

**SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING
CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA
Meeting Minutes – May 11, 2020**

Meeting No. 2020-26: The Special Assembly Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau was called to order by Mayor Beth Weldon at 5:30 p.m. The meeting was held as a virtual only meeting via Zoom and broadcast on Facebook Live.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

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

Assemblymembers Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Manager Rorie Watt, Deputy City Manager Mila Cosgrove, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Deputy Municipal Clerk Diane Cathcart, City Attorney Robert Palmer, Assistant City Attorney Emily Wright, Bartlett Regional Hospital Director Chuck Bill, Finance Director Jeff Rogers, Library Director Robert Barr, Code Compliance Officer Nate Watts, Executive Assistant Tricia Everson, Airport Manager Patty Wahto

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved as presented.

III. AGENDA TOPICS

Mayor Weldon noted that before beginning the meeting topics, she wanted to send condolences to the family and friends of former Juneau Mayor and Lt. Governor Byron Mallot, who passed away last week; his leadership will be missed. She also expressed her condolences for the passing of City of Nome Mayor Richard Beneville who was not only recently reelected but was also elected to serve as the President of the Alaska Conference of Mayors.

A. COVID-19 Update and Actions

Ms. Cosgrove provided an Emergency Operations Center report. Ms. Cosgrove shared that the case count has remained stable over the past 14 days. Juneau currently has 27 total confirmed cases, and 26 total recovered cases.

Ms. Cosgrove also provided an update on CBJ operations. There has been a slight uptick in airport screening. More people have been coming into town and receiving tests. Alaska Airlines will begin having up to nine flights a day beginning on June 1st.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Ms. Cosgrove to clarify the current testing capacity, and why it remains at 50 people per day. Ms. Cosgrove answered that, the hospital is testing about 40-50 people a day; however this number is far lower than the capacity that the hospitals are capable of.

She also added that there are other healthcare providers in the community who are also administering tests. She says between Bartlett and CBJ, they perform about half of what is announced in the community on a day-to-day basis, resulting in Juneau having an additional testing capacity.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs asked Hospital Administrator Chuck Bill if Juneau had received the Cepheid tests that Dr. Zink discussed at the last Assembly meeting she attended.

Mr. Bill confirmed that Juneau can begin using Cepheid tests. However there are only 70 tests available and he does not know when they will receive more. Due to their limited supply, the Cepheid tests are being reserved for patients who are scheduled for surgery.

Mr. Edwardson mentioned that with the summer season comes many fishermen travelling up to Juneau to work in the fisheries. He asked if 50 tests a day would be enough to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Mr. Bill said that 50 tests a day would not be enough, and there is a possibility that the testing capacity could be overwhelmed. He is optimistic that the number of tests per day will grow, but they have not received any updates from the test kit manufacturers that they would be receiving more anytime soon.

Mr. Bill also echoed Ms. Cosgrove's statements about Juneau having an additional testing capacity through other healthcare providers, but added that those tests typically have longer turnaround times. If they intend to test everyone that travels to Juneau, they would still be asking those visitors to quarantine for three days when they arrive. He said that the Cepheid tests have a turnaround time of about an hour, which would be a reasonable solution for travelers coming in on flights.

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Palmer to verify that the CBJ is not able to require someone to be subject to a medical exam solely because they travelled on an airplane, or because they are unhoused. Mr. Palmer said that there are a few exceptions to this: the first being if the CBJ has justifiable reason to believe that somebody has COVID-19 and is refusing to quarantine, they can petition the State Medical Officer to force that individual to be tested. The individual can refuse to receive a test, in which case there would be a hearing process in front of a judge.

Mr. Jones had a follow-up question, and asked if the testing capacity could be able to potentially test 400-500 people in a single day.

Ms. Cosgrove said that if there was a greater need for testing, she believed that CBJ could step up and do that. She added that the Division of Public Health (DPH) has indicated to them that they have plenty of supplies on hand to provide when needed. Mr. Bill added that with the 48-72 hours turnaround, he thinks we do have the ability to test people, but doesn't know what we will do with them for the 72 hour period.

Mr. Bryson asked what would need to happen to make the testing capacity go from 50 tests per day to 300-400 tests per day.

Ms. Cosgrove said that she would want to hear from the DPH to see if they were comfortable with using additional resources to test asymptomatic people. She added that it would be a logistical issue if raising the testing capacity is feasible. It will just require a lot of planning and processing.

