

IN A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WHITE PINE COUNTY COMMISSION HELD ON APRIL 30, 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

County Officials

Elizabeth Frances, Finance Director
Mike Johnson, IT Specialist
Tim Bunch, Human Resources Dir. (Zoom)
Bill Calderwood, Public Works Director (Zoom)
Kristi Rozich, Aquatic Center Director (Zoom)
Brad Christiansen, Building Inspector (Zoom)
WPC Sheriff Scott Henriod (Zoom)
WPC Recorder Martha Rivera Sindelar (Zoom)
Charissa Halsey, Juvenile Probation (Zoom)
Deputy District Attorney Melissa Brown (Zoom)
Mike Wheable, District Attorney
Maxine Lantz, Victim Witness Services (Zoom)
WPC Assessor Burton Hilton (Zoom)

Also Present

George Chachas, George Town Media
Caroline McIntosh (Zoom)
Geri Wopschall (Zoom)
Marietta Henry (Zoom)
Amy Reed (Zoom)
Deana Zakar (Zoom)
Judi Bourbeau (Zoom)
Ely Mayor Nathan Robertson (Zoom)
Moirra Kolada (Zoom)

Chairman Richard Howe called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. Commissioner Shane Bybee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE/SILENT INVOCATION

This was duly observed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. George Chachas asked about the property tax sale being put on hold; he noted that he has friends who need legal help, but no one is answering the phone. Will those who are poor be given the same help as the others? He advised the April 15th meeting failed to comply with the Open Meeting Law. He continued that Mr. Kurt Carson is allowed to put trailers on his lots that are in violation of an Ordinance. Mr. Chachas advised that he's received violations and have paid them, but he's tired of being cited while others get away with non-compliance. He feels he's being discriminated against. He added that Mr. Keith Carson keeps horses, in violation of the NRS, City and County codes. Chairman Richard Howe responded that is a City of Ely issue and the Carsons are in the City limits. Mr. Chachas asked why the RPC and the Building Inspector selectively enforce the law? The Tourism & Recreation Board wants to buy the Chamber of Commerce building, for 5 years free rent. He



advised that the Commission needs to appoint people to boards that have the best interests of the County in mind. Time was called.

COUNTY COMMISSION

Discussion/For Possible Action to extend the County Declaration of Emergency until May 15 at midnight on the same terms or to include discussion and proposals of modified or additional terms pursuant to Resolution 2020-29

Chairman Richard Howe presented this item; Commissioner Travis Godon stated he will not support it. Commissioner Shane Bybee asked if we would be able to go back on this extension; District Attorney Mike Wheable replied in the affirmative. He explained that this was done in order to receive grants and assistance from the State. The original Declaration of Emergency expires tonight; the Department Heads are to tell their staff to go back to their schedules prior to the first Declaration.

Commissioner Laurie Carson stated the Governor is having a Press Release today at 5:00 p.m.; she knows Eureka is planning on opening up their restaurants tomorrow, and their offices on Monday. There was some thoughts that the Governor might let the rural counties do their own thing. Commissioner Carson thinks we should have a Special Commission meeting on Tuesday to take a hard look at Dr. Byun's recommendations for a soft opening. She found it interesting that Mining is carrying the State right now; she's not inclined to approve another 15 days. D.A. Wheable explained this is separate from other actions the County might take as far as Ordinances and rules are concerned. Commissioner Ian Bullis was informed yesterday that Douglas County is hand-delivering a letter to the Capitol requesting the Governor to fully open, and people will show their support by showing up en masse. He noted that people don't want to comply with this any longer. Chairman Richard Howe acknowledged the soft opening tomorrow and felt that as we proceed with the removal of our Declaration, we can't wait 15 more days.

One thing not addressed is the opening of the beauty salons and barbershops. Chairman Howe noted the 3 local people who tested positive are now negative, so we have no active cases in the County. He felt that extending this Emergency is saying we're okay with 15 more days, but then what? He felt each Commissioner's input is vital on how to proceed. White Pine County needs to be concerned for its residents and right now we have -0- cases. We don't have an International Airport, nor are we located on an Interstate. Do we want to extend the Emergency Declaration until May 15th ?

