how you think about the work of community?*

Both panelists and attendees in the chat noted how the pandemic required people to shift how they worked both in terms of the use of technology and in what they were focused on. For example, David Green noted how the Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute (GTLLI) shifted its lectures online with an audience of senior adults, many of whom were still new to some of the technologies. He noted how when they needed to make the shift most were able to figure it out and many have since indicated in feedback, that they would consider this format going forward.

Shirley Keaveney noted the initial management of the pandemic was done by the Emergency Management Control Group for the first few months until Meaford Council started to meet via Zoom over the last 6 weeks. She noted how communication was key between the two groups and the community and cited the use of newsletters, local digital media and communicating face to face as important.

Cathy Innes shared how the work of Beaver Valley Outreach with 18 programs needed to shift gears especially with the Treasure Shop, which generates revenue, having to close and the additional loss of fees from childcare and other children's programs. Staff had to focus on the needs of parents at home trying to manage kids and seniors who were isolated.

It was also noted that COVID has revealed the "crack" that is the lack of internet access in rural areas especially with education relying on online tools for learning. Shirley noted how the province has acknowledged this and is moving quickly to address the lack of access. Attendees in the chat also noted new actions and behaviours included learning to work from home, pivoting business models online and taking advantage of online learning and the need for greater collaboration between groups, whether it be businesses organizations or governments.

One person noted how the online learning and shifts and in practices are helping her to move forward in ways they always intended to, but now it was imperative to make that shift.

## Panel Presentations and Discussion

The four sector participants were:

**Business Sector:** Mark Palmer, President/CEO and Executive Director of the [GREENLAND Group of Companies](#), Collingwood

**Nonprofit/Charitable:** Cathy Innes, [Beaver Valley Outreach](#) Board Chair replacing Carolyn Letourneau, Executive Director, Beaver Valley Outreach and Community Recovery Advisory Member, Blue Mountains

**Government Sector:** Shirley Keaveney, Chair, Recovery Task Force and Deputy Mayor, [Municipality of Meaford](#)

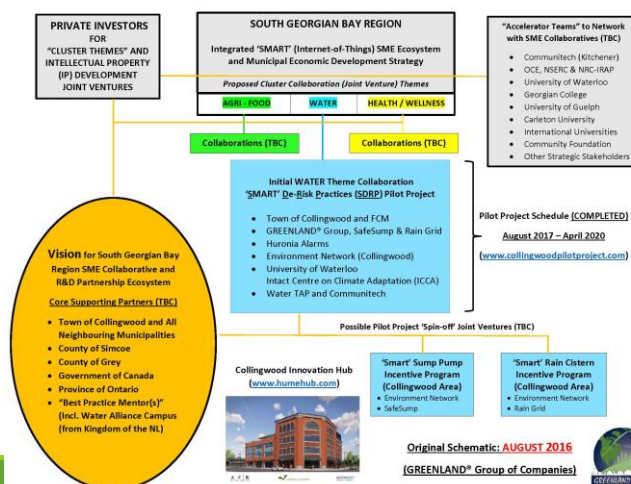
**Philanthropic Sector:** David Green, Past Chair, [Georgian Triangle Lifelong Learning Institute](#)

Mark Palmer from GREENLAND Group of Companies opened the session with a brief presentation. His business is for-profit but he has collaborated with municipalities and nonprofits for many years. He opened his comments noting his company was an essential service during the pandemic and described how he and his staff had to adapt right away to be able to deliver services as well as ensure staff were safe. He noted engineers have the skills for adaptation and resilience.

Mark used the example of a recent project he worked on in partnership with the Town of Collingwood on some SMART Technologies (Internet of Things, Storm Water Management and SMART Sump pump technology). Mark shared through the use of slides, details about the project and their ability to collaborate with lots of partners. He indicated how the example of the project with Collingwood could be expanded throughout the region with investors and additional partners.

Mark noted the experience of COVID has required people to unpack old ways of working and to

relearn and create new ways for moving forward. He specifically noted the importance of not working in silos. Municipalities and their stakeholders need to share their ideas and collaborate together to



achieve big picture thinking and better outcomes.

The Panelists then opened the conversation addressing a series of questions and attendees were invited to respond to the questions at the same time in the chat.

The first question posed was:

***What themes and action items from your community's Recovery Task Force discussions/recommendations are things you believe are important for regional collaboration and action? What would make us more resilient, inclusive and sustainable as a Region?***

As the facilitator, Liz noted that previous session participants had shared how they have recognized, through their pandemic response, the need to drop traditional geographic boundaries and instead ask who has the skills and how can we all come together to find a solution. Secondly, she reminded people that we heard how some leaders have shifted from their role as an administrator or overseer of work to stepping in as simply one of many players all working together.

