

City Council Work Session

5:30 PM
Virtual Meeting
April 20, 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) ✓ Cole, ✓ Shaw, ✓ Yakawich, ✓ Neese,
✓ Ewalt, ✓ Joy, ✓ Choriki, ✓ Purinton, ✓ Ronning, ✓ Boyett, ✓ Brown
CM excused:

ADJOURN TIME: 9:00 PM

Agenda

TOPIC #1	Covid-19 Update
PRESENTER	John Staley, Fire Chief – Lockwood Fire Department; John Felton, Yellowstone County Health Officer
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- John Felton – 72 cases in Yellowstone County – no new cases on 4.19.20; the 11th death in the State today. Yellowstone County had its first death over the weekend. Governor is expected to give an indication of a phased restart tomorrow in his address. Less risky businesses will open first; then limited group sizes; will increase testing – at about 5% positive tests. Relatively few hospitalizations and very few in ICU. Discussions about how to monitor outdoor activities, farmers market and Alive after 5 events, etc. Operational periods are being reduced to once a week.
- Shaw – What can Council do to support UIC?
- Felton – Be a reliable information source. Provide a sense of calm and hope.
- Neese – Thanked for the operational chart for UIC. How many hospitalized? How many on ventilators.
- Felton – 11 hospitalized; 3 on ventilators. Recovered means they are cleared for the requirements of 72 hours without fever or 7 days without symptoms. Explained how to clear the household – the vast number of patients do not get hospitalized. Food service is high-risk and is licensed by the health department. Other businesses receive guidance from the health department.
- Ronning – Difference levels to get testing – Doctor's prescribed? Can anyone get tested? Where? Are there enough to test all that need to be tested? PPE enough?
- Felton – symptomatic at high-risk are being tested. No one that is asymptomatic is being tested. Also, symptomatic patients who are not at high-risk are being tested now. Takes several weeks to see what results will be from phased reopening. Nasal swabs tests. Have rapid tests – 45 minutes, but not many supplies for that. Currently okay on PPE, but a big increase in cases would make it difficult.

- Ronning – All people that have been tested have been symptomatic in Montana.
- John Staley – Branch Chief, Community Response Branch – EMS side of it. Spoke about oxygen treatment in ambulances and getting ready for reopening the community.
- Purinton – face mask requirements for the general public? A false sense of security? Sterilization methods?
- Staley – correct that it creates a false sense of security. Asking people dispose them right away if disposable and if fabric or cotton clean them hourly if you are out and about or daily.
- Kukulski – missed placing the organizational chart in the weekly so pushed out. Next week will circle back to Steve Arveschong, and then the community care branch and then bringing the branches around until this is resolved.
- Mayor - explains reimbursement process with FEMA and explains the CARES Act. – nothing for cities under 500,000, Has come back to Congress and they are working on reimbursement for hospitals and paycheck protection plan, etc. Suggested staff and Council stay engaged. Locate someone, a staff member to report back on all of this. Losses will be in property taxes to this community. Needs to be tracked closely. Meeting procedures – 1. Questions for staff ask right away before meetings; 2. 3 minute rule for public comment; 3. Short breaks; 4. Staff shorter presentations. Suggests: 1. Recognition from chair before speaking; 2. Ordinance states that before someone speaks a second time, all other CMs have an opportunity to speak first; 3. Limit questions.
- Ronning - CARES Act – governors office is asking for feedback, can fill out survey monkey how businesses’ want the money spent. The more businesses that respond to the survey monkey the better for Yellowstone County receiving up to \$1.5 billion.
- **Public Comment: None**

TOPIC #2	Project Recode Update
PRESENTER	Nicole Cromley, Zoning Coordinator and Wyeth Friday, Planning Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Nicole Cromwell – 18 code sections are in the final drafts – it has been 3 years since this started. Very complex and necessary – believe the public hearings are needed in a different venue, waiting out COVID-19 for now. 95% done with code drafting and 100% complete of mapping. Unprecedented opportunity to take our time to do code amendments. She reviews the Project Recode webpage with the Council. Uses and Standards was where the most time was spent and definitions and measurements. Before COVID-19, staff was ramping up their presentations to different community groups. Have heard from a variety of groups concerning the new code and are taking advantage of development under the new code.