Commissioner Carson had a teleconference on Monday or Tuesday, during which they discussed rural counties opening up early with the PPE. Bars can open at 50% capacity; restaurants and retail stores would open as well. They also discussed a stimulus package for certain individuals, to be passed along by a letter to Senator Rosen. D.A. Wheable stated he does not support this item. Finance Director Elizabeth wanted to advise the Commission that County revenues will be in a declining cycle, and asks that if this Declaration is not passed, the Commission should hold a special meeting to consider a Resolution to declare a financial state of emergency, in order to maintain a budget that is viable to adjust and adapt to failing revenues. She wants to keep the provision for COVID-19 supplies; we could delay hiring; and non-essential purchases would all be delayed in an effort to keep us under budget. Chairman Howe wants to hear what the Governor says tonight. He's not happy about extending this for 15 more days. Everyone has been so good

here to comply; the reality is that kids aren't playing baseball, and the mental part of all this is taking effect. Approving this Declaration will bind people to their homes for 15 more days. Commissioner Shane Bybee clarified that this Declaration only affects our County employees; if the City of Ely has more stringent restrictions, our decisions could affect everyone. We can't control what the City does with what they administer; the City can control businesses within the City. Commissioner Bybee asked if our County Sheriff is obligated to enforce the City's rules, or the County's? The reply was, the Sheriff would most likely enforce the State law. Commissioner Bybee thought a joint meeting with the City Council would be a good idea. WPC Clerk Nichole Baldwin notified the Commission that the earliest we could hold a special meeting would be next Wednesday, unless it will be an Emergency Meeting. Chairman Howe entertained a motion to approve extending the County Declaration of Emergency; there was no response. He requested a motion again; again, there was no response. Item died for lack of a motion. The Emergency Declaration expires tonight at midnight. County employees should contact Human Resources Director Tim Bunch if they have questions about continuing to self-isolate and using sick leave. Commissioner Carson advised that Senator Pete Goicoechea was appointed to a "rural task force" recently, which means we will be getting more vital information and have a stronger voice at the table.

Discussion/For Possible Action or to ratify to send an updated letter, including comments from Commissioners and various community stakeholders to the Governor requesting limited exemption from Statewide directives to allow local authority to control and regulate social distancing measures and limited and flexible opening of certain activities dependent on current status of community spread of COVID-19 if any, consistent with federal guidelines under the advice and counsel of our local Health Officer

District Attorney Mike Wheable advised he had tried to include all the Commissioners' thoughts in this letter. He felt the letter was reasonable, and that it articulates why rural counties should have their own control, especially in the light of the fact that we now have -0- cases of COVID-19. Commissioner Laurie Carson reminded the Board that we do have test kits, plus the ability to do tracking. If we follow the guidelines and keep track of where we go and use PPE properly, we will stay in good shape. D.A. Wheable advised the State wants to do random testing, and our Hospital can comply; however, the State isn't willing to go forward, because the tests aren't theirs. He felt the State isn't prepared or organized enough to handle going forward. We, as a County, he continued, can take necessary steps if we do get a new case. Chairman Richard Howe felt this County needs to "get back its life" and he's ready to resume life as we knew it. Commissioner Shane Bybee brought up that this control was brought in, to keep us from overwhelming our health care system. People think Hospitals are "breeding grounds for COVID-19" so they won't seek medical treatment. He wondered if people are dying at home because they are too scared to go to the Hospital. He advised that he was in the ER here with his dad, and "it was silent." This was noted with interest by the group; Commissioner Laurie Carson mentioned the prohibition on elective surgeries will be lifting. D.A. Wheable noted the model response we have provided as a community, and credited it for our success. Commissioner Shane Bybee noted as a country, America set up outside resources to handle mass cases of COVID-19, and

they are largely empty. "We are as prepared as we can be." Commissioner Carson made a motion to ratify the letter as requested. Commissioner Ian Bullis seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. George Chachas stated we need to solicit a newspaper; our local newspaper put out an ad encouraging people to read the paper, to become more involved. He stated real issues aren't even addressed in the paper. The Hospital's website stated 123 tests have been done, with 8 pending results and -0- testing positive. He asked where the "8 pending" came from. He felt the Justice Center construction project will bring in infected persons from outside areas. He wants to open his store, but he "won't be foolish." He was told there is a Victim's Fund and he wants to know more about it. He noted the expensive, yet ineffective sound system set up here; he had told the Board to set it up because people don't speak loudly enough and he's unhappy, and his viewers aren't happy, either. He started bringing up old issues, and Chairman Richard Howe ceased his comments.

District Attorney Mike Wheable noted that if people are interested and to comply with the 10 person limit, they are invited to attend these meetings via Zoom. The special joint section of the meeting will start at 9:00 a.m. next Wednesday. This should be a Joint Board of Public Health meeting as well. D.A. Wheable wants to know precisely what we are going to discuss at that meeting; Commissioner Travis Godon wanted to lay out something similar to Dr. Byun's letter.

Commissioner Laurie Carson wants an Emergency Leadership meeting next Monday; only 2 Commissioners should be present in person, and the other people could be present via Zoom for our Special Meeting on Wednesday. This meeting would start at 9:00 a.m. and would be to handle the financial Emergency Declaration in the Library with the joint meeting to follow.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Bybee moved to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Bullis seconded. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COUNTY OF WHITE PINE
STATE OF NEVADA

BY: Richard Hume
CHAIRMAN

ATTEST:

Waldemar
WPC CLERK OF THE BOARD