

THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

Meeting Minutes – April 2, 2020

MEETING NO. 2020-15: The Special Assembly Meeting of the City and Borough of Juneau Assembly held in the Assembly Chambers of the Municipal Building, was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Beth Weldon.

I. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

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

Assemblymembers Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Manager Rorie Watt, Deputy City Manager Mila Cosgrove, Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Interim Engineering/Public Works Director Robert Barr, Municipal Attorney Robert Palmer, and Sign Language Interpreter Michelle Darrah

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

A. Telephonic Public Participation

IV. AGENDA TOPICS

A. COVID-19 Update and Actions

Incident Commander of Emergency Operations Center Update:

Juneau remains at Level 2. There are 147 cases in the state of Alaska, and there are currently 10 confirmed cases in Juneau. The Department of Health and Social Services has determined that of those ten active cases: 1 is travel related, 5 are local, and 4 are currently under investigation. There have been 5,530 tests conducted statewide. Bartlett Regional Hospital has conducted 153 cumulative tests so far. It should be noted that this number does not include tests that have been done through individual providers. Out of the tests done through BRH, 45 of those tests are currently pending results.

The Department of Public Health has reported that there are 26 cases in Juneau that they are tracking, up from 10 yesterday. Two people who have tested positive for COVID-19 are currently hospitalized at BRH. The state has reported a cumulative number of thirteen people across the state who were hospitalized. The state has reported that there have been three fatalities due to COVID-19.

Today the EOC began Operational Period 5 which will conclude on Sunday, April 5th at 1:30 p.m. The CBJ ICS team met today to discuss issues, and holds meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday with BRH. Issues in the critical path have not changed, they continue to decompress the shelters, plan for quarantine and isolation facilities, and provide childcare for

essential employees. The supply chain is operational, stores are reporting fewer out of stock items.

CBJ Operations: CBJ continues to reassign staff to EOC functions where appropriate. There are some staff who are unable to work at this time due to childcare necessities.

Mr. Jones had a question relating to one of the Governor's mandate regarding requiring essential service businesses that rely on workers coming from outside the community to submit a plan for approval. He asked Ms. Cosgrove if CBJ knows how many businesses in Juneau have had their requests approved.

Ms. Cosgrove responded that those requests are directly referred to the State. She also said that the mines did share information with the EOC, but she has not heard any detail about any businesses not being approved. Ms. Cosgrove shared an anecdote from Mr. Day in which she heard that retail businesses who hire seasonal staff from outside Juneau have been encouraged not to hire seasonal staff from out of town this year. Mr. Jones had some additional questions related to this and Ms. Cosgrove said she would inquire and provide the Assembly with further information.

CBJ Operations cont.: Ms. Cosgrove reported that there is no impairment to operations at this time. JEDC reported that the business loan fund is up and operational.

Airport: The airport reported that 10 out of 34 passengers voluntarily screened after arriving on a flight yesterday. The EOC is looking into the screening process, and will likely be making adjustments to that process moving forward.

Mobile Screening: Yesterday, the mobile screening service received over seven calls to the phone bank, which resulted in seven tests being conducted at the drive-thru testing station that day. They have reported to have screened over 157 individuals to date, and have sampled 91 for testing.

The JACC had 47 individuals overnight, the hours of operation have been extended to 8:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. The EOC is trying to have Centennial Hall available while the weather is cold and they are working on standing up the Mill campground site that is replacing the former Thane campground to also be open for overnight starting April 15.

There were no ferries yesterday, thus no vessel screening.

Mayor Weldon asked about who was checking the fishing boats coming in as she and others in the community have seen the sign about boats selling live crab down at the harbor. Ms. Cosgrove said the vessel screening task force is handling the live crab situation.

The **Isolation and Quarantine Task Force** – Mt. Jumbo has been stood up to be used for either quarantine or isolation, it is planned to be used as a backup option besides the Centennial Hall/JACC campus for use by more than just the unsheltered population.