Mr. Bryson asked how testing could be used. Ms. Cosgrove said that it is possible to test asymptomatic people, and that is better than not testing them at all. She says that testing is a gradual assessment of risk and risk mitigation over time. Ms. Cosgrove says that it is a balance of all factors.

Mayor Weldon asked Ms. Cosgrove how long people remain Persons Under Investigation (PUI). Ms. Cosgrove believes that it is a 14-day period where they are watched to see if they become symptomatic.

The Assembly took a brief break from 6:10-6:15p.m.

Alaska Chief Medical Officer Dr. Anne Zink then joined the meeting after the break along with U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security Dr. Alex Eastman who is a member of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Joint Incident Command (JIC).

Dr. Eastman introduced himself to the Assembly, and shared that he and his team have been travelling all over the world to locations that have been struggling with Coronavirus. He elaborates that he is here in Alaska not necessarily because it has been struggling with the virus, but because Alaska's geography, access/lack of access to particular resources, and tourism industry all contribute to Alaska potentially having a "mix" with this virus. Dr. Eastman says that his team is here to learn, and to provide whatever assistance they can from their combined experience from working in other communities.

Dr. Zink shared a presentation with the Assembly assembled by her epidemiology team that covers Juneau-specific data and information. There are currently 27 total confirmed cases, 26 total recovered cases, 6 total hospitalizations, and 0 deaths. She shared that the majority of confirmed cases since March have been the result of secondary transmission from known contacts. There have been 1,368 tests administered in Juneau, roughly 4.28% of the population.

Dr. Zink said that she has been actively working on getting more testing supplies to Juneau, specifically the Cepheid tests which are very limited in supply.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Dr. Zink when Juneau would be likely to have the testing capacity to test every traveler.

Dr. Zink said that she has had discussions regarding travel, tourism, and keeping Covid out of Juneau by using a test-based strategy. She adds that Juneau has been incredibly proactive in monitoring the airport. Dr. Zink says that those discussions also mentioned using the existing screening and monitoring already in place, and adding a test-based strategy to potentially shorten the 14-day quarantine. She acknowledges the inherent risk associated with this potential decision, but said that there is also a benefit to it, such as the restoration of critical infrastructure and normalcy.

Ms. Triem asked Dr. Zink to clarify which phase of reopening Alaska is at, and how should people be behaving in accordance with the current reopening phase.

Dr. Zink answered that she noticed a lot of people were done with the mandates about a week before they were changed; and that people will make decisions based on their own accord. She adds that the more people who try to keep social bubbles relatively small, maintain social distancing, wash their hands, and wear masks, the better off we will be.

Ms. Hale noted that about 25% - 30% of Juneau's population are either at-risk or immunocompromised, including senior citizens. She mentioned that some of the senior citizens she knows benefit from physical activities, such as going to the pool, and quarantining at home has had negative effects on their health. Ms. Hale asks Dr. Zink if there has been any consideration given towards the population who still has to stay at home, while the rest of the population is able to enjoy the reopening of Juneau. She suggests that businesses could potentially have certain hours specifically for those who are immunocompromised to visit. Dr. Zink agrees with Ms. Hale's suggestion and believes it could minimize the risk of infection, while still maintaining a balance of quarantine and normal life. She says that we can support people in their personal decisions for their own health risk management. She adds that it is the responsibility of the State to continue to provide resources and information about COVID-19, but individual decisions are the responsibility of the individual.

Mr. Smith asked Dr. Zink if the implementation of a testing screening strategy for incoming travelers would be a worthwhile pursuit.

Dr. Zink said she thinks that testing is an added component to an approach, but does not consider a test to be an "end all-be all". She adds that a test-based strategy does not necessarily replace a quarantine-based strategy.

Dr. Eastman agreed with Dr. Zink, saying that testing is a part of an overall strategy that helps manage incoming travelers. He mentioned that he has performed enhanced screening for international incoming travelers in 13 airports around the country. That screening process involved a combination of factors: symptom checks, temperature screening, targeted questioning, and inquiring about travel history. Dr. Eastman says that we cannot base an entire strategy on testing, describing a test as a "snapshot in time" that cannot detect every aspect of the disease alone.

Mr. Smith had a follow-up question, asking Dr. Zink if we should expect quarantine to be lifted by next week.

