

MARCH 17, 2020

T HE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LEWISTON, IDAHO, met in a Special meeting on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, in the back conference room of Lewiston City Hall, 1134 “F” Street. Mayor Collins called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Councilors Present: Collins; Schroeder; Blakey; Bradbury; Kelly; Miller (by phone); Pernsteiner.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Collins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. CITIZEN COMMENTS: *Provides an opportunity for citizens to address the council on agenda items or other items they wish to bring to the attention of the council. Citizens are encouraged to discuss operational issues in advance with the city manager. In consideration of others wishing to speak, please limit your remarks to three minutes.*

There were no citizen comments offered.

IV. SPECIAL MEETING DISCUSSION ITEM

A. PROCLAMATION DECLARING A STATE OF EMERGENCY

Councilor Blakey and Mayor Pro Tem Schroeder moved and seconded, respectively, adoption of Resolution 2020-14 declaring a local disaster emergency and extending the Declaration beyond seven days, in accordance with Idaho Code Section 46-1011; appointing a Director and Deputy Director of Civil Defense, in accordance with Chapter 12 of the Lewiston City Code; finding an emergency exists pursuant to Idaho Code Section 67-2808(1)

Councilor Bradbury said though he thinks the Resolution is well intentioned, he doesn't believe it is hitting the mark until there is County-wide control. He expressed concern that the casino and Clearwater Paper are outside of the city's jurisdiction. Either both are going to have to be shut down or the Council will have to deal with the consequences of a Covid-19 infection when it happens. He said he believes that until there is one common director, this document is meaningless.

City Manager Nygaard emphasized that there is emergency coordination and there is already an agreement between the City and Nez Perce County in place. The proposed Resolution allows the City Manager to bring city resources forward to work with the County to respond to emergencies in a coordinated effort. Councilor Bradbury questioned the authority of the City to shut down the casino

and Clearwater Paper and Mr. Nygaard replied that this authority lies with the Public Health Department. At some point the City may be asked to enforce that authority, but at this point, it generally is in their hands. City Attorney Gómez said the City has the authority to make all laws, rules and regulations consistent with the State of Idaho to protect the health and safety of the City. The only action taken so far is to limit City-sponsored events and to encourage others throughout Lewiston to follow the CDC guidelines. Councilor Bradbury emphasized he doesn't believe the proposed Resolution goes nearly far enough.

Councilor Blakey asked if the document only applies to City personnel and City-sponsored events and Mr. Nygaard confirmed. Mr. Blakey added that the Proclamation does not require Corporate America to shut their doors.

Councilor Pernsteiner said he thinks it is important to adopt this Resolution and get it into effect immediately. The Council and staff can then discuss the merit of other ideas, coordination and possible tracking of costs related to mitigating Covid-19 should the Federal government come on line.

Councilor Miller moved to call for the question. Councilor Blakey seconded the motion. The motion carried 5 to 1 with Councilor Bradbury voting nay and Councilor Kelly excused.

V. CITY COUNCILOR COMMENTS

Councilor Bradbury noted the Council is talking about a life and death matter when it comes to Covid-19. He said the Council has talked about shutting down the Senior Nutrition Program's meal sites, but doesn't seem to have any issues with 900 people working at Clearwater Paper or individuals going to the Casino. Mr. Bradbury emphasized that now is the time to help to flatten the health curve. When people begin getting sick and dying and it continues to spread, he said the Council can know that they could have helped to prevent it if they would have taken further action.

Councilor Miller reminded Councilor Bradbury that both Clearwater Paper and the Casino are outside of the City of Lewiston's jurisdiction. She noted that she has a great deal of experience with food banks and distribution of needed supplies to the vulnerable population. The food banking system throughout the region has tremendous outreach capabilities and she encouraged the City to partner with them and Community Action Partnership.

Councilor Pernsteiner thanked City staff for their thoughts on how best for the City to respond. The document provided is very fluid and it is important to recognize that the goal is to mitigate risk. Mr. Pernsteiner addressed the estimates on the economic downturn which has the potential to kill more people than the virus in the United States. It will be important to keep an eye on the long term

which means thriving past the pandemic. Domestic violence, child abuse, etc. has a good chance of going up during this time. The more the City shuts down and isolates, the more likely it will dramatically affect the long-term impact on the Valley and the less likely businesses are to recover. There is a very real possibility of high unemployment in the future. Councilor Pernsteiner encouraged the councilors to reach out to the local businesses as they figure out ways to deliver their products during this time.

