

IN AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE WHITE PINE COUNTY COMMISSION HELD ON MARCH 18, 2020 IN THE COUNTY LIBRARY CONFERENCE ROOM IN ELY, NEVADA

The Following Were Present:

County Commission

Richard Howe, Chairman
Travis Godon, Vice-Chairman
Ian Bullis, Commissioner
Shane Bybee, Commissioner
Laurie L. Carson, Commissioner
Nichole Baldwin, Clerk of the Board
Susan Lujan, Deputy Clerk

County Officials

Lori Romero, Library/Sr. Center Director
Kristi Rozich, Aquatic Center Director
Tim Bunch, Human Resources Director
Lynette Gust, Juvenile Probation Officer
Brett North, WPCFD Fire Chief
Bill Calderwood, Public Works Director
Lori Williams, Library Admin. Assistant
Scott Henriod, WPC Sheriff
Jennifer Farnworth, IT Specialist
Mike Johnson, IT Specialist
Brett Ratliff, BCT
Elizabeth Frances, Finance Director
Burton Hilton, WPC Assessor
Mike Wheable, District Attorney
Bryan Pyle, Deputy District Attorney

Also Present

Geri Wopschall
Jodi Foster, KDSS
Karen Livingston, KDSS
Alexandra Santella, UNR Coop Ext.
Kay McMurray, Ely Times
Leslie Riley, BLM
Ken Kliewer
George Chachas, George Town Media
Kyle Horvath, Tourism & Recreation Board

Chairman Richard Howe called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m. Commissioner Shane Bybee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE/SILENT INVOCATION

This was duly held.

PUBLIC COMMENT

WPC Assessor Burton Hilton commented that we need a functioning government in order to have a functioning society; we need to do what we can to maintain services and do our part to keep things as calm as possible during this time. We need to be cognizant of people losing their jobs around the country today and wonder how they will pay their bills, when deciding about giving employees paid time off. Those are the people, he pointed out, who are paying our salaries. The most important thing now is “communication, communication, communication.” He commended the Board for making good decisions regarding the Senior Center and the Aquatic Facility, but he noted seeing comments on Facebook prior to those decisions and they weren’t good.

Mr. George Chachas, George Town Media, commented that the County needs a good sound system.

DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION/APPROVAL TO DECLARE A COUNTY EMERGENCY THROUGH RESOLUTION 2020-17 AND TO ADOPT THOSE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED THEREIN, DUE TO THE COVID-19 VIRUS, STATE AND LOCAL CONDITIONS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW AND IMPLEMENT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE NEVADA GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANDATES, AND TO FACILITATE IN OBTAINING FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL FUNDING AND SUPPLIES

District Attorney Mike Wheable advised this resolution is in draft form, and is still being worked on with respect to the Governor's initiatives. He added the Commission can modify, change, reject, etc. any or all parts of this draft; he assured the assemblage it is not going out as written, without this Board approving a final version. He encouraged taking care of things now and not have to hold so many emergency meetings, as that's not fair to the public. This will also strengthen Public Health Director Dr. David Byun's position, as he issues his orders. There are currently no active cases in our community, and we want to keep it that way. He reviewed the highlights of the resolution, noting it explains the emergency situation and that we will be handling things in an altered manner, such as providing pertinent supplies to our Department Heads in order to allow them to conduct business differently. This could include providing laptops so people could work from home, and providing funds from Contingency to allocate and fast-track needed purchases and to do the accounting at the end of the fiscal year. This is basically to streamline the process and advise our boards with respect to closures. The credibility of this Board is extremely important; while other communities have "beat us to it" with regard to the directions they are taking, we want to ensure what would be necessary and what would not be required at this point in time. He emphasized we're addressing our citizens' needs as we go forward.

