

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

March 25, 2020

The minutes of the proceedings of a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Coos Bay, Coos County, Oregon, held at 2:00 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers, 500 Central Avenue, Coos Bay, Oregon.

Those Attending

Those present were Mayor Joe Benetti and Councilors Drew Farmer, Stephanie Kilmer, and Phil Marler. Attending remotely by teleconference were Councilors Lucinda DiNovo and Carmen Matthews. Councilor Rob Miles attended via video conference. City staff present were City Manager Rodger Craddock, City Attorney Nate McClintock, Finance Director Nichole Rutherford, Deputy Finance Director Melissa Olson, Deputy Police Chief Chris Chapanar, and Police Lieutenant Michael Shaffer. Public Works and Community Development Director Jim Hossley attended remotely by teleconference.

Flag Salute

Mayor Benetti opened the meeting and led the council and assembly in the salute to the flag.

Public Comments

No public comments were given.

Adoption of Resolution 20-05 Asking Governor Brown for Increased Restrictions on Temporary Lodging Establishments

City Manager Rodger Craddock stated over this past weekend many coastal communities experienced a large influx of tourists. While this is normally welcomed as tourism is an important part of our local economy, it was not welcome or wanted by those wishing to protect their citizens from the potential spread of COVID-19 and unnecessary consumption of limited local resources. Several cities and a few counties took extraordinary and immediate action, in an effort to decrease this unwanted traffic by closing temporary lodging establishments and tourist destinations.

The Governor's Emergency Order issued March 23, 2020 closed public and private campgrounds, to all but a few exceptions, but did not close or otherwise impose regulations involving short-term rentals, hotels and motels.

The Oregon Legislative Coastal Caucus recommended concerned counties and cities adopt resolution to request Executive Order from Governor to include closure of temporary lodging facilities, except for essential travel. This would include closure all transient lodging facilities to stay and purchase to persons of less than twenty-eight (28) days in coastal areas, until May 1, 2020, with limited exceptions for individuals in the trucking industry, victims of domestic violence,

health care workers, contract workers, and others that may be deemed as essential personnel services.

Mayor Joe Benetti stated he had spoken to Governor Brown and her aides over the last couple weeks. The Governor had asked for information from the city mayors and would speak with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for possible signage. There was concern over coastal cities all doing something different. City Attorney Nate McClintock had stated, along with other city attorneys, he did not believe municipalities had the authority to close temporary lodgings.

Mayor Benetti read a letter in opposition of the city closing temporary lodging facilities from Best Western Holiday Motel General Manager Joseph Monahan citing Governor Brown's Executive Order that only those providing essential services are currently traveling and staying in the area, and a restriction could delay supply deliveries and services. Mr. Benetti stated he did not believe the Executive Order had curtailed travelers locally and along the coast, visitors were not following recommendations and were using local supplies resulting in resources unavailable to local citizens, and the resolution would not ban those providing essential services. Mr. Monahan's letter noted the city should focus efforts on other important issues such as getting unemployment funds to those not working, helping local businesses, getting the online schooling up, getting supplies to the stores, getting a mobile hospital on the coast, and getting help for the homeless. Mr. Benetti stated Work Source Oregon addressed unemployment, various sources were helping local business such as Coos Bay Downtown Association, the city was researching what funds (if any) were available to assist local businesses, online school options are responsibility of the Coos Bay School District, distributors were working to resupply stores due to visitor run on local store supplies, a mobile hospital was being handled by local health agencies and was part of the discussions with the medical community, and the city, along with Coos Health and Wellness, was working on options for the homeless to stay in place and safe.

Coos Bay-North Bend Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB) Executive Director Janice Langlinois spoke in opposition of any request to mandate closing lodging properties other than for essential travel as it would cause issues with booking through online travel agencies (OTA) and many companies only use OTA. Ms. Langlinois noted closure could affect pre-planning for future travel, Governor Brown's Executive Order banned non-essential travel already so resolution was unnecessary, VCB had been marketing "Stay Home, Save Lives", but concern future visitors would be dissuaded from recreating in the area. Ms. Langlinois stated occupancy was currently under 30%, and was mostly truck drivers, construction contractors, and medical professionals. Councilor DiNovo clarified lodging properties could alter OTA settings to not allow bookings for a specified period of time and keep future booking dates open. Mayor Benetti had concern without the resolution and guidance from the Governor, some facilities along the coast would promote for travelers to visit and stated the resolution was not banning any essential workers from the area.

