



Economic Stabilization Task Force

Appointed by the City & Borough of Juneau's Mayor
Adopted Meeting Minutes from April 24, 2020

Call to Order

The Economic Stabilization Task Force meeting was called to order at 3:07 p.m. by Mr. Mertz.

Task Force Members Present: Max Mertz, Linda Thomas, Theresa Belton, Bruce Botelho, Eric Forst, Ken Koelsch, Lauren MacVay, Laura Martinson, and Terra Peters

Task Force Members Absent: None

Staff Present: CBJ City Manager, Rorie Watt; EOC Incident Commander, Mila Cosgrove; CDD Director, Jill Maclean; and CDD Administrative Officer, Brenwynne Grigg

Special Guest Speakers: None

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: by Ms. Thomas to adopt the minutes from the April 9, April 14, and April 24 Economic Stabilization Task Force meetings as written. Mr. Forst Seconded the motion.

Hearing no objections, the motion carried.

CARES Act Local Funding

Mr. Watt expressed optimism at the amount of CARES Act funding the State of Alaska says it intends to allocate to Juneau, but is cautioning the Assembly to wait until the City receives the funds before allocating them. The methodology used to divide CARES Act funding between Alaskan communities is unclear and it is expected that the legislature will take up the topic. The legislature will attempt to convene on May 4, however, the legal requirements of reconvening present hurdles. At this time, Mr. Watt is encouraging the Assembly to focus on the municipal budget and the needs of the private sector as they begin to consider how to allocate the funding.

Mr. Mertz asked if there is a prescribed use for the funding. Mr. Watt replied that is not yet clear, but the Governor's intent was to fund some of the vetoed line items from the Governor's budget.

Mr. Botelho asked about the likelihood that the legislature would consider a new School Bond Debt Reimbursement Bill when they reconvene, now that it is understood the \$1.25 billion cannot be used to replace the vetoed funds for that program. Mr. Watt did not know the legislature's intent.

Mr. Watt asked Assembly Member Loren Jones to give an update on an AML meeting he attended telephonically. Mr. Jones reported that guidelines for expending the funding are in the process of being created,

and that funding unexpended by December 30, 2020 is returned to the Federal Government, according to the rules of the program. AML is cautioning communities to refrain from spending the funding until guidelines are in place.

To Mr. Botelho's question, as to whether the legislature might consider a supplemental appropriation as opposed to a veto override, Mr. Jones reported that AML's lobbyist stated there did not seem to be a path to proceed toward that option.

Mr. Jones also reported on methodology for directing CARES Act funding to communities. Metrics used included the Community Assistance Formula, which is population-based, along with the economic activity and tax revenues of communities. Over 60 communities attended the telephonic AML meeting. Most of the communities have been exercising extreme caution about expending the money. It is clear that school bond debt is not an allowable expenditure according to the federal guidelines currently in place.

Mr. Mertz asked if the December 2020 date was flexible, to which Mr. Jones replied he was unsure. Mr. Mertz said the U.S. Treasury Department seems to be receptive to industry input, so he imagines there will be more information to come on this topic.

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) / COVID-19 Update

Ms. Cosgrove, EOC Incident Commander, began by speaking about the structure and function of the EOC. She reported a unified command structure, which includes incident commanders from the City & Borough of Juneau (CBJ), herself; Bartlett Regional Hospital (BRH), Mr. Chuck Bill; and the State of Alaska Division of Public Health, Ms. April Resendez. There are standing daily meetings at 1:30 p.m., in addition to a high frequency of ongoing coordination, email exchanges, smaller meetings, etc. Mr. Tom Mattice, CBJ Emergency Programs Manager, is liaison to the State Emergency Operation Center (EOC). The COVID-19 situation requires close communication to address the needs in Juneau.

