

ASSEMBLY STANDING COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
March 23, 2020, 6:00 PM.
Assembly Chambers - Municipal Building

MINUTES

I. ROLL CALL

Deputy Mayor Maria Gladziszewski called the Committee of the Whole, which was immediately following the Special Assembly Meeting 2020-11, to order at 8:56p.m.

Assemblymembers Present: Mayor Beth Weldon, Maria Gladziszewski, Loren Jones, Rob Edwardson, Wade Bryson, Carole Triem, Michelle Hale (telephonic), Alicia Hughes-Skandijs, and Greg Smith

Assembly Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Manager Rorie Watt, City Attorney Robert Palmer, Deputy City Manager Mila Cosgrove, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Emergency Programs Manager Tom Mattice, Library Director Robert Barr, MIS Director Matt Scranton, Deputy Municipal Clerk Diane Cathcart, COVID-19 Communications staff Felicity Toney, Systems Operations Manager James Zuelow.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION by Mayor Weldon to only take up item A. COVID-19 Update and to move items B. C. D. and E. to a later meeting to be determined by staff as to when and which meeting they would be moved to. She said that she thought item D. could be rescheduled to Thursday but she'd defer to staff as to when/where it should go.

Objection by Mr. Bryson. He said that the April rents and mortgages will be due within the next week and if they could get as much information as possible about the rental assistance program (item C) that should be the top priority next to hearing about the medical issues.

Ms. Gladziszewski said they would take up items A. and C. She also noted that they will be receiving an update from Dr. Bridget Weiss from the Juneau School District.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

IV. AGENDA TOPICS

A. COVID-19 Update

Dr. Weiss provided a brief update about their collaboration with CBJ to prepare for a longer closure. This week staff are out on spring break but last week many of the staff was working from home while others were in the building preparing for longer closures anticipated. At that time, they were preparing home study packages, helping families set up internet connections and resources. They surveyed families to find out what technology needs were. JSD has participated in EOC calls.

Dr. Weiss said that one of their success stories is the meal program. Last week they provided over 4500 meals to students, breakfast and lunch. Just today, they provided 1000 meals and are making some adjustments to follow federal guidelines.

Financially, they are concerned about some of the reimbursements they will be able to get but their highest priority is to the students and they are moving forward with the needs. Last week, they began all their meetings remotely and have been holding their School Board meetings via Zoom and telephonically. Public participation was also done remotely as opposed to in person. She said it has been a long couple of weeks and they are looking forward to how best to adjust while still being able to provide instruction and they will be focusing on how best to help seniors as they prepare to graduate and take their next steps.

Dr. Weiss then answered a number of questions from Assemblymembers that touched on communications with students and families about the importance to not gathering together, teachers connecting with their students and families. Mr. Jones asked, in light of the Governor's new travel mandate, if they had any ideas as to how many students and staff may have traveled out of town during spring break. Dr. Weiss said that they did a survey about that and the district has compiled a list based on those survey results. She then talked about the preparation they have done to provide for work from home and distance delivery to students. They have worked with ACS and GCI to help provide internet connections to families and the JSD is allowing students to take Chromebooks home to be able to participate in school remotely.

Ms. Gladziszewski thanked Dr. Weiss for all their work to prepare for this and for participating in the meeting.

Deputy Manager/Incident Commander Mila Cosgrove provided an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Update. within the last 24 hours, Juneau had its first confirmed case of COVID-19 in Juneau. She spoke to the efforts of the EOC. They will be providing EOC reports. She said that since so much discussion has been around travel, there has been a significant decrease of travel into Juneau. Generally they receive approximately 1000 people per day at the airport, two days ago on Saturday, they had approximately 450 arrive and yesterday they only had 189. She said that on the Alaska Marine Highway, Saturday had 35 people come off the ferry into town and on Sunday there were 34.

Ms. Cosgrove said they have stood up the Joint Incident Command (JIC) EOC and their main focus is on improving tactics and improving communication flow which has proved a little more challenging given the disbursement and trying to accomplish the work between so many different agencies without putting all those workers at risk. She said that provides extra hurdles but she has confidence they will work through those issues as they move forward. Today, they had many community partners discussing the general overall sense of where everyone was. Level 1 tactics are in place. They are beginning to put their Level 2 tactics in place, specifically planning for mass quarantine and isolation which will be the next big heavy lift. There were a number of logistical pieces put into play to accomplish this and they will continue to work together to ensure they are coordinating response and making sure the resources are not conflicted. She then turned it over to BRH CEO Chuck Bill to address a list of questions that came from the last meeting and he will address those as well.