Shirley noted how Meaford was happy to be included in the group, noting they are in a good position to link to Owen Sound. She talked about the Recovery Task Force in Meaford and how they were collaborating with all the key players. An example of how they are working in new ways, which accelerates progress, is by replicating good solutions, such as the e-commerce platform developed by The Town of Blue Mountains for their local businesses. She described how it was important to get things moving quickly and so if it was possible to borrow things from other communities then that was the ideal thing to do. Shirley also described how Meaford reached out and was working with Grey County and using their tools to support businesses, as well as finding ways to leverage resources to support businesses to open patios quickly, including fast-tracking decisions from the Town. She noted overall how they have taken an approach that has them reaching out to find what is working, identifying where they can learn, and supporting one another in continuing this way of working going forward responding to the urgency of the issue.

Cathy opened up her response by saying if there was one word to describe the response in her community it is "collaboration". She described the experience of her local Recovery Task Force and the all people they have brought together in the community to gather many points of view. She noted how they have been able to benefit from the experience of others in responding to all the protocols on how businesses have to open, for example, and how people are supporting one another. She gave the example of reopening the Treasure Shop and how the Village Association has developed protocols for everyone to adapt to their local context which saved them a lot of volunteer time. Cathy also shared how by networking with others they have shared information about what grants are available, what technology platforms are effective and found the experience extremely helpful.

On the chat, we heard about the importance of taking time to stop, reflect and listen to residents. Increase engagement options for all to hear the voices and have residents determine their needs. It was also suggested one could find street connectors to hear from their neighbours.

David, speaking from the perspective of the philanthropic sector, reviewed what philanthropy means and specifically focusing on well-being and the context of where an individual lives. He noted how the region has a tremendous base of people who volunteer time and resources to so many things in the area. These opportunities span a wide range of issues from social justice to the environment, the arts and many more. David also shared the difference between charity and philanthropy noting that charity often addresses the immediate problem, where philanthropy tends to address the root cause and takes a long view. David noted the importance of finding ways to tap this volunteer resource and highlighted the efforts of [Community Connection](#) to match volunteers with needs.

David also noted the area has a changing and growing population including younger people and we need to ensure that they are part of building the sustainable communities going forward.

Mark reiterated the need to refocus our communities to be more connected, specifically as we move into the Open for Business Recovery Phase 3, which has a longer-term focus. Mark shared how he had learned from Supply Chain Canada that, during COVID, 70% of respondents had reported a disruption in their supply chain. Mark noted supply chains are not just about production or tech, they also impact our social capital and all the sectors represented in this series. He expressed a sincere hope for the region to connect Phase 3 re-openings to look at supply chains and understand their impact as we manage the potential of future outbreaks together. The language of “unpacking, examining and re-packing processes”, and the notion of supply chains applied across the board, are helpful ways of framing some of the challenges we face and may help us consider different perspectives.

### **The next question was: What do you think is possible now that wasn't before?**

Shirley shared some elements of the new economic development plan for Meaford and her favourite line in the document which is: “collaboration is the new leadership”. Shirley shared the slides of the plan for Market Square and the impact of COVID and the need to find ways to encourage people to return to the downtown. Shirley reviewed the proposed plans for renovations to Market Square that would support encouraging people to come to small performances (no singing or dancing yet), encourage people to get take-out food and eat at the new picnic tables.

Mark spoke about his role in the proposed UN Conference on Sustainability. He indicated there will be more information soon. While centred in Collingwood, it is intended to be a regional conference and the idea is to include communities from across the region. He noted with the UN focus and the global attention it could be a great opportunity for the region.

David commented on what is possible now. He noted more collaboration between levels of governments, municipalities, arts organizations, business and charities. He added because the collaborative actions taken during the crisis, there is a greater understanding developing between different groups. From a business standpoint, David noted that finding some of the weaknesses and vulnerabilities have not been pleasant. Citing Mark, David built on the idea of supply chains and the idea that all the relationships between customers, suppliers, delivery groups will be very different going forward. There is a great opportunity to take advantage of online, the use of e-commerce, and the work of Brandon Houston in developing the Collingwood Commons. People are more comfortable overall with technology. David commented on the big shift for restaurants to take-out and how successful this has been. Finally, David commented on the population of the region and the number of part-time and weekend residents and how this experience has reminded us how import the local population is. There may also be opportunities to cross-promote across the region for example from Meaford Hall, Theatre Collingwood and other facilities.