The EOC has three broad categories of responsibilities:

1. The State of Alaska Division of Public Health is responsible for contact tracing, testing results, and health data.
2. Bartlett Regional Hospital, in partnership with community medical providers, is monitoring the local medical response. This includes planning for a potential surge, monitoring hospital capacity, monitoring testing kits and PPE, etc. BRH has recently shifted the Rainforest Recovery building to an alternate care site for COVID-19 patients if needed. Under the new emergency status, BRH is now a 148-bed hospital.
3. The CBJ manages community operations outside of the strict medical standpoint. Capital City Fire and Rescue (CCFR) is conducting mobile testing, checking in on people under quarantine, and fielding calls from people who need help. CBJ has also implemented a screening operation at the airport and is speaking with incoming fishing vessels to inform them of the 14-day quarantine period. Additionally, CBJ is sheltering and feeding the unsheltered population, providing isolation spaces, and providing quarantine spaces. Robust communications efforts are also underway to keep the community informed.

Ms. Cosgrove explained the following metrics used in understanding the community's ability to respond to the pandemic:

1. Hospital capacity and availability to treat COVID-19 patients. Currently, the hospital is very confident of its ability to handle higher numbers of patients.
2. Medstaff capacity has remained in the green zone, meaning the number of people calling out sick or needing to quarantine is minimal.

3. The ability to test is high. The State laboratory has expanded its testing ability and there are adequate test kits. If our current rate of testing is maintained, there is a 50-70 day supply. If testing increases, we will need more test kits. The Division of Public Health has reported that more test kits are en route.
4. PPE is adequate, as there is a 2-3 week supply on hand. This is being assessed on a daily basis.
5. Disease transmission is another major metric tracked. There are 27 confirmed cases in Juneau to date. With the work the Division of Public Health is currently doing, they are able to have a high degree of certainty that people are taking quarantine instructions seriously.

Juneau has tested 2.45 percent of its population. We have 7 active cases in the community, 20 people have recovered from COVID-19, and 28 people are being tracked to see if they become ill during their quarantine period.

Ms. Cosgrove stated that after having spoken to Bartlett Regional Hospital and the Division of Public Health, they feel confident about moving forward with a slow opening of the economy, but that is a policy decision that will be decided by the Assembly at their meeting on Monday, April 27.

Mr. Botelho asked if SEARHC is playing a role in the EOC. Ms. Cosgrove replied that they are an active member of the Bartlett ICS structure, along with many other major providers in town. Mr. Bill, CEO of BRH, feels the entire medical community is in tight communication and working together on issues as a whole.

Ms. Martinson asked what role the EOC plays in furnishing supplies to businesses. For example, the childcare protocols require supply security, and it may be difficult for childcare businesses to acquire the supplies independently. Ms. Cosgrove replied that, in general, the EOC has access to stocks. Their first priority will be ensuring that medical providers and first responders have ample supplies. However, childcare is essential if the economy is going to be re-opened, so if the childcare provider community can demonstrate they have tried to secure supplies and are unable, they may present their case and need to the EOC for assistance with ordering.

Mr. Mertz referenced an article about levels of testing needed to track potential spikes. Ms. Cosgrove replied that Juneau is currently testing 50-70 people a day and has expanding the testing criteria. This is excellent for a population of 32,000. Certain populations may see an increase in testing, such as the Pioneer Home and Lemon Creek Correctional Center.

Mr. Botelho asked when Juneau would have the ability to obtain test results without shipping out of community. Ms. Cosgrove replied that CBJ has the greatest supply of PCR tests, which still require shipping out of community. BRH and SEARHC have an Abbott testing machine, which has a high degree of certainty regarding positive test results. Negative test results, however, carry less certainty, so a PCR is administered and shipped out of community to confirm the results. There is a third test, Cepheid, which can be processed locally to obtain definitive results the same day, but there is limited supply and the test kits are in high demand.

Business & Retail Protocols Update

Mr. Forst presented the Governor's plan for re-opening the economy in phase 1, stating that it is fairly detailed and robust in its guidelines to businesses. For most businesses, these standards will be difficult to attain and will take some time to implement. Local food suppliers are expecting a shipment of masks for restaurant use the week of April 27, but opening at 25% capacity will not be profitable for some; we may see many restaurants waiting until phase 2 of the Governor's plan, when they may operate at 50% capacity. Restaurants are concerned about their ability to secure their employees for re-opening.

