For the latest updates and information related to COVID-19, visit the Kansas COVID-19 Response and Recovery website. covid.ks.gov.

Governor Kelly Announces Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Taskforce to Lead State's Economic Recovery

May 19, 2020

As part of her commitment to rebuilding Kansas and the economy, Governor Laura Kelly today announced the Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas (SPARK) Taskforce to lead the state's economic recovery. The taskforce is charged with leading Kansas forward in recovery from the far-reaching effects of COVID-19.

The Recovery Office team will be responsible for the statewide distribution of significant CARES Act funding. A five-member executive committee will oversee the process, and the office will have a steering committee with an additional 15 members who will form three subcommittees. The three subcommittees will focus on communication and engagement, finance and policy development and implementation and accountability.

"The state's recovery effort must serve urban and rural areas alike across the state, and all sectors of the economy" Kelly said. "I am grateful that

our team membership reflects these ideals, and I want to thank these leaders for their willingness to serve in such challenged times.

“The health and economic challenges COVID-19 inflicted on our state truly are unprecedented – and we must use our collective talents to develop strategies to not only regain what we lost, but build a better, more inclusive and resilient economy.”

Earlier this month, Governor Kelly announced she had selected Cheryl Harrison-Lee as the Recovery Office’s executive director and Lyle Butler as the chair. Harrison-Lee has more than 30 years of experience in strategic leadership positions in a variety of corporate, entrepreneurial, private and public environments, and Butler has years of experience working with the business community and economic development as the President and CEO of several local Chambers of Commerce, most recently retiring from the Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce.

“Cheryl and Lyle understand the needs of local communities in Kansas,” Governor Kelly said. “Their experience and dedication with be paramount during our state’s recovery effort and in the statewide distribution of CARES Act funding.”

“I look forward to working with these committees on a process that ensures transparency, equity and accountability, while leading Kansas’ recovery efforts from this challenging period in the world,” Executive Director Harrison-Lee said.

Other members of the SPARK Taskforce, appointed by the governor, include representatives of the business community, economic development and the Kansas Legislature. These taskforce members are:

Executive Committee

- **Tom Bell,** President and CEO, Kansas Hospital Association, Topeka, Kansas;
- **Lyle Butler,** President and CEO, Manhattan Area Chamber of Commerce (retired), Manhattan, Kansas;
- **Senator Jim Denning,** Vice President, Discover Vision Centers, Overland Park, Kansas;
- **Jill Docking**, Senior Vice President, The Docking Group – Baird Financial, Wichita, Kansas;

- **Alise Martiny,** Business Manager, Greater KC Building and Trades Council, Shawnee, Kansas.

Steering Committee

- **Natalie Haag**, Attorney, Capitol Federal Savings, Topeka, Kansas;
- **David Harwood**, Senior Vice President, Terracon Consultants & Chair, **KANSAS**Works State Board, Olathe, Kansas;
- **Senator Tom Hawk**, Ranking Minority Member, Senate Ways and Means Committee, Manhattan, Kansas;
- **Representative Dan Hawkins**, House Majority Leader, Wichita, Kansas;
- **Edward Honesty, Jr.**, President & Chief Operating Officer, Best Harvest Bakeries, Kansas City, Kansas;
- **Chuck Mageral**, Proprietor, Free State Brewing Company, Lawrence, Kansas;
- **David McCarty**, Owner, McCarty Family Farms, Colby, Kansas;
- **Senator Carolyn McGinn**, Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee, Sedgwick, Kansas;
- **Shelia Nelson-Stout**, President and CEO, OCCK, Inc., Salina, Kansas;
- **Neelima Parasker**, President & CEO, SnapIT Solutions, Overland Park, Kansas;
- **Jim Robinson**, Partner, Hite Fanning & Honeyman, Wichita, Kansas;
- **Secretary David Toland**, Department of Commerce, Topeka, Kansas;
- **Representative Troy Waymaster**, Chair, House Appropriations Committee, Bunker Hill, Kansas;
- **Representative Kathy Wolfe-Moore**, Ranking Minority Member, House Appropriations Committee, Kansas City, Kansas.

The final member of the taskforce will be a representative of the aviation industry and will be announced at a future date. Over the coming days and weeks, information on the Recovery Office and the SPARK Taskforce can be found at covid.ks.gov.

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