In addition, we heard from attendees on the chat about the need for municipalities to support charities and nonprofits more especially given the volume of volunteer support they provide. We also heard ideas that included municipalities changing or loosening bylaws to support businesses to access patios or changing labelling requirements to help small producers. We heard how one person was impressed with the panelists and everyone's point of view. Given the current state of the world, they wondered if the panelists are talking about plans to integrate an anti-racist approach to rebuilding? Moving forward without mindful thought to systemic racism and unconscious bias in our communities and businesses seems a lost opportunity.

David added we need to acknowledge the presence of anti-black racism in the community as well as challenges with homelessness and poverty. We need to address these issues.

Liz noted how is it often in the day-to-day practices that systemic oppression is held. We need to unpack, examine and repack as Mark has framed.

Attendee Thom Vincent shared his experience on establishing the Syrian Family Foundation to sponsor 7 or 8 families in the community. It attracted 50 or 60 volunteers and the families are all now working in the community. Thom also shared his ideas for next steps, which included: 1. Attainable Housing 2. Arts and Cultural Regional Strategy with CACE 3. Work to involve the Municipalities with the Private Sector matching funds to assist our local businesses to grow after COVID.

**If you could describe an ideal approach or solution that would align objectives, pool resources, and accelerate collective action as a region, what would it be?**

Mark kicked off this discussion citing the work of Collingwood Council who are looking at the creation of a Community Foundation. There are some great examples such as Perth County where this has been very successful. Shirley reiterated the need to work as a region including

the example of Attainable Housing. It was a volunteer group that came together to hire a consultant to develop the report and take action on the Foodland site in Thornbury to move ahead. It took 2.5 years but was completely doable. Moving ahead on the Arts and Culture Strategy is a key area. David identified the need to create working groups. He identified the Kaizen approach and the use of the “5 Whys” to get clear on what is happening and why. He reinforced the need for working groups to be from a range of sectors. He also shared the importance of having some independence and objectivity in the groups.

Cathy added we need to find champions who are big picture people. They need to be people who are enthusiastic enough to put together something that is not just another layer of community and who hold enough influence to gain the respect of government and business and other community members with their ideas. She identified how many groups have to maintain a very local focus and we need groups who can hold the bigger picture. She suggested a core working group and possibly the creation of smaller working groups around the four pillars of the Institute (Environment, Social Justice, Innovation and Arts and Culture).

One of the opportunities Cathy identified is the new level of accessibility the Zoom format has created rather than face-to-face meetings. People have become much more comfortable sharing ideas in this new format. She also talked about the importance of looking at how we engage in youth-friendly communities and make communities accessible for seniors as things we should focus on. Cathy emphasized these ideas are all things that move across communities, so if you are working on these issues you already have things in common with every community.

This reminded us that when working in large systems we need to attend to the parts, the whole, and the greater whole.

### **What actions are the ones that stand out to move ahead? What would you need to do it?**

Shirley opened the discussion with a focus on the arts, advising you need to reach out and invite participation, get clear on the purpose and to start small and build over time. David added you need to have the will to do something and willingness to think and act regionally and you need a clearly defined mandate, identify the key people you need, and some indication that the results and recommendations will be acted upon. David also indicated you need regular reporting to keep things moving forward.

From the chat participants we heard we need to look at the Collingwood Vision 2020 model and working on a Community Foundation with a Social Planning Council to address the social issues. We also heard the need to work on exploring Wi-Fi and device access to increase Internet access in the community. One other comment included needing to explore a Plan B beyond Tourism - how the region might pivot and if we did, what would be the focus instead. We also heard the need for local councils to be updated regularly by groups who are working on these issues in open sessions so local municipalities are made aware of what else is going on.



Participants also explored the creation or the building upon of regional tables such as one with a focus on business, one on sustainability, another on social services and an emerging one on arts and culture. Rosalyn shared while the idea of creating these round tables is important, the magic happens when we can align two or three objectives that everyone can agree on, and come together to work on them - that is when change can really happen.

As the session, ended Roz acknowledged the Design Team and the facilitators for their efforts and all the participants for joining the calls and contributing their ideas and time. She shared how the plan is now to pull a leadership team together to identify next steps and not to forget other important pillars where we have yet to have bigger conversations. We are aligning sectors to ensure the best possible outcomes. Roz also reiterated the need to focus on youth, seniors and the UN Conference coming to Collingwood.

The Mapping Our Road to Recovery spring discussion series materials will be on our website [www.tisgb.com](http://www.tisgb.com) this July.

Our first collective next step is on July 8<sup>th</sup>. 40 volunteers from the Arts and Culture Strategy event held on May 27 will help shape the priorities for that strategy. The Institute is committing \$2,500 to begin that work and will be asking other sectors for resources to move it forward.