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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TOWN STEVENSVILLE TO TAKE LEAD ON FORMING
ECONOMIC RECOVERY TASK FORCE**

Task Force will create an economic recovery strategy to support Stevensville businesses, nonprofits, community organizations, and individuals through impacts of COVID-19.

Stevensville, MT – Stevensville Mayor Brandon E. Dewey today announced the creation of an Economic Support and Recovery Task Force. The Task Force is charged with guiding the Town's efforts to sustain and recover local businesses and employment and mitigate the economic hardships that come from the COVID-19 crisis. Their work will support Stevensville organizations and individuals throughout the remainder of Governor Bullock's Stay Home order and will lay the groundwork for economic recovery in the area by identifying and mobilizing available resources to strengthen the local economy.

The Task force includes a broad range of stakeholders building a partnership of public and private for-profit and non-profit entities. The team is built from a team of experts and professionals that share a passion for our community and an enthusiasm for positive growth. The Task Force will be staffed by the Mayor's Office and will include the Town's Finance Officer Robert Underwood, and Town Clerk Monica Hoffman.

"We want to do all we can as an organization to support and share resources with the community, hear their concerns and collect the data we need as a town to help empower our recovery efforts," said Mayor Dewey. "The economic impacts of this virus will certainly be long-lasting, but by moving quickly with comprehensive plans for relief, reform, and recovery, we can support getting our families, workers, businesses, and nonprofits back on their feet sooner."

The economic impacts of COVID-19 are already being felt across Montana. The Montana Department of Labor and industry has seen a significant increase in new claims for unemployment and claim reactivations. Thousands of workers across the state are filing for unemployment which will with certainty raise Montana's unemployment rate from February's 3.5%. At Town Hall, officials have already assisted several businesses in providing information about available options from local organizations and the Small Business Administration. The Town is currently seeking input from businesses with its Business Impact Survey found on the Town's Business Resources for COVID-19 webpage.

The Task Force will be guided by the following economic recovery priorities:

- Support small businesses: Small businesses and nonprofits are significant cultural and economic drivers for Stevensville. Support is needed to help businesses and community organizations manage temporary closures, revenue drops, or increased need for services.
- Prioritize vulnerable people: Stevensville will prioritize, design, and implement policies to create more equitable outcomes for our vulnerable populations.
- Support local arts and culture: Stevensville must sustain the individuals, organizations, and businesses that contribute to our unique character that may not be able to operate per public health guidance.
- Complement Federal and State efforts: Significant resources for small businesses and vulnerable populations will flow from the Federal and State governments. It is important that Stevensville understand the funds, programs, and other stimulus programs and direct local dollars to fill the gaps.
- Connect Stevensville's workforce to jobs: Work is the foundation to housing and food security, healthcare, and psychological wellbeing for individuals and families. Stevensville must help connect workers who have been laid-off with employment, with a focus on positions with upward mobility and protecting worker safety.
- Promote Stevensville: Stevensville will continue and reinforce efforts to promote the community as a good place to live, work, and explore.

The Task Force will begin meeting next week and continue through June 30 to develop short-, medium- and long-term strategy recommendations. Members of the public are invited to learn more about the task force and share their ideas for economic recovery by visiting www.stevensvillefirst.org

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