Community Development Director Von Tersch reported that Business Licensing staff is charged with providing alcohol licenses. The proposed Resolution affords her the opportunity to say there shall be no more than 50 people in attendance or the license would not be issued.

After thanking the city's leadership team for their excellence, Councilor Blakey said people in the Valley are beginning to make the right decisions. With regard to the proposed Resolution, he emphasized that it only limits the number of people at City gatherings and not the number of people who can go into a market or store, for example. He noted it is important to make this clear as to not cause fear amongst the residents of Lewiston.

Mayor Pro Tem Schroeder said she believes the City is on track and is doing the right thing. She expressed that fear from individuals regarding the virus is already happening and hopes measures can be taken to help to alleviate that fear. City Manager Nygaard replied that Public Information Officer Maurer is working diligently to deliver accurate information and to dispel rumors. It is important to try to calm fears so people can make appropriate decisions. It is important for the city to remain supportive and to continue to thrive for the good of the entire community.

Councilor Bradbury said he agrees that shutting down a big facility is drastic. The question is, should it be shut down to avoid infection or shut down because there is infection? He distributed an article from a group of physicians for Council review.

Mayor Collins reported that he met with Councilor Pernsteiner and discussed the economic impacts the City could face upon conclusion of the pandemic. In 2007 and 2008, there were 500,000 deaths associated with the economic downturn. He said he believes the City of Lewiston is very resilient, but strongly encouraged community members to look out for each other. Many organizations and agencies have already taken steps on their own volition to assist in preventing the spread of Covid-19. The Resolution before the Council today is the first step and further decisions will be made as they come forward.

City Manager Nygaard reported that staff has been meeting with other agencies in an effort to work together as things progress. Public Health has the

expertise and a great deal of information regarding the needs of this community and the City stands ready to help and support them. Communication is in place and when additional actions are needed, staff will step up and take those actions. Today's approval of the Resolution gives staff the authority to act quickly and to be proactive. If there is a need to create laws which state that people need to behave in a particular matter, that will be brought before the Council prior to any action is taken. All the work and planning done by previous employees, county officers, state officials and city employees is now in place with the declaration of the Governor's State of Emergency.

VI. CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

City Manager Nygaard reported that it is imperative that every member of the community follow the CDC guidelines and practice social distancing, cover mouths and noses when sneezing and wash hands, etc. None of the guidelines require individuals to lock themselves in their houses and it is important to get out and enjoy the fresh air while at the same time ensuring a six-foot distance from others. When this pandemic is over, it is crucial to ensure that Lewiston businesses are still open and operating. It is important to be careful as issues are implemented with regard to the virus and to be thoughtful about how those things will affect the business community. City Manager Nygaard asked for a brief presentation from each Department as to how their services have been impacted.

Fire Chief Myklebust said the focus of the Lewiston Fire Department is to remain ready to provide services to the area. He said he met with staff and the President of Local 1773 and all are 100 percent on board and are moving forward with one cohesive plan. Chief Myklebust said that crisis management is what his employees deal with every day and this pandemic has just broadened the scale.

Councilor Blakey mentioned that Gritman Hospital has set up an outdoor triage center in its parking lot to assess individuals before entering the facility. He asked if the local hospitals have a plan in place. City Manager Nygaard replied that St. Joseph Regional Medical Center has restricted its entrance to one location only and will be interviewing everyone before they can enter.

Police Chief Hurd said the Police Department has made some changes with regard to movement within the Department and has cancelled all training. Upon the first confirmed case of Covid-19 in the area, changes will be made to how service calls are handled. He said his staff will most likely not respond to medical calls unless requested. Police personnel are essential and will continue to do their jobs while doing everything possible to remain safe for themselves and their families.

With the shortage of essential items such as toilet paper, Councilor Miller asked if the City is planning to work with Nez Perce County to ensure these items

are available to those who need them. Police Chief Hurd replied it comes down to supply and demand. Unless his officers see somebody hoarding or selling essential items for more than they actually cost, it is difficult to regulate. Councilor Miller asked if Clearwater Paper could be contacted to see if they could supply toilet paper. Councilor Blakey reported that Clearwater Paper only manufactures the product and does not package or convert it into a useable finished product.

Public Works Director Davies indicated that his Department's key focus has been to provide clean water to citizens within its district, to maintain clean water through the wastewater system and to provide solid waste services. Though operations have not yet changed drastically, changes are expected in the near future. Asotin County Landfill has closed to the public and will only be allowing commercial vehicles to dump at this time. Construction is underway at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and any future shutdowns will have to be worked out with the contractor. With a shortage of toilet paper, Mr. Davies reminded everyone to refrain from placing any other products down their toilets.

