



May 1, 2020

Honorable Mayor Debbie McDowell
North Port City Commission
4790 City Hall Blvd.
North Port, FL 34285

Re: Helping businesses open in the City of North Port

Dear Mayor McDowell and City Commissioners,

Thank you for your service during these difficult times. We appreciate the difficult decisions you are making. The business community is also making some difficult decisions right now regarding our future and we need your help. We are writing you today to seek your assistance with regulatory rules in helping businesses within Sarasota County open again.

COBA is comprised of The Argus Foundation, The Economic Development Corporation of Sarasota County, The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, The Gulf Coast Builders Exchange, Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance, Manatee Sarasota Building Industry Association, the North Port Area Chamber of Commerce, Realtors Association of Sarasota Manatee, the Siesta Key Chamber of Commerce, Suncoast Chapter – Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, Venice Area Chamber of Commerce, and Visit Sarasota County. COBA organizations represent over 7,000 local businesses/employers in the Sarasota region.

We are respectfully requesting that you consider the following items in an effort to help our businesses open and stay in operation:

- Waivers of permitting and costs for improvements made as a result of any new state or federal health guidelines, or to improve health and safety for business reopening or operations.
- Temporarily suspending code enforcements on temporary signs and window signs, for all businesses, to allow businesses to communicate to the public the services they provide.

- Waiver of permitting and permitting costs, or if permitting is absolutely needed - expediting permitting for outdoor dining or retail activity on sidewalks, right-of-ways, and parking lots (this also includes parking requirement relaxation).
- Waivers of permitting and any necessary inspections for tents for dining and the sale of products.
- Waiving business tax license fees due in August/September for a year.
- Expedited approvals, permitting, and fee waivers for construction projects that will get started in the next six months with an option to renew the program for another six months. We propose this because we are seeing construction contracts begin to fall through and subcontractors left without work. This will encourage construction to begin sooner.

We encourage government to do everything it can to facilitate the creative operation of businesses right now. Pro-actively finding ways to expedite and streamline approvals, permitting, inspections, and licensing should be a priority. We encourage you to look at your plans from the Great Recession and see if there is any applicability of those plans to today's environment.

The most important aspect to these items is the speed with which they are implemented. If they can be done administratively, please implement them immediately. If it requires commission action, please consider calling a special meeting to implement them. Everyday matters in this situation.

Now more than ever, the business community needs support and assistance. We respectfully ask that you consider implementing the above changes and find ways to eliminate unnecessary regulation and bureaucracy.

Respectfully Submitted,



Russ Bobbitt
Chair