Mr. Botelho asked if Mr. Forst knew whether supplies are immediately available in Juneau, or whether there is a collective effort for a mass purchase to supply the community. Mr. Forst replied there is no supply in Juneau.

However, several vendors have reached out to businesses on ways in which their products may be used to meet the mandates. For example, a sanitizer commonly used for ice machines can be used as a surface sanitizer when diluted. This product is readily available and the supplier has published the dilution criteria for restaurants. Mr. Forst is confident that innovation is happening and that supplies will rapidly become available for shipping when businesses are able to open.

Mr. Mertz asked if the attachments in the packet were examples of businesses' individual COVID-19 mitigation plans. Mr. Forst replied in the affirmative. Mr. Mertz asked if businesses needed additional assistance with their mitigation plans. Mr. Forst replied that there is so much protocol already provided from the State, DEC, and specialized industry leaders, that the resources are plentiful.

Ms. Martinson stated that customers are required to wear masks in order to enter a retail establishment and she wondered how that might affect businesses. Mr. Forst does not anticipate that will be a problem.

Ms. Martinson also asked if Mr. Forst was hearing comments from businesses that will choose to stay closed simply due to lack of tourism. Mr. Forst replied that many will not open at all this tourist season and may never open again, due to what effectively translates into 18 months of zero revenue from the loss of one tourist season. However, he added that just one month of cruise ship traffic might be a lifeline to get them to next summer.

Mr. Forst suggested the Task Force recommend to the Assembly that local businesses follow the protocols in phase 1 of the Governor's mandate and watch data as it related to COVID-19 cases. He suggested that the Task Force can be a resource for local merchants on where they can go if they need help.

Ms. Thomas stated that from a practical basis, it will be difficult for retail businesses to enforce the "one person per household" and customer masking protocols, and we will have to trust that retailers will do their best. Mr. Forst agreed and added that businesses are taking this very seriously, and he is confident they will follow the mandates. It is in their best interest to do so, in order to prevent a spike in COVID-19 cases that would result in another closure.

Mr. Forst feels the Assembly is unsure of whether to allow for phase 1 of re-opening according to the Governor's mandate or to delay it. He encouraged the Task Force to supply the Assembly with information and reassurance from the business community that taking this first step is a good thing. He reminded the Task Force that major retailers have been open this entire time and the curve has still flattened. Allowing small locally owned businesses to re-open is the next step.

Ms. Peters added that many small businesses sell the same items as large retailers, and that shopping local is important for our economy at this time. Her perception is that local businesses want to open safely to protect the community and earn some revenue so they are able to stay around for Juneau.

Ms. Martinson agreed with Mr. Forst and Ms. Peters, adding that the role of the Task Force is to help stabilize the economy and make recommendations to the Assembly that promote that goal. If following the safety guidelines outlined in the Governor's mandate furthers the goal of stabilizing the economy, then she believes the Task Force should recommend that.

Mr. Botelho shared that he believes the mandates, which came from the Governor's office, were written based on a public health perspective, and that his comfort level is guided by that.

Mr. Koelsch cautioned the Task Force against promoting policy to the Assembly and instead encouraged asking the right questions. For example, why is Fred Meyers able to sell toys but Imagination Station is not? He

suggested that if one business is able to be open, competitors should also be able to open, so long as they follow health protocols.

Ms. Thomas suggested that Task Force members send their list of questions to Mr. Mertz and herself. They will compile the questions and include them in their presentation to the Assembly.

Mr. Botelho acknowledged that the common denominator in the conversation seemed to be the issue of equity. By not re-opening the economy, we may be inadvertently putting small local businesses at a competitive disadvantage. He stated that this is something the Assembly should weight into their decision.

ACTION ITEM: Task Force members will email questions and thoughts to Mr. Forst. Mr. Forst will compile the information and send to Mr. Mertz and Ms. Thomas to incorporate into their COVID-19 update at the April 27 Assembly meeting.