Dr. Zink said that there are no plans to lift quarantine restrictions in totality, and she suspects that it will not be lifted by next week.

Mr. Bryson asked for Dr. Zink to clarify the legality surrounding COVID-19 testing and if CBJ could legally force residents and visitors to undergo testing for COVID-19.

Dr. Zink said that they would need to get their lawyers involved with that specific question, and forcing people to undergo testing could get into some constitutional issues. She said that the state has been encouraging residents and partnering with institutions, rather than forcing anyone to be tested. She added that she worries about the potential backlash in the community if testing were to be forced.

Mr. Bryson asked Dr. Zink if there would be a mandate that states when we can hug our loved ones again.

Dr. Zink said that she has been asked this question a lot, and encourages people to only hug those in their families and social bubbles.

Ms. Triem asked Dr. Zink when we can safely resume intrastate travel.

Dr. Zink told Ms. Triem that those conversations have been happening, and to stay tuned.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Dr. Zink to explain how she came to the decision to implement Phases 1 and 2, and how Juneau could continue to avoid any exponential growth in cases. She also asked how she would know if Juneau had crossed a line that required reinstating restrictions.

Dr. Zink said that there are four metrics that her team looks at when considering reopening. The first is epidemiology, what the current case numbers are and where they are coming from. The second is testing, what the current testing capacity is across the state and regionally. The third metric is case investigation, the ability to investigate positive cases and following up with them to ensure that they quarantine. The fourth and final metric is hospital capacity, seeing if the hospitals have the capacity to care for residents in the case of an outbreak. Dr. Zink added that just because Alaska is opening up does not mean that they are giving up, and that every single case is investigated thoroughly.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked a follow up question regarding positive cases in the meat packing industry in the country, and how that same situation could happen in Alaska's fishing industry.

Dr. Eastman answered that he and his team were recently in Kansas to help the meat packing industry. He stated that the reason he is here in Alaska is to help mitigate the risk of this virus

with solutions that he used in Kansas, which helped them come back to operating at nearly-full capacity.

Mayor Weldon asked Dr. Zink what number of cases would she consider to be concerning for Juneau. And given that number, she asked if DPH had the capacity to quickly contract trace those cases.

Dr. Zink answered that there is not a magic number, and any cause for concern would depend on the cases themselves. She says if she saw four or five cases in one day that were the result of community transmission, then she would be concerned.

Dr. Eastman echoed Dr. Zink's statement that there is no magic number. He says it is a complicated balance of reviewing the number of cases, the ability of the healthcare system to care for these cases, and the desire to open Alaska's economy.

Mr. Jones asked how Juneau would be able to handle testing 400 – 500 incoming travelers. He also asked if they would perform contact tracing for those who have the clinical symptoms of COVID-19, but have a negative test.

Dr. Zink answered that there is adequate testing in Juneau. However we must go at least 28 days without a case before we can assume the virus has been eliminated, and Juneau is not there yet. She also said that approximately 1,300 people have been arriving into Alaska each day, a drastic decrease from the 40,000 per day from last year.

Dr. Zink says that COVID is difficult to clinically diagnose, and since there are not a lot of existing COVID-19 cases within the community, she claims it is likely that they were sick with something else. She states that the PCR test is definitely not perfect, but it is the best test that they currently have. Dr. Zink added that they will not be conducting contact tracing on individuals experiencing COVID-19 symptoms with a negative test result, and instead are focusing on known positive cases.

Mayor Weldon asked if asymptomatic testing would be a recommended part of the reopening plans. If so, she asked if the DHSS could assist Juneau in building their testing capacity to do so. Dr. Zink said that currently the state lab does accept tests for asymptomatic cases. The DHSS is partnering with communities on testing strategies.

Mayor Weldon also asked if the surgical ear loop masks are more effective than the cloth face coverings.

Dr. Zink said that cloth face coverings are fantastic, and effective in keeping any droplets from spreading.

Mayor Weldon asked for Dr. Zink to provide an update on if University of Washington would be compatible for Juneau to send tests to their lab.

Dr. Zink responded that she is waiting on an email back from the laboratory director at UW, and encourages the Assembly to contact UW directly.

Dr. Eastman said he would send the Assembly contact information for the UW lab.

Mayor Weldon and the entire Assembly thanked Dr. Zink and Dr. Eastman for their time and information they provided.