The **Volunteer Task Force** has received information from 204 people wanting to volunteer, 70 of whom have already been connected to services. The VTF has received 20 requests for

assistance from individuals, primarily concerning food, food delivery, and general questions regarding the program. There are a lot of people in the community who are wanting to assist in the efforts, Ms. Cosgrove encourages people to sign up on volunteer form on the CBJ COVID-19 webpage.

Ms. Gladziszewski asked Ms. Cosgrove to explain the details and plans in place regarding isolation and quarantine. Ms. Cosgrove responded that the plans are currently fluid, as the needs of the community are expected to shift and change over time. There is a group of people working on sheltering, including decompressing the shelters for those who are currently experiencing homelessness; and the potential implementation of quarantine and isolation spaces for those experiencing homelessness, and/or those who have ineffective quarantine spaces within their own homes. The EOC is working with the Centennial Hall and JACC on creating those spaces within those buildings.

Ms. Hale had a question regarding the 36 flight passengers who arrived in Juneau yesterday, and asked if those passengers are aware of the Governor's mandate requirements, and if they are complying with those requirements. Ms. Cosgrove shared the airport's response to the screening which found that the large majority of passengers were aware of the mandate, and wanted to get to their destination as quickly as possible so that they may begin their quarantine. Based on that behavior, Ms. Cosgrove says that we can assume but there is no concrete way to confirm that all of those passengers will be quarantining.

Mr. Smith had a question about modeling, and asked if the models have been able to determine how close to ready Juneau is for the surge level. Ms. Cosgrove reported that there is not currently Juneau-specific modeling available, but there is modeling that represents the entire state of Alaska. She stated that reasonable conclusions can be drawn from the statewide models, and that there are several different models out there giving varying results. The EOC has been carefully monitoring how and when cases arise, in terms of number and in the nature of transmission.

Mr. Watt said he has been following the modeling closely, and referenced Dr. Zink's message tonight about modeling – Dr. Zink has released the state's new dashboard that features new data, projections, and calculations related to the transmission rate in Alaska. The Governor said tonight during his press briefing that 'as a state, we are not doing poorly'. Mr. Watt encourages Assemblymembers to watch the press conference.

Mr. Smith asked Ms. Cosgrove about the target number of isolation beds and equipment. Ms. Cosgrove did not have the BRH surge plan with her at the time, but that matter was discussed at the meeting on Monday evening, Ms. Lawhorne had a surge plan of about 90 patients, and they have the ability to convert other rooms if needed.

Mayor Weldon asked how soon Centennial Hall will be ready for providing shelter, to which Ms. Cosgrove responded it should be ready next week.

Mr. Watt reports that the information office continues to provide information to the community, as well as receive positive feedback. They continue to push the "hunker down" message and to

control your individual actions. He believes it would be very informative for the community to watch tonight's press conference with Dr. Zink and the Governor.

Mr. Bryson received information today about food rationing from food distributors. Food insecurity will continue to be a larger issue as the weeks go on.

Economic Assistance: Draft Ordinance – 2019-06(X) DRAFTv2: *An Ordinance Appropriating to the Manager the Sum of up to \$500,000 as Funding for an Emergency Rental Assistance Program; Funding Provided by the General Fund's Fund Balance and the Affordable Housing Fund.*

JEDC has the loan program and 1st application established. Mayor Weldon and Ms. Gladziszewski discussed the concept of creating an economic team, and the details of that team are being worked on.

Mr. Watt reported that the ordinance had been updated with some additional language. He expressed that his goal for tonight's meeting was to decide upon the dollar amount and the source of funding.

Mr. Ciambor gave an overview of the program, describing it as a response to the growing community concern surrounding school closures, unemployment, and loss of jobs due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Assemblymembers reached out to the community and asked how best to assist them during this unprecedented time. This Short Term Rental Assistance program was created to help impacted households in need be able to still afford to pay rents and mortgages. Mr. Ciambor has worked in collaboration with the Alaska Housing and Development Corporation to implement this rental assistance program.