Chairman Richard Howe focused on Item 14, regarding closing the Library. Due to what we need the Library for, perhaps just limiting access to certain times of the day could be implemented; he advised that many elderly people don't have computer access and this is a vital part of the community. Library/Sr. Center Director Lori Romero explained the Library is an information center; their phones are ringing constantly. She noted the foot traffic has gone down, but she could also lock the doors and perhaps do some services by appointment. Copying and faxing requests remain normal, as she pointed out the Library is the only place this can be done. She commended her dedicated staff, noting they are fine with being on site, and would prefer to continue operating, either by appointment or some other method. She emphasized they still want to be available to the community. In reply to a query from Commissioner Laurie Carson, Director Romero advised they've shut down every other public computer to allow for distancing, and the computers and chairs are sterilized prior to the next person utilizing the station; they've been doing this as routine all along, before this all came up. They added a few more sanitizing steps such as the doorknobs, etc. Seniors call upon them to look things up for them as they don't have computers, etc. Commissioner Travis Godon pointed out that the Commission has to meet here so it wouldn't be appropriate to close the building. District Attorney Mike Wheable noted this provision was adopted from suggestions of other resolutions made throughout the State. Seniors are an at-risk population, and he felt they need to stay home for their own protection. There's lots of overreaction regarding closing things down; he reiterated there are no active cases here, "but by the time there are this will be too late to prevent the spread of it over the next

month.” We need to ensure our central services are still provided, and we’re walking the line right now between closing our doors and adjusting to deliver those services.

District Attorney Mike Wheable advised that Dr. Byun will be issuing his orders today, which is expected to be in incremental steps for us to take as necessary. He is not directing the Commission to close things down, just noting that it was being done throughout the State and we need the opportunity to discuss it. Finance Director Elizabeth Frances asked if, since there is decreased flow through the Library, this would be an appropriate time to recarpet the Library, using the \$30,000 in the budget for that purpose? D.A. Wheable noted that we aren’t saying strictly essential government services are the ones we will be doing, but allowing service to the Internet and related essential services is pretty important and during the next 30 days we need to keep that in mind. He recommended taking steps to reduce staffing by 60% at this point in time; this could be achieved by different means. Commissioner Travis Godon asked, if that would be similar to Ridley’s grocery store keeping specific hours for the seniors to go to the store? WPC Sheriff Scott Henriod confirmed that action had been taken. Commissioner Shane Bybee agreed that we would need the Internet, but as a lending Library, what about materials going in and out? Director Romero noted everything is sterilized when it comes in. D.A. Wheable emphasized that the highest priority of service would be the Internet/computer use for people who rely on that access. The Library could restrict their hours, people, etc.

At this point WPC Clerk Nichole Baldwin advised Dr. Byun is sending an email currently, of which she read a portion into the record, including; “Shutting down could backfire; he will present mitigation by issuing incremental responses next week.”

District Attorney Mike Wheable moved on to Item 15, regarding the Aquatic Center; it would be closed to all except for those services deemed necessary by the Director. The Board agreed with this, as Aquatic Center Director Kristi Rozich briefly explained that activities and classes would be suspended and only minimal usage of the pool would remain. Chairman Richard Howe noted that it is paramount that the County is trying to slow the panic; needs of our citizens are essential, others items not so much. Reducing the work force and segregating coworkers are suggestions; he feels the Library remains a main focal point and wondered if people should be screened as they enter the building. Commissioner Laurie Carson noted that by declaring an emergency situation, while we don’t have a confirmed case here yet, it will free up our ability to adapt to the situation in a more relaxed manner but still be accessible to equipment and funds to allow the different County Departments to do what they need to do.

DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION/APPROVAL TO OFER UP TO 10 ADDITIONAL DAYS OF PAID ADMIN LEAVE TO EMPLOYEES. TO BE USED ONLY BY NON-ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES DURING THE ENXT 30 DAYS. TO ALLOW NON-SYMPOMATIC AND NON-ESSENTIAL EMPLOYEES TO “SELF-QUARANTINE” CONSISTENT WITH GOV. SISOLAK’S DIRECTOR TO STATE EMPLOYEES, AND TO FURTHER IMPLEMENT THE PRESIDENT’S DIRECTION TO SELF-QUARANTINE “LOCK-DOWN” FOR AT LEAST 15 DAYS. TO INCLUDE DISCUSSION ON THE PAYROLL COSTS FOR THIS MEASURE AND FUNDING SOURCE (I.E., CONTINGENCY)