- Neese – maps – east heights has mostly R-7000 and is being converted to N-2 – can be converted?
- Wyeth – within N-2 districts no special review is required. Not everything that was R-9600 is going to N-3, etc.
- Boyett – had difficulty finding casinos in the key word search.
- Cromwell – casinos will be defined in 3 levels. The key word search will need to be updated.
- **Public Comment: None**

TOPIC #3	Downtown District Extension and Project Opportunity: N. 29th and N. 30th Two Way Street Conversion
PRESENTER	Debi Meling, City Engineer; Andy Zoeller, Finance Director and Katy Easton, Downtown Billings Alliance
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Andy Zoeller – Finance Director
- Extending life of Downtown Urban Renewal District, talked about the unique financing of a TIF District – 15 years, but can be extended – this is for the Council to consider. Parameters resolution for the sale of bonds the end of May or beginning of June to extend the life of this district. Final time to extend this TIF district.
- Katy Easton – Downtown Billings Alliance
- **Two-way streets offer important advantages in commercial corridors:** They facilitate an appropriate amount of traffic, Provide a safe environment for pedestrians, Support a good location for small business, Property values tend to rise at a faster rate on two-way streets than one-way streets, It is on these slower paced, two-way commercial streets that pedestrian shoppers, diners, and downtown visitors feel the safest and most comfortable.
- Debi Meling – City Engineer
- Published and Presented to Council in Sept. 2019, City Council Goal Adopted March 2020, Analyzed 6 alternatives: N/S Two-way Conversions, E/W Two-way Conversions, 6th Avenue North lane reduction, Montana Avenue lane reduction, N. 13th Street lane reduction, Broadway closure to traffic
- All projects feasible singly or overlapped, Allows City to move quickly as funding becomes available, Design review under way for MDT signals, Design completed in May provides estimate for District bonding, Bring Trans. Plan Amendment through local process, Prepare bonding process for action in June
- Open Bids on June 9th and Award June 22nd, Receive MT Transportation Commission approval in June, Long lead-time on signal poles/equipment, 4+ months from award, Construction not likely until Spring 2021, allows City to schedule with 2021 Chip Seal
- **Public Comment: None**

Recess at 7:55 pm
 Reconvene at 8:05 pm

TOPIC #4	Aviation and Transit Operations during COVID-19
PRESENTER	Kevin Ploehn, Aviation and Transit Director
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Kevin Ploehn – gave specifics about COVID-19 affecting Aviation and Transit operations. January/February 10% above average. March saw a 95% reduction in traffic, huge layoffs from airlines. Return to normal mid-2021. Don't think it will return like before. Cause for lengthy return to normal: Fear, social distancing, recession. Will be a smaller industry with less flights when it returns. Billings Airport looking at revenue shortfall of \$4-5 million. Federal help from Cares Act of \$12.7 million, no end date on spending.
- Moved two Airport officers to Transit Department, Custodial staff working at MET, No seasonal help, very little capital unless supported by Grant funds. Continuing challenges: fare increase, less flights, recession, possible resurgence of Covid-19 in 6-8 months.
- MET Transit received \$5.3 million, can be used for operating, bus purchases, does not expire.
- Free fares will continue into May. Existing 5307 went from 50/50 to 80/20 match.
- Ewalt – expedite construction due to less travelers? Ploehn – yes, continue with construction before traffic returns. Helpful with social distancing.
- **Public Comment: None**

TOPIC #5	Council Discussion
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- Purinton – Consent Agenda - fewer items versus the regular agenda. Did Chris change something? Mayor – requirement of City Administrator to prepare draft meeting and circulate to Council.
- Kukulski – agendas have lead time for staff to prepare staff memo and attachments. Consent Agenda items: very straightforward, previous presentations, no legal requirements for Public Hearing, don't anticipate a lot of Council questions. Typical Consent Agendas should take approximately 15 minutes, this Council averages 1-2 hours for Consent Agenda.
- Neese – send in a lot of questions, will continue to separate items to ask questions. Reconsideration on next Council agenda?

- Kukulski – rules do not require reconsiderations to be brought back to the next meeting, it will be brought back to May 11th Council meeting, in order to give staff time to prepare material.
- Ewalt – questions have to be asked, doesn't matter how long it takes.
- Mayor – would like Council to be involved in agenda process.
- Joy – Council discussion at Regular meetings can get very off topic. Council's job is for community.
- Brown – already asked and answered questions do not need to be brought back up for Community 7. Public can see emails that Council sends to staff asking questions, do not need to bring them up again.
- Neese – change Regular Business meeting agenda to add discussion portion?
- Ronning – already brought up, didn't go anywhere.
- Brent Brooks, City Attorney – caution against discussion on Business meetings due to public notice statutes.
- Yakawich – learn through Council questions. Length of meeting is irrelevant.
- Shaw – public does not have time to watch 5-6 hour meetings, lengthy meetings make public participation more difficult.

TOPIC #6	Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda
PRESENTER	
NOTES/OUTCOME	

- None