MOTION by Ms. Triem that the source of funds for the program be pulled entirely from the Affordable Housing Fund. The current balance of the Affordable Housing Fund is \$1,020,300. *Hearing no objections, the motion passed.*

Ms. Gladziszewski asked if this rental assistance program would be truly useful to families in need. She pointed out that many people will not be able to pay rent and/or mortgages, and that the CBJ has a small amount of money for such a large issue. She believes that the CBJ should not be giving rental assistance towards a government entity (via a government or state-owned rental) but rather should focus on ensuring that the assistance is being received by the renters and homeowners themselves.

Mr. Palmer noted that this area is fraught with nuanced policy arguments in terms of creating amendments such as this. He advised to be careful when putting limits and conditions on assistance programs, otherwise it could put the program at risk for potentially discriminating against certain homeowners.

Mr. Ciambor explained the process of how current rental assistance program works.

Ms. Triem asked for clarification regarding what the sense of current need is in the community. Mr. Ciambor answered by referencing his work with the HDC that the need is there. He would

expect the need to come in waves, especially as more unemployment happens throughout the community from month to month.

Mr. Edwardson asked about the related federal and state relief from protection from eviction, and whether or not those outside relief programs were currently in place.

Mr. Palmer confirmed that the Federal CARES Act went into effect in February, and that program will provide assistance for 120 days. The Alaska Court System has prohibited evictions for the time being as a short-term solution. A long-term solution, State Senate Bill 241, was passed by the legislature. Mr. Palmer is not certain on whether or not SB 241 has been transmitted to the Governor yet. Therefore, long-term protections and assistance programs created by the State have not been put into effect as of tonight's meeting.

Mr. Edwardson asked if the CARES Act would provide immediate relief for the people that this ordinance would apply to. Mr. Palmer explained that the answer is a little nuanced, not everyone in need is necessarily guaranteed to be protected under the CARES act, and gave an explanation of the CARES act provisions and terms.

Mr. Jones mentioned that the CARES Act and State SB241 both prevent evictions or bank foreclosures, but both also expect tenants to pay the accrued amount of their past due payments. Mr. Palmer confirmed that was correct for the State protections, but the Federal CARES Act is somewhat vague in what it intends to do regarding missed housing payments. Mr. Palmer recalled some versions of the CARES Act which state that there will be forbearance, while other versions state that there will be a moratorium or deferment enacted.

Ms. Triem asked what the median rent currently is in Juneau. Mr. Ciambor: responded that the median rent for a two bedroom apartment in Juneau is approximately \$1200. Ms. Triem asked how the assistance program would work in situations such as roommates living together, and how those individual people would qualify for the program. Mr. Ciambor said that he would have to check with the AHFC, but assumed that roommates would qualify through the same process as a family member household.

Mayor Weldon asked Mr. Ciambor to clarify the split between how many people rent vs. how many people own. Mr. Ciambor referenced the most recent census data, which verifies that Juneau has approximately 7,000 homeowners and 6,000 renters, totaling 13,000 households.

Ms. Gladziszewski noted that there are a lot of questions and uncertainty surrounding this issue, and she suggested sending this ordinance to an economic task force for further discussion. Mayor Weldon noted that a task force has not yet been created but they will be looking at that.

Discussion took place regarding process and timing if this were to be brought before the Assembly as either an emergency resolution or a standard ordinance. Mr. Palmer explained the process for both and Ms. McEwen provided the fast track potential dates for either an emergency resolution or a regular ordinance vs. the process for a standard ordinance timing as follows:

Fast Track timing:

April 6 Regular Assembly Meeting- Emergency Ordinance presented and could be acted upon during that meeting.

April 6 Regular Assembly Meeting – introduce a regular ordinance and set for public hearing on Friday, April 17 or Monday, April 20

Regular Ordinance process/timing:

April 6 Regular Assembly Meeting – introduce a regular ordinance and set for public hearing on Monday, April 27

MOTION by Ms. Gladziszewski to introduce as a regular ordinance on April 6th, and to refer it to whichever committee is agreed upon at Monday's meeting.

Objection by Mr. Bryson. He said if a rental assistance program is introduced at the end of April, the damage would have already been done. He stated that this issue needs to be resolved immediately in order to help the community during a time in which assistance is needed the most. Mr. Bryson said he would rather this decision be made as an emergency resolution.