Finance Director Elizabeth Frances discussed the leave policies briefly; she noted the County doesn’t wish to prevent people from taking their leave if they wished to do so. District Attorney Mike Wheable cited the “orders” for people to stay home, which is impossible to enforce unless they are really sick, he felt. The State is sending non-essential employees home, which is an extreme measure but it can reduce staff enough and yet be able to get through the next 30 days. He recommends

reducing our office staff by 60% over the next 10 days, but at the discretion of the Department Heads. Chairman Richard Howe agreed with that recommendation, as the Department Heads would know what would work best for their offices. Commissioner Laurie Carson had a concern about promoting a false sense of security by doing this. Commissioner Shane Bybee felt this would be fine after our other options are exhausted at the option of the Department Head; he still feels we could approve this. D.A. Wheable noted that while we can't make people use their sick leave first, we can still ask them to do so; also he doesn't want Department Heads to say their employees can't use their vacation leave if they wish to do so. He is looking to create an atmosphere that will allow an employee to stay home. Commissioner Travis Godon felt it's "a slap in the face to the taxpayer if we are allowed to use our leave when others are losing our jobs." Public Works Director Bill Calderwood asked if we could even meet the 60% quota by staggering shifts? He knows the union would need to be involved, but still feels the offices could function, we could just ask our employees to stagger their hours/days for the next 30 days. He realized that some offices could make that work easier than others, though. Commissioner Ian Bullis suggested we could plan to stagger and see how that would work for us. Human Resources Director Tim Bunch noted that there are County policies already in place that address catastrophic leave and quarantines.

DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION/UPDATE ON COUNTY OFFICE CLOSURES, DOOR CLOSURES, SERVICE ROLLBACK, AND TO PLAN OR GIVE DIRECTION TO DEPARTMENT HEADS ON WHAT SERVICES TO FURTHER CURTAIL

While this had been discussed above, D.A. Wheable encouraged the Department Heads to make further comments. He advised that District Court has been rescheduled past the next 3 weeks and suspended jury trials, for the public's information. He did note that those currently in custody will have their hearings heard, although most have been rescheduled. Aquatic Center Director Kristy Rozich noted they fall under the recreation buildings to be closed, per Governor Sisolak's message yesterday. She noted they would either lead by example or limit their hours; and if they do close, she had some ideas with respect to her full-time staff so they can still get their hours. But she did note that to follow the Governor's statements they should really be locking their doors. Finance Director Elizabeth Frances advised that there are other ways her staff could perform services, such as calling people to make sure they're ok and see if they need anything, for example; that way they would be providing an essential need for the citizens and earn their wage. Such "mercy" jobs could be one way to ensure our citizens' needs are met, D.A. Wheable agreed. Director Frances advised the union is willing to work with the County to see what needs to be done. Director Rozich noted there are only 3 pools in the State that are still open; Commissioner Bybee felt the pool should close entirely. Director Rozich commented that her employees would love to be utilized elsewhere, so long as they are continuing in some way. Chairman Howe cited a couple of County employees were assisting at the Senior Center to help implement some new methods there. Commissioner Ian Bullis advised Director Rozich could work with our Emergency Management Director to figure out where her employees would be best suited, and thus be redeployed elsewhere. WPC Assessor Burton Hilton cited NRS 245 noting the authorization of closing offices of elected officials and how Department Heads could make their decision regarding to close or not. D.A. Wheable agreed and noted such closure is not the plan right now. Public Works Director Bill Calderwood suggested perhaps not hiring seasonal workers at this time and stagger employees to get things done, noting that "we can't let the grass die," but rather just be able to function and stay separated out. The D.A. commended Director Calderwood on this creative example. Other suggestions were made during the discussion: To delay hiring of all seasonals at least 30 days, at the Department Head's discretion; deliveries and curbside pickups could be

instituted for clients at the Social Services office; locking doors but placing signage and phone numbers to call to mitigate traffic, such as at the Administrative Building, with a temporary doorbell to be installed. D.A. Wheable would like to hear from the courts on how the judges wish to handle this. Director Frances did indicate that IT would still need to be available 24/7; and D.A. Wheable offered that he has instituted a rotational schedule and remote computers.

DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION TO CANCEL ALL CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD MEETINGS FOR THE NEXT 30 DAYS

Tourism & Recreation Board Chairman Kyle Horvath cited there's going to be a Republican Party Convention at the Convention Center on March 21st, and they are indeed moving forward with this. He noted that Dr. Byun could cancel it with an order, however. While they are an advisory board, Chairman Horvath noted they make cleanliness a priority; they've met with their maintenance staff and will be doing full-force cleaning. He noted that after this weekend they WILL be closing their doors and anyone wishing to make reservations must contact them by phone. He added that while this will hurt them economically, from a safety standpoint it isn't essential to keep the Convention Center doors open. He is expected from 75-100 people to be in attendance. He continued that while there will be no more self-serve coffee and cookies, caterers will be used; during their breaks everything will be wiped down and sterilized. The 6-foot barrier may be enforced starting later on today, per Public Health Director Dr. Buyn, and so they must be creative in conforming to that. District Attorney Mike Wheable noted that the Board could approve this. Chairman Richard Howe entertained a motion to approve; Commissioner Ian Bullis made the motion to cancel all Citizen Advisory Board meetings for the next 30 days as requested. Commissioner Travis Godon seconded. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION/CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE FOUR 10-HOUR WORK DAYS FOR 4 WEEKS (DURATION SCHOOLS ARE CLOSED IN WHITE PINE COUNTY). OFFICES TO REMAIN OPEN BUT ALLOWS NON-EXEMPT STAFF TO ROTATE DAYS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE CARE FOR MINOR CHILDREN

Human Resources Director Tim Bunch advised long before the Governor made any declarations, he was looking at different options, and this is one of them; D.A. Wheable clarified this is just another tool that could be considered. He felt the Department Heads could just do what they felt they needed to do to make things easier. Director Bunch asked how we could maintain operations, minimize people and still not be hit to the bottom line with respect to our finances; these ideas are not meant to impact our financial status.

DISCUSSION ONLY ON THE FLEXIBLE INTERPRETATION ON THE SICK AND ANNUAL LEAVE TIME PURSUANT TO DOL GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Resources Director Tim Bunch advised that according to the Dept. of Labor statement there is a stipulation that businesses and owners and entities need to consider flexible working conditions with respect to COVID-19. He cited Policy 6.2 with respect to sick leave and quarantines. If we were to take a flexible view of this, it could give Department Heads autonomy of things to happen in their scope of leadership. He added there's another policy that states if not enough sick leave has accrued, vacation leave could be used; but NOT the reverse, per the DOL guidelines. However, the County Policy does address this; see the next agenda item, noted.

DISCUSSION ONLY ON LEAVE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM EMPLOYEE TO EMPLOYEE FOR THE SPECIFIC NEED IN DEALING WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Director Bunch cited the catastrophic leave bank had been used in the past. He noted many County employees are parents, and trying to figure out that situation, as the kids won't be in school for the next 4 weeks. The swimming pool is no longer an option, and neither is the Library. He discussed this with the union representative, and found it was feasible to have someone donate 40 hours of leave time to someone who has kids, in order to meet the needs of this situation. The only problem would be the possibility of stockpiling leave time and then abusing it. If it's limited to 40 hours specifically to the parent or caregiver of sickly parents, for example, they could have that. If the hours aren't used during the 4-week period, then the remainder would return to the contributor, so it would be a win-win situation. As long as the union knows we are taking care of our employees, he has discussed this with them and they would support this. In reply to questions from the Board, Director Bunch noted that donating employees would require above 240 hours in their leave bank to make this work. This will be placed on the next County Commission meeting agenda.

DISCUSSION ONLY ON ENSURING LIMITATION OF PERSONNEL AND SOCIAL DISTANCING IN GENERAL MEETING AREAS (FOR INSTANCE COMMISSION MEETINGS, EOC) PURSUANT TO PRESIDENTIAL AND GOVERNOR DIRECTIVES

Director Bunch noted this had been discussed earlier today, but we need to focus on the Commission meetings and other such gatherings requiring social distancing. Also, he noted many people come in off the street at the Admin Building, the Courthouse, and other areas. He added that the Maintenance and Road employees are segregated in their jobs, except in the lunchroom, and we need to ensure that doesn't occur during this time. This also extends to other groups, as he explained to the Board.