Dr. Zink and Dr. Eastman left the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Mayor Weldon called on each Assemblymember to share their thoughts on all of this.

Mr. Jones said he has mixed thoughts. He understands what the epidemiologists are saying, and sort of understands those who are frustrated about hunkering down. He doesn't quite understand why they are so tired of hunkering down. He remembers when they were working really hard and wanted to take days off and turn off their cellphones; now they can do all of this, but people are upset about doing it. He is concerned about large gatherings, pools, gyms, and travel. He worries that we might run into constitutional issues regarding restricting travel.

Mr. Jones shared that he is not exactly sure what to do. He errs on the side of that we should not be doing things that increase the ability of large groups of people getting together. He added that sticking with the Governor might a possible solution, as Mr. Jones says he doesn't have any other effective alternatives.

Ms. Gladziszewski expressed that she wished there was a little more time before implementing Phase 2. She added that some of the guidelines didn't come out until Thursday. She also mentions that some guidelines contradict other guidelines, such as one guideline limited groups to 50, while another guideline about graduation restricts gatherings to 20.

Ms. Gladziszewski said that as a whole package, she is as comfortable as she can get, which is not very comfortable. That said, she added that this is not going to get any easier and there are no certainties. She is grateful for Dr. Zink and her team for answering questions thoughtfully and with notable consideration. She is concerned not only for Juneau but also the smaller Southeast Alaska communities. She says that she does not have an alternative to offer regarding this phase of reopening.

Mr. Edwardson said there isn't a right vs. wrong dichotomy here, but rather there is a selection of choices to make. He believes that the way to make good choices is to think about what is most important, and to him that is protecting peoples' lives. Mr. Edwardson shared that his decision regarding Phase 2 reopening would be similar to his decision last week: he wishes to have a discussion on policy. He says things like quarantine and travel restrictions should be treated as

public policy decisions, and make decisions that can make a difference. Mr. Edwardson said he is in favor of keeping the travel and quarantine restrictions in place, and added that the Assembly has the legal authority to make decisions regarding those restrictions.

Ms. Triem said that she believes Dr. Zink's decision-making is based on how individuals will behave, rather than what the rules are. She thinks that this way of decision-making would be beneficial to use when making their decisions, too. In terms of going forward, Ms. Triem said she does not have any strong opinions right now, and it is hard to say without knowing what the state's plans will be.

Ms. Hale mentioned that both Dr. Zink said and Commissioner Crum have asked to hear from communities on their ideas on travel restrictions. She says that the Assembly may need to have a special meeting to really discuss travel policies, particularly intrastate travel. She also suggested that maybe the City Manager could bring something to the Special Assembly meeting prior to the AFC meeting on Wednesday; something to allow the Governor to see the community's thoughts on this issue.

Ms. Hale would also like to hear what the plan for reopening CBJ facilities are, especially pools. She echoed the comment she made to Dr. Zink earlier in the meeting about senior citizens benefitting from using those facilities.

Mayor Weldon asked Ms. Cosgrove for an operational update on the pools, libraries, and museums.

Ms. Cosgrove shared that the Augustus Brown Pool is getting ready for a fairly large CIP project, and CBJ does not intend on bringing it back online prior to the CIP project. Dimond Park Aquatic Center is in the middle of a deep clean and will not be operational until at least June 1. She adds that DPAC started deep cleaning because no one expected the Governor to open pools up this quick.

She also said that it would be worth having a conversation regarding the cost effectiveness of opening the pools. Considering the cleaning restrictions in place, the level of staffing, pool attendance, and the potential revenue could all possibly make it difficult to reopen the pools at this time. She likes Ms. Hale's suggestion of making a specific time available for higher risk groups when the pools do reopen.

Ms. Cosgrove also shared that the libraries and museum could potentially be able to reopen next week. She added that some library staff members have been reassigned to other EOC tasks. She mentioned that the library is currently providing some community services through the mail, and believes the city museum is also offering services along those lines as well.

Mr. Watt added that the Health Mandates are complicated, and require for a public facing facility to implement their own risk mitigation plan: training staff, asking patrons questions, etc. These plans are not easy to implement and are a difficult aspect of reopening.

Ms. Hale appreciated Ms. Cosgrove's and Mr. Watt's feedback, and said that she asked the question because she is aware of how these closures have impacted the mental health of others.