Mr. Palmer mentioned that the Assembly could have this presented as an emergency resolution on April 6th and pass it that day, or could possibly postpone it to a different date.

Ms. Gladziszewski spoke in favor of the motion, stating that the city has limited resources which should be used wisely. She believes that this ordinance could possibly help 83 households. She says that she understands the desire to move quickly, but also mentioned how Juneau is moving quicker in comparison to other cities in their implementation of rental relief programs.

Objection by Mr. Jones who said that he thinks that this needs to be quickly done. He believes that if the decision is made by May, it would not allow renters and homeowners to pay April rent. If this decision is done quickly, it would allow for the May rent to be taken care of in the future, and for the April rent to be taken care of now. He says it would make sense to help families weather this storm by not allowing them to go through the stress that comes with financial instability by assisting as soon as possible.

Mr. Edwardson agreed with Mr. Jones and Mr. Bryson. He mentions that the Federal CARES Act provides relief to some but not to all, and that there is currently no assistance being provided by the state. Mr. Edwardson believes that the Assembly needs to make smart decisions for our community, and that Juneau is still in an emergency status. Mr. Edwardson said he was in favor of an emergency resolution.

Objection by Ms. Hughes-Skandijis. She agrees with Ms. Gladziszewski that the city's resources are limited and should be used wisely, however, she did think that it is important for people to stay in their homes right now. By coupling the AFHC with their funds, she believed that providing assistance as soon as possible would be a beneficial use of funds. Ms. Hughes-Skandijis said she would be voting against motion.

Ms. Hale spoke in favor of the motion. She believes that Assemblymembers should not blame the CBJ for putting people out of work, that rather it was the Coronavirus that led to the closure of businesses and subsequent layoffs. She says that the Assembly should be more thoughtful about decisions, and advises against making a rash or quick decision.

Mr. Smith mentioned that the state has prohibited foreclosures and evictions. He believed that the Assembly should move about this decision in a methodical way to gain a better understanding of exactly who they intend to help with this decision.

Mayor Weldon asked the clerk to restate the motion so everyone understood what they are voting on.

Ms. McEwen noted that the **MOTION** is to introduce this ordinance on Monday, April 6, refer it to a committee, and set it for public hearing on the April 27 Regular Assembly Meeting.

Roll Call vote on the above motion:

Ayes: Gladziszewski, Hale, Smith, Triem.

Nays: Hughes-Skandijs, Jones, Edwardson, Bryson, Weldon.

Motion failed. Four (4) Ayes, Five (5) Nays.

MOTION by Mr. Bryson that the Assembly create an emergency resolution for the CBJ COVID-19 Short-Term Rental Assistance Program which would be introduced on Monday, April 6 and asked for unanimous consent.

Objection by Ms. Gladziszewski. She said that she doesn't know what that would mean and if amendments could be made to the resolution on April 6 or not.

Mr. Palmer clarified that the motion is to allow an emergency resolution to be presented to the Assembly on Monday night for action; presenting this resolution to the Assembly inherently allows for amendments to be made to it.

Ms. Gladziszewski expressed her concern asking when the time for fact finding and understanding come in along with any amendments members feel may be needed.

Roll call vote to create an emergency resolution to be brought back to the April 6 meeting:

Ayes: Bryson, Edwardson, Hughes-Skandijs, Jones, Triem, Weldon.

Nays: Gladziszewski, Hale, and Smith.

Motion passed. Six (6) Ayes, Three (3) Nays.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Hale expressed her desire to draft a thank you letter to the Governor thanking him for his response to the pandemic and the actions he has taken during this time. Mayor Weldon suggests that she and Ms. Hale work together to draft a thank you letter.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Assembly, the meeting was adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Clerk's Note: Special Thanks to Lacey Davis from the Juneau Public Libraries for her work on preparing these minutes for approval.

Signed: _____

Elizabeth J. McEwen, Municipal Clerk

Signed: _____

Beth A. Weldon, Mayor