Councilor Pernsteiner questioned the possibility of placing moratoriums on water shut-offs and late fees for 60 to 90 days and suggested a document be drafted.

Community Development Director Von Tersch said at this time her staff is still offering all services but is encouraging customers to call in and e-mail. Business Licensing is currently working remotely, all travel has been cancelled, outside groups can no longer reserve the meeting rooms, and board and commission meetings have been cancelled. With the expectation that the Bell Building will close to the public at some point, forms will be provided in a rack on the sidewalk. Transit staff has been busy deep cleaning the buses and it is expected that at some point in the near future the fixed route will be suspended and employees will be reassigned other duties. The last service that would possibly be cancelled would be Dial-a-Ride for dialysis patients. Responding to a question from Councilor Pernsteiner, Ms. Von Tersch indicated there are probably enough requests to keep one bus busy. However, with no way to social distance two wheelchairs, two buses might be necessary.

Mayor Collins asked if the delivery of Senior Nutrition meals by Transit staff has been discussed. Community Development Director Von Tersch confirmed, noting that if this was implemented the individuals would be notified and the meals would then be left on the door step by Transit employees.

Administrative Services Director Marsh Dan Marsh said his team works with citizens all day every day. One major goal is to ensure that staff has what they need. With regard to IT, Mr. Marsh said he feels they are in great shape in terms of equipment. Staff has worked remotely in the past and will easily be able to do so in the future if necessary. Everything is in place to hold virtual meetings if that need arises.

Backup plans are in place in payroll to guarantee payments go out, limits on credit cards have been increased to ensure department emergencies will be covered, and five essential mechanics at the Service Center continue to work on site. Staff is capturing all expenses that could be reimbursed from the Federal and State government. Regardless of whether or not these expenses will be reimbursed, it will provide a good overview of what this pandemic has and will cost the City.

With regard to utilities, Administrative Services Director Marsh asked the Council to endorse the recommendation to suspend utility shut-offs and late fees for 60 days. Online bill pays, phone payments and drop box use will be encouraged and a flyer has been prepared to insert in the utility bills if Council agrees.

With the exception of Councilor Bradbury, the remainder of the Council agreed to move forward with the temporary suspension of utility shut-offs and late fees and asked staff to prepare the appropriate document.

Library Director Johnson explained the Library Board decides whether or not to close the Library, followed then by a consensus of the Council or City Manager. At this point, the entrance/exit has been limited to 5th Street only and pickup of materials has been limited. Staff has doubled down on cleaning and it is anticipated that soon only essential staff will be working at the Library while the others work from home. All programs have been cancelled through the end of March and all volunteers have been asked to stop volunteering until further notice.

Councilor Miller indicated she would support closing the library to the public in hopes that delivery services or distribution could still take place. Councilor Blakey agreed. City Attorney Gómez reiterated that this would be a decision of the Library Board. Councilor Miller expressed her desire to be proactive, stating if the City has the authority to close the facility then it should. She applauded staff for all of their efforts, but stressed that the public should not be able to come into the facilities in an effort to prevent the spread of this highly dangerous virus.

Parks & Recreation Director Barker talked about facilities, Recreation programs and parks. With regard to facilities, staff is busy keeping 19 buildings stocked with equipment and supplies. Each department has taken on some custodial duties to allow custodial staff to focus on door handles, counter tops, meeting rooms, doors and all high traffic areas.

With regard to Recreation, Mr. Barker said he has been identifying those activities and programs that should be closed wherein groups of 50 or more are expected, such as the Seaport River Run. Drop in programs, such as the Senior Nutrition meals, continue through the end of the week and will be suspended after that. Home delivered meals will continue as long as assistance can be provided

from Transit staff. The plan is to alter the congregate meal program to a paper bag meal that individuals can pick up and take home.

Staff continues to maintain the park restrooms. Even though some recreation programs have been cancelled or delayed, the trails, golf courses, disc golf, etc. remain open to provide places for people to continue a healthy lifestyle.

Councilor Blakey said he would like to have the Senior Nutrition congregate meals shut down immediately and to have bag lunches for pick-up only beginning tomorrow. Parks & Recreation Director Barker noted the reason for waiting through this week was because there is not contact information for many of the people who attend drop-in programs. Staff is working hard to get the word out to those who participate.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Lewiston City Council, Councilor Blakey moved and Councilor Schroeder seconded adjournment of the March 17, 2020, Special Council Meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Kari Ravencroft, Recording Secretary

Date approved by City Council