Mr. Botelho also suggested asking Dr. Zink about the 20-person limit in gyms and other similar businesses.

Childcare Update

Ms. Martinson reported that her key points from the prior week are still relevant as they relate to supply security, checking the temperatures of staff and children, and masking. Childcare centers seems willing and able to handle the addition work. The Central Council of Tlingit and Haida has secured grant funding to assist with the expenses related to these additional supplies.

Mr. Mertz asked Ms. Martinson to summarize the three findings she has made.

Ms. Martinson replied that childcare centers:

1. Need assistance with establishing supply security, through the EOC if necessary.
2. Should work with local public health nurses and CDC guidelines to establish protocols. *This is now established.*
3. Are concerned about the possibility of lower enrollment levels. They are interested in any financial assistance that is available, and this assistance may be necessary to help them stay open when the Federal assistance expires May 30.

Ms. Martinson added that she received an email from a Public Health Nurse, asking that childcare centers keep a log of people who are sent home sick or have a fever of above 100.4.

MOTION: by Mr. Botelho to forward the Childcare Recommendations, attached to the packet, to the Assembly, with the addition of Ms. Martinson's summary. Ms. MacVay seconded the motion.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Forst asked if the Childcare Recommendations follow the Governor's protocols in phase 1.

Ms. Martinson replied the recommendations do not specifically state that, but they are pulled from specific recommendations from the Governor's protocol and made more relevant and detailed. The recommendations are not stricter or more lenient, just more thorough. The Public Health Nurse with whom Ms. Martinson worked pulled the highlights from Federal and State guidelines to create a condensed version of what Juneau should be doing.

There were no objections and the motion passed.

Mr. Botelho suggested the Task Force go back to the business protocols and make a motion on them.

MOTION: by Mr. Forst to collect potential questions related to reopening businesses under the Governor's mandates that the Assembly should consider or pose to Dr. Zink. Ms. Martinson seconded the motion.

AMENDMENT: Ms. Thomas stated she is not sure we need to pose questions to Dr. Zink, but just to the Assembly for discussion in general. Mr. Mertz and Ms. Martinson agreed.

Mr. Mertz restated the motion with the amendment.

AMENDED MOTION: Mr. Forst will collect potential questions for Mr. Mertz or Ms. Thomas to provide to the Assembly for consideration in their deliberations on whether to proceed with the Governor's plan.

Hearing no other discussion and no objections, the motion with the amendment passed.

MOTION: by Mr. Botelho to adopt and forward to the Assembly the guidelines and safety procedures for reopening businesses in Juneau. Seconded by Ms. Thomas.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Mertz asked Mr. Forst if the letters integrate well with the Governor's mandates. Mr. Forst replied that he is unaware of anything in the letters that contradicts the Governor's mandate. There are specificities that pertain to individual businesses, such as movie theaters, that may not pertain to other businesses due to operational differences.

Mr. Botelho clarified that he was not intending to incorporate the mitigation plans from Gross Alaska Theaters or Annie Kaill's, just the two documents that Mr. Forst generated himself.

Hearing no other discussion and no objections, the motion with the amendment passed.

Good of the Order

Ms. MacVay asked if there is data on which businesses are closed or open. Ms. Grigg sent the Task Force members a link to the CBJ website with the status of individual businesses. Mr. Mertz added that Mr. Dahl from the Chamber of Commerce intends to link to that list as well. Ms. Martinson stated that the Chamber sent an inquiry to local businesses, asking if they planned to open in phase 1 of the Governor's mandate. Additionally, if they chose not to open, the Chamber is interested in what barriers exist to keep them from opening.

Ms. Belton stated that CCTHITA is continuing to assist childcare providers and received a question today for protocols on approving small grants for larger centers.

The meeting was adjourned.

Appointed Task Force Members

Max Mertz, Co-Chair • Linda Thomas, Co-Chair • Theresa Belton • Bruce Botelho • Eric Forst

Ken Koelsch • Lauren MacVay • Laura Martinson • Terra Peters