Mr. Bill confirmed that they did have the first case of COVID-19 in the hospital as of yesterday and it was a travel related case who had spent a lot of time in Portland, OR and Washington. He said there were still several others who have tested but not yet received their results back. He said the reality is that the BRH staff is trained, they have been practicing and they are ready to respond to a limited level of COVID. He said they do have limited resources but at this time they have approximately 10 respirators that could be stood up immediately. They have another 5 that could be repurposed and are currently obtaining the pieces of equipment to make those work as general respirators. There are some other resources that could be called up if the need arose. He said our unique isolation from other communities is to our advantage and they are taking note from lessons learned elsewhere. He said the more they can control personal contact and travel the better the outcome and he appreciated the Governor's travel mandate actions.

In answering some of the questions that had been asked at the previous meeting, Mr. Bill reported that they have adequate masks for now. He said that if they are successful in flattening the curve, the pipeline of supply will be refilled. There is a lot of infrastructure being called up to provide for PPE. He said that gowns are their biggest concern for right now. They are requiring 14 day quarantine of

all staff. He said that most physicians who are traveling from out of state are doing what they can to social distance, wear protective equipment and adjust their travel time such that they are lowering the risks as much as possible. He said anesthesiologists were a perfect example of this and they are only being used for emergency surgeries and BRH has postponed all elective surgeries until June and maybe longer.

Mr. Bill said they are tracking the costs associated with COVID response and they don't have enough data to share yet but they have noticed that the PPEs are much more expensive than it has been in the past, both from volume and cost standpoints. He said that the impact of the loss of the tourist season, the loss of ancillary outpatient services will cost the hospital approximately \$10 million through June. He said some of that they will get back when they turn elective patients back on but in the meantime it is good that they have some reserves to fall back on. He said that he anticipates at least 75% of the costs to respond will eventually be covered by FEMA but it is unclear about the lost revenue and it also unclear about whether they can provide services to the physicians for them to stay safe so they are working through those issues.

The next question was about the triage tents and those are there to control human traffic throughout the hospital. He then provided information on how the screening process is done.

There were questions about ventilators and he said the whole world is looking for ventilators and while they do have a couple on order, they will likely receive them after other priority locations such as California and New York. He said that they currently have approximately 10 ventilators available with the potential for five others that are either available through air transport or re-purposing those that are used for anesthesia that would need to be modified for use as long term ventilators if the need arose. He said if Juneau can slow the curve, we should be fine but if we don't, we will find ourselves in the same situation as New York and California.

Mr. Bill said with respect to testing, they have approximately 300 test kits with another 300 at doctors' offices, SEARHC, and around the community. He said that as of this morning, they have done 49 tests at BRH and they just received confirmation of their first COVID patient at BRH who is someone currently in the ICU. He said the hospital case that was just confirmed was in addition to the person in the community who tested positive and that both cases appeared to be travel related. He then discussed the equipment in place for testing and what they are anticipating will be available in the future.

Mr. Bill then answered a number of questions from Assemblymembers.

Ms. Cosgrove then provided additional updates from the EOC on what they have been doing to prepare which included that while CBJ is still open for business with the exception of some facilities such as the pools, that they did begin the process earlier in the day to close many CBJ facility from being open to the public to now being open/available through remote means only via phone calls, emails, website interactions, etc... For those buildings that are still open to the public, they are redirecting traffic flows. With that, a significant number of employees who are not directly engaged in federal health and safety are transitioning to working from home. The Leadership Team asked if they should attend the meetings tonight and Ms. Cosgrove encouraged them to stay home and practice social distancing and leave the physical spaces available to those who wished to provide testimony tonight. They are online and listening in and CBJ staff in general is stood up and ready to be of service in responding to this emergency. She said that overall, morale is good and that people are concerned and engaged.

Ms. Cosgrove said that airport screening is up and operational as discussed on Sunday. They are pairing the airport screening task force contacts to the mobile screening call center which is now stood up at the Valley Library and staffed by JSD nurses mostly. They are trying to work together so if people come through, we can check in with them a few days out, ask them how they are feeling and try to get ahead of the quarantine tracking if possible.