Mr. Bryson shared that he has always has been willing to go with the State's plan, and has a lot of respect for Dr. Zink and Commissioner Krum. Mr. Bryson believes that the more the Assembly contradicts the State's strategy, the more they lose credibility on some level. He suggested that the Assembly follow Dr. Zink's advice. He agreed with Ms. Triem's point, adding that individuals have already chosen their own behavior towards this crisis, and no mandates have decided how they are going to behave. Mr. Bryson says the Assembly can urge and encourage the community to do the right thing, rather than force them to do it, which would result in a better community response. He added that people don't like to be told what to do, they like to be asked what to do.

Mr. Bryson also agreed with Ms. Hale to reach out to the Governor and express their concern about travel mandates. He added that there is an entire wave of college students who have not come home for the summer yet.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said that she is most concerned about allowing gatherings of up to 50 people. She said that she has said all along that she will listen to the experts, and trust their recommendations and data. She added that she does not have any alternatives to the Governor's plan, and agrees with Mr. Bryson's statement on potentially losing credibility if they contradict the Governor. As far as messaging, Ms. Hughes-Skandijs mentioned it is worth trying to talk people into wearing masks. Dr. Zink said if we all do a little bit, it allows us collectively to do a lot. Ms. Hughes-Skandijs said she will continue to carefully monitor the situation, and is willing to listen to any others' ideas.

Mr. Smith – He said his main concern is the importation of Coronavirus from outside the community. He believes Juneau's isolation has kept the case numbers down. He also mentioned that a lot of people would probably want to receive tests if more tests were readily available. He appreciates Dr. Zink and her team's information and messaging.

If there were to be any communication to the Governor, Mr. Smith suggested discussing testing those who are visiting from out of town, and asked how could they develop a testing strategy.

Mayor Weldon mentioned that she spoke with Ms. Cosgrove earlier regarding new messaging. She said that she is also concerned about allowing gatherings of up to 50 people, but also understands that was mainly for churches. She knows a number of churches that are not planning on reopening soon.

Mayor Weldon has heard from the local business community that these guidelines are still pretty strict. She believes that travel is a little different, and she agreed with Mr. Edwardson's frustration that they do not hear what the Governor says with much advance notice. She adds that there is no Special Assembly meeting currently scheduled for Thursday, and that they may not hear from Governor until Monday.

Mr. Jones mentioned several board meetings that have either rescheduled or moved to virtual meetings only.

Ms. Gladziszewski does not want to meet on Wednesday prior to the AFC meeting, and suggested writing a letter on Thursday to express their concern to the Governor.

Ms. Hughes-Skandijs expressed concern, and believes it would be beneficial to discuss their concerns regarding the travel restrictions in the Governor's mandate.

Mr. Bryson does not know if holding a meeting regarding the travel restrictions would be helpful, and believes that focusing on AFC meetings would be a better use of their time and resources.

Ms. Hale liked the idea of Mayor Weldon and Ms. Gladziszewski working together on drafting a letter to be brought back on Wednesday.

Mr. Edwardson supports Mayor Weldon and Ms. Gladziszewski drafting a letter for ratification on Wednesday.

Ms. Hale said that there is no need to schedule a Thursday meeting.

Ms. Triem said she thinks they should schedule Thursday in case they need it, and agrees with Mr. Bryson's statement that they should focus their energy on Wednesday's AFC meeting. Ms. Triem added that she was in favor of restricting gatherings to a smaller number than the Governor has proposed.

Ms. Hale understands the concern for gatherings of up to 50 people, but also understands the needs of churchgoers who are wanting to attend church in person again.

Mayor Weldon said that she and Ms. Gladziszewski will draft a letter with the City Manager to present to the Assembly on Wednesday, and asked Ms. McEwen to schedule a Thursday meeting.

Mr. Watt shared with the Assembly that the Legislative Budget and Audit Committee had been meeting all afternoon to debate the allocation of CARES Act funding, and they just voted to approve to disburse \$568 Million to the communities. This information will be presented at the AFC meeting.

He also added that there is a House version of this bill currently in Washington, D.C., that would relax the expenditure guidelines to allow for the replacement of municipal revenue. He says that this is potentially good news on the financial front.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Clerk's Note: Special Thanks to Lacey Davis for her work on preparing the minutes.

Signed: _____
Elizabeth J. McEwen
Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____
Beth A. Weldon
Mayor