Councilor DiNovo stated it would be irresponsible to not consider as top priority the health and wellbeing of our citizens. The resolution did not require closure of lodging facilities or stopping OTA bookings, only limited the type of guests allowed at this time, and the city could not ignore

the threat of increased visitors right now. Councilor Matthews stated concern for the ability for essential personnel to book a room if they don't have the ability online through OTA and asked if a question could be added if the traveling was for essential purpose or leisure. Councilor DiNovo stated the question could be asked and added to the booking engine, and many places still took bookings outside of OTAs, like over the phone. Councilor Matthews stated with few businesses open for service and no recreation open at this time travel would be difficult, and every business owner was affected; however, as not everyone will be honest, council may have to make hard decisions to make sure citizens are safe. Councilor Farmer stated we needed a healthy population to have a healthy economy in the future, expressed concern the resolution was not making an exception for local people to book hotels, stated the Devereux Center has funds to provide hotel rooms for homeless individuals; however, lodgings were stating there were no availabilities, and proposed adding verbiage related to the housing of homeless individuals. Councilor Kilmer clarified the resolution was asking the Governor to take the step, not the city; stated concern for citizens and businesses, noted rural area with limited access to the supply chain and decreased supplies in stores, didn't want to make it difficult for people to supply our community, but the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had stated this was growing exponentially every seventy-two hours so was in favor of taking action in asking the Governor to do something that should have been done originally as it is difficult to follow social distancing with the impact of those coming in an area. Councilor Marler stated he agreed with what had been said, this was an unfortunate situation and difficult time for the community, council needed to take steps to prevent situation from getting worse, and difficult decisions had to be made. Mayor Benetti stated we could highlight in a cover letter the items the city wanted that were not in other coastal caucus resolutions and advocated to the hotels to not encourage visitors.

City Manager Rodger Craddock suggested the language "requesting Governor Brown to include in her next Executive Order the recommendations to close all transient lodging facilities to stay and purchase to persons of less than twenty-eight (28) days in coastal counties and their communities, until May 1, 2020, limited exceptions to individuals in the trucking industry, victims of domestic violence, local residents to include unsheltered individuals, health care workers, contract workers, and others that may be deemed as essential personnel services."

Councilor DiNovo moved to adopt Resolution 20-05 with changes as stated by the City Manager. Councilor Farmer seconded the motion which carried. Ayes: Benetti, DiNovo, Farmer, Kilmer, Marler, Matthews, Miles.

Adoption of Resolution 20-06 Temporary State of Emergency Declaration

City Manager Rodger Craddock stated state of emergency declarations were being made at numerous levels in local, state and federal governments in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic for the ability to seek state or federal assistance. Based on our local codes, and state statutes, a local declaration allowed the city flexibility in managing resources under emergency conditions.

On March 19, 2020, the City Manager declared a State of Emergency. Coos Bay Municipal Code requires such declarations to be ratified by the Council.

Councilor Kilmer moved to adopt Resolution 20-06 declaring a Temporary State of Emergency for the City of Coos Bay. Councilor Marler seconded the motion which carried. Ayes: Benetti, DiNovo, Farmer, Kilmer, Marler, Matthews, Miles.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Rodger Craddock suggested suspending council work sessions in April 2020, having only the regular council meetings scheduled for April 7, 2020 and April 21, 2020, and reschedule the budget committee meeting to May 14, 2020. Council agreed with the recommendations.

Council Comments

Councilor Miles thanked city staff, council, and everyone in the community for doing what they could to get through this time. Councilor Matthews thanked city staff for working hard to maintain a calm front for the city and providing essential services, had seen and felt community support for those in need, thankful to be a part of this community, asked everyone to stay safe, and stated we would survive together. Councilor DiNovo thanked Councilor Kilmer for her words and all the councilors for their thoughtfulness in looking at all sides regarding the resolution, thanked the councilors and mayor for attending in person, thanked staff for setting up the meeting to follow social distancing, and stated we would get through this unprecedented time by coming together and taking care of one another. Councilor Farmer stated we were in an unprecedented time; however, the community had come back from previous challenges stronger, asked everyone to take care of themselves and neighbors, and stated we would be back to regular before we knew it. Councilor Marler stated recently he had heard "difficult times like these can bring out the best in good people and the worst in not so good people" and "in difficult times like this there is a lot of panic and fear"; necessary to stay calm and avoid panic or fear, and things would get better pulling together and working for the better of the community. Councilor Kilmer stated these were interesting times and we all had to adjust our sail to reach the goal of keeping everyone safe and healthy, including our incredible medical staff in the area; with all the channels of information it could be scary, we would get through to the other side of this by changing our course, asked everyone to take this time to shelter in place and rediscover the things we may have lost such as moments with our families, observe social distancing when going out, and be kind to those on the front lines. Mayor Benetti thanked the council for all their efforts and hard work, stated we would get through this with our citizens, city staff stepped up taking care of things including firemen, police, and dispatchers for the cities of Coos Bay and North Bend, and was proud of the citizens in their efforts to continue to work through challenges of the situation.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come before the council, Mayor Benetti adjourned the meeting. The next regular council meeting was scheduled for April 7, 2020 in the council chambers at city hall.



Joe Benetti, Mayor

Nichole Rutherford

Attest: _____
Nichole Rutherford, City Recorder