Ms. Cosgrove then asked a number of questions from Assemblymembers and described the complete

process someone who may need to be tested would go through. She also answered a number of other questions from Assemblymembers regarding the EOC process and reporting timing. Discussion then took place regarding communications between Southeast Alaska communities. Ms. Cosgrove provided information about what is taking place between EOC staff in Juneau and other communities and Mr. Jones provided information about a Southeast conference call planned for tomorrow hosted by Alaska Municipal League.

Assemblymembers and Ms. Cosgrove then discussed the role of the Assembly vs. staff and the EOC work being done. Ms. Cosgrove will be providing an EOC update at each of the Regular and Special Assembly meetings as well as providing copies of paperwork as they go through the operational cycles. She said that money will become an issue and they will be coming to the Assembly shortly with information about that and that is a key role the Assembly will be playing during this emergency.

Ms. Cosgrove reported that the warming shelter is up and operational at the JACC and they would like to convert it to a 24/7 operation so that people who are experiencing homelessness are off the street no matter what time of day it is. She said that will come at a cost of approximately \$2,500/week for every week that is open and they are ready to say yes unless they hear anything different from the Assembly at this meeting. She said there are additional issues related to quarantine and isolation. It is a complex topic and they have a group looking at it. It is a potentially expensive option if they look at housing in hotels and there are other issues related to compliance and staffing that they are trying to work out. That is not off the radar and it is very much on the table for discussion and they will look to the Assembly to make some of those decisions.

Mr. Jones said he would like the EOC to come up with a definition because in all of his training, quarantine, self isolation, isolation, and stay at home are way different and nobody is doing what his definition of quarantine is unless it is the person in the ICU at BRH. Mr. Jones said there are legal definitions and medical definitions, and he would like to have the EOC come up with the definitions for those terms so everyone understands what is being referred to when those terms are used.

Ms. Cosgrove said that request is noted. She then finished her report that with the first confirmed case, contact tracing has begun within the community and that is defined to one case of separation within the last 48 hours. As cases expand, that will be more and more difficult to do and they are working on trying to help them get additional resources.

Ms. Cosgrove said the primary issues the EOC wanted to touch base with the Assembly on was with respect to the shelter issues mentioned above. The second is that the EOC recommendation is that the CBJ facilities that are currently closed remain closed through May 1, the same as the school closures.

Ms. Cosgrove said that the last piece they had is that they planned to implement utility forbearance. They would still ask people to pay their utility bills but that CBJ would not implement any finance charges until May 25. They would suspend any water utility cut offs until May 25. She said they encouraged anyone who needed to, to contact staff to work with them on any payment arrangements needed.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked if there was any objection to shelter or closure recommendations from the EOC; hearing none, they were approved.

Ms. Cosgrove then answered questions from Assemblymembers regarding contact tracing, and the steps in the process for quarantine and isolation. Ms. Gladziszewski noted that there will be Assembly meetings on Thursdays and Mondays and Ms. Cosgrove will be providing updates at each of those meetings.

Mr. Jones noted that Ms. Gladziszewski didn't ask for any objections to the request regarding utility forbearance. He said that he had a discussion earlier in the day with someone who was a member of the statewide realty association. He said that they spent the weekend with the Legislature discussing some kind of statute change that would require some kind of rent forbearance and no evictions. His

concern was how much of that was real and due to COVID vs. other reasons. Mr. Jones said that while he has some questions regarding the utility forbearance and how that might work for multiple units etc..., he doesn't need or want to know all the details and does not object to the request for the May 25 forbearance.

Additional discussion took place regarding the extreme measures that have been taken by the State and now CBJ in people potentially losing their jobs and not being able to pay the utilities by the May 25 date. Ms. Cosgrove said the devil is in the details which they will be working out and staff will bring back additional information to the Assembly on those details.

Mr. Smith asked about an economics team working with the EOC. Ms. Cosgrove noted that there is not currently an economics team working with the EOC but that may be something the Assembly may be taking action on in the future.

B. Federal Legislation

Postponed to a future meeting.

C. Existing Rental Assistance Program AHDC/Gruening Park

Ms. Gladziszewski noted that the time was after 10p.m. and they have been meeting for more than five hours and asked members if there was anything else that had to be covered at this meeting. Mr. Bryson noted that he felt it was critical to address the rental assistance program before they adjourned.