Per direction from District Attorney Mike Wheable, only the following previous agenda item is to be considered for action, as follows:

--For the Resolution 2020-17, Deputy District Attorney Bryan Pyle discussed the changes that will be made to the resolution per today's discussion. Chairman Richard Howe entertained a motion to approve. Commissioner Laurie Carson made a motion to approve Resolution 2020-17 with modifications as discussed. Commissioner Ian Bullis seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

HR Director Tim Bunch advised that JobConnect is not going to close down, so people can have Internet/computer services there.

KDS Owner Karen Livingston noted it will be difficult for them to continue if this gets much worse. She noted they are essential because they provide hourly news, but it is national news. The community is craving local, official news. She's asking the Board to help them out with either written statements or live interviews, on a daily or weekly basis. She noted she interviewed the City Mayor yesterday, and in fact their "phone lines and Facebook are blowing up" with people wanting to know what's going on. District Attorney Mike Wheable assured her the County will reach out to them.

Public Works Director Bill Calderwood noted there is a group of employees who are NOT eligible to receive sick leave donations; those are those people who are still under Probation. He wants to see this change. D.A. Wheable agreed this should be on the next agenda, it needs to change.

Finance Director Elizabeth Frances shared a story with the assemblage: Someone rang the doorbell to her Dad's house, who lives in a larger urban area. When he opened it a woman and her daughter were standing there. They were going door-to-door to make sure everyone was okay! She

reported he was surprised and delighted to see that kind of individual effort in a community member to reach out to him during this time. As a community of people, she added, we would hope to see that kind of outreach to each other as well!

District Attorney Mike Wheable noted that pertaining to the Governor's declaration, he can't see that his Executive powers were invoked, but rather strong suggestions were made. If Dr. Byun adopts these, he could make them mandates. He added that if people could close by noon on this date, per the declaration, he would recommend that, but it isn't likely that would be mandated today. Only a direct order of law requires businesses to close, he clarified; and it's only the gaming industry that was shut down, through the Gaming Control Board. He added that he felt incremental steps that will be proposed by Dr. Byun would be a good response to the situation.

Commissioner Laurie Carson noted that in a local boarding/grooming facility, an animal was dropped off; the owner can't leave the dog and close her doors! She cited another facility which provides essential services such as feed and other such for animals as well as boarding/grooming, which she noted wasn't fair for one business and not the other, in connection with having to shut down. D.A. Wheable clarified these facilities do NOT have to shut down their services, only if they can, and this isn't enforced locally at this point.

Mr. George Chachas commented that he sees what this Board is doing for the County, which is well and good. As a downtown businessman who sees downtown shrinking, he may have to shut down, but he noted he could do other things, such as repairing the buildings he owns. However, he can't seem to get a permit from the Building Inspector to clear the way for him to be able to do those things. He advised that he can see what the County is doing for their employees; however, ¾ of his Social Security earnings go to pay for his property taxes. He asked the Board not to forget the taxpayer who is "knocking at an empty door." He's getting tired of asking for things.

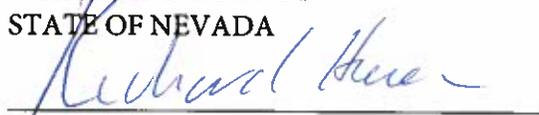
WPC Clerk Nichole Baldwin advised she has been in communication with the other Nevada County Clerks. It seems that all the Clerk's offices south of Ely have shut their doors and are requiring people to make appointments to go in and apply for marriage licenses. She sees an influx of people coming in, and wondered how to protect her staff from all that!

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss today, Chairman Richard Howe entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Ian Bullis made the motion; Commissioner Laurie Carson seconded. Motion carried.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
WHITE PINE COUNTY
STATE OF NEVADA

BY:


CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:


WPC CLERK OF THE BOARD