

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

April 1, 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, Carmen Matthews, and Rob Miles. City staff present were City Manager Rodger Craddock, City Attorney Nate McClintock, Finance Director Nichole Rutherford, Deputy Finance Director Melissa Olson, Fire Chief Mark Anderson, and Deputy Police Chief Chris Chapanar. Public Works and Community Development Director 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 20-07 Requesting Temporary Lodging Facilities Voluntary Compliance with Restrictions

City Manager Rodger Craddock stated this continues to be an extraordinarily challenging time in our country, state and in our city, as we confront the public health, safety, and financial issues facing our residents. Across the country, leaders are passing ordinances, signing emergency orders, and providing guidance to their community members. On March 25, 2020 Governor Brown issued enhanced restriction aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19 and flattening the infection rate.

Over the first weekend of spring break 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, nor the consumption of limited local resources. Several cities and a few counties took extraordinary and immediate action in an effort to close down temporary lodging establishments and tourist destinations.

The Governor's Emergency Order issued on 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 or hotels and motels. On March 25, 2020, council adopted Resolution

20-05 asking Governor Brown to consider uniform coast-wide restrictions instead of considering restrictions of our own locally. Staff was advised the Governor was limiting her restrictions via Executive Orders to statewide issues and at the time this was not a statewide issue.

Mayor Benetti authored a letter provided to all temporary lodging establishments operating in Coos Bay asking for a voluntary limit of the room rentals to individuals providing essential services in our community and to help the city tell visitors to stay home and stay healthy. The voluntary compliance model allowed for the temporary lodging establishments to continue utilizing online booking services.

Staff requested council to consider adopting a resolution codifying the city's request of temporary lodging establishments within the city to help us in telling visitors to stay home and stay healthy by voluntarily limiting the rental of their rooms to individuals who are considered essential workers, local residents, the unsheltered, and persons lodging for medical reasons.

Coos County adopted a resolution on April 1, 2020, placing a county-wide order restricting temporary lodging establishments from operating unless under certain conditions limiting occupancy to a specific group of people. The county resolution is on all lodging establishments operating in Coos County, including incorporated cities, unless a city had adopted a more restrictive resolution related to short term rentals or lodging. The Coos County resolution was a mandatory order through April 30, 2020 and preempts the City of Coos Bay resolution which was for voluntary compliance through June 1, 2020. The county has authority to make the order under the state of emergency, they controlled the health department, and this was a health issue.

Councilor Farmer proposed to strike out everything after “local county residents” in exemption item “a” and continue on with remaining exemptions as there are many reasons local residents book rooms, they are not tourists, and wanted to make broader to not miss anything. Mayor Benetti and Councilor Marler stated making the resolution broader would not change the county resolution or have a direct effect. Councilor Kilmer and Councilor DiNovo stated the city resolution may not be more restrictive, but in acting on behalf of the citizens the council should do what they believe was best for the citizens and include important elements even if the county resolution preempts the city resolution. Council consensus to amend the resolution to strike out everything after “local county residents” in exemption item “a”.

Joseph Monahan, representing the lodging industry and Coos Bay North Bend Visitor and Convention Bureau (VCB), stated the lodging industry was not getting inundated with tourists, the Governor’s travel ban on March 23, 2020 took care of 98% of the discretionary travel, and the additional rules and restrictions were for a non-issue. Many companies used the online booking agencies so hotels cannot close, take down online booking, and only take in-house reservations. Mr. Monahan thanked Councilor Farmer for his comments regarding local residents as there were many issues residents book rooms for such as being impacted by fires, floods, electrical issues, and household or domestic emergencies.

Councilor DiNovo stated the Mill Casino had been receiving roughly twenty-five calls per day from visitors asking if they can come. Councilor Marler asked people be careful what was said especially on social media and be more responsible with comments, as after the March 25, 2020 special meeting, he received an email from the contract manager for the school district stating the workers were told the City of Coos Bay shut down all the hotels and they could not stay in Coos Bay. Mr. Marler stated we were in uncharted territory, not sure there was such a thing as over-reacting at this time, and wanted to reserve the opportunity to return to the issue if voluntary compliance was not working. Mayor Benetti clarified the city resolution was voluntary and asked how it was different than the county resolution. City Attorney Nate McClintock stated the city resolution was voluntary, the county resolution being mandatory would most likely trump the city resolution, as the county was considered the local public health authority; however, the city was memorializing the voluntary request through the letter, making a statement of council expectations, and identifying what was in the best interest of the citizens. Mayor Benetti asked everyone to be conscious of what they were doing, be responsible in following executive orders and recommendations, and thanked people for following the orders.

Councilor Kilmer moved to adopt Resolution 20-07, as amended, codifying the city's request of temporary lodging businesses to limit the rental of their rooms and assist the city in telling visitors to stay home and stay healthy. Councilor Farmer seconded the motion which carried. Ayes: Benetti, DiNovo, Farmer, Kilmer, Marler, Matthews, Miles.

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