Mr. Watt said that there is an existing program run out of the AHDC group at Gruening Park. He said that if the Assembly wants to do something related to rental assistance, his recommendation would be to provide funding and direction to that group on how to disperse it. He said they can try to figure out the details and they need to know the Assembly's interest in dollar amount and/or policy disbursement. He said they have not made any progress on that so he didn't know if the Assembly wanted to do that.

Mayor Weldon asked if we knew what their fund balance was. Mr. Watt said he had heard it but he didn't recall it other than it wasn't very large (tens of thousands only). Mayor Weldon asked for confirmation that program was strictly for rentals and not for mortgages and Mr. Watt confirmed that was correct.

Mr. Watt explained that there is a group that has limited funding to assist people with rental payments if they are jeopardy of losing their housing but that this group does not have the funds necessary to fund this emergency on the scale that is likely to be needed. He said that mechanically, if the Assembly wants to do something, if the Assembly wants to provide funding and criteria to this group, that might be the best method for trying to disperse that assistance.

Mayor Weldon noted that since it was so late in the evening, she suggested that Mr. Bryson work with Mr. Watt to come up with a proposal to bring back to the Assembly for housing/rental assistance. Mr. Bryson said that it is critical that they look at this issue in light of the recent Assembly action and he looked forward to working with the Manager on this.

GOOD OF THE ORDER

Mr. Palmer noted that as a result of the Assembly's adoption of the "Hunker Down" legislation and the Governor's health mandates requiring gatherings of no more than 10 persons, that the Assembly will need to modify how they are meeting and conduct their meeting in ways other than this for the foreseeable future. Mr. Palmer noted that it will likely require another change to the Assembly's Rules of Procedure which were recently updated to address meetings during the COVID response. He said

that one way other municipalities have dealt with this is that the Chair of that meeting is physically present with the critical staff members at that meeting and everyone else participates by phone.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said that considering how that would apply to public participation as well, typically there are a minimum of 3-4 staff, there would only be an opportunity to have the chair plus approx. 4 staff and 5 members of the public present. Mr. Palmer noted that maximum occupancy signs can be modified to reflect the no more than 10 person number and once you've reached that number, the door has to shut.

Mayor Weldon asked Mr. Palmer to reach out to the Governor's office to get his interpretation on what that really means because with that in mind, the Legislature can't meet. Mr. Palmer said he can do that but that the Legislature has a little different carve out in that they are immune from misdemeanor charges whereas the Assembly is not.

Ms. Hale asked if there was also a separation of powers with the Legislature.

Ms. Gladziszewski noted that Mr. Palmer will work on this tomorrow.

Ms. Gladziszewski thanked everyone for bearing with them during this long evening. She stated that when they passed a monumental mandate earlier and not many Assemblymembers spoke to it much because so much had been said about it at the previous meeting. She said they have received hundreds of emails with passionate opinions about this. She said that they were not form letters and almost none of them were duplicative and they were all heartfelt from this community. She said the contained terrific information and full of people concerned for the community willing to sacrifice for the community for the better good. She said she is proud to live here and thanked every person who took the time to send in their comments.

D. Ordinance 2020-15: An Ordinance Amending the Continuity of Government Code to Improve City and Borough of Juneau Procedures for Emergencies.

A continuity of government code was created in 1962 during the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis when communities were concerned about physical attacks. While the underlying concepts in the continuity of government code remain relevant today—like designation of successors for certain municipal officers—some code provisions are outdated. This ordinance would modernize the continuity of government code to provide the current form of City & Borough of Juneau government better code authority to deal with emergencies other than physical attacks.

This ordinance was heard at the March 13, 2020 Assembly Human Resources Committee and referred to the Committee of the Whole for further review.

Postponed to a future meeting.

E. Ordinance 2020-16: An Ordinance Amending the Civil Defense Code to Improve City and Borough of Juneau Procedures for Emergencies.

Chapter 03.25 was originally created in 1967. This ordinance would amend Chapter 03.25, the Civil Defense Organization chapter to be consistent with current emergency management practices.

This ordinance was heard at the March 13, 2020 Assembly Human Resources Committee and referred to the Committee of the Whole for further review.

Postponed to a future meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:17p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth McEwen, MMC
Municipal Clerk