

July 22, 2020 Special Session

The City Council of the City of Idaho Falls met in Council Special Session, Wednesday, July 22, 2020, at the City Council Chambers in the City Annex Building located at 680 Park Avenue in Idaho Falls, Idaho at 8:30 a.m.

There were present:

Mayor Rebecca L. Noah Casper
Councilmember Michelle Ziel-Dingman
Councilmember John Radford (by WebEx)
Councilmember Thomas Hally
Councilmember Jim Freeman
Councilmember Jim Francis
Councilmember Shelly Smede

Also present:

Geri Rackow, Eastern Idaho Public Health (EIPH) Executive Director
James Corbett, EIPH Community Health Administrator
Bryon Reed, Bonneville County Commissioner, EIPH Board Chair (by WebEx)
Duane Nelson, Fire Chief (by WebEx)
Bryce Johnson, Police Chief
Pamela Alexander, Municipal Services Director
Ed Morgan, Civic Center for the Performing Arts Manager
Randy Fife, City Attorney
Kathy Hampton, City Clerk

Mayor Casper called the meeting to order at 8:34 a.m. with the following:

Opening Remarks, Announcements:

Mayor Casper stated this topic has been discussed since the July 9 City Council Meeting. Since that time the EIPH Board has met several times and have passed a plan that contains metrics and measures which triggers strategies. An order has been issued under this plan as of July 21 for Bonneville County. This order makes it unnecessary for the City to take action. Mayor Casper stated EIPH has a director, an epidemiologist, and, access to medical professionals which provides an expertise level. She noted cities and counties do not have public health officials on staff therefore, cities rely heavily on the guidance and leadership from these expertise professionals to manage best practices within the City. She also noted public health is geared to communities, healthcare is geared to individuals. She believes the community is safer because of public health. She expressed her appreciation to these public health professionals. She acknowledged Commissioner Reed, Ms. Rackow, and Mr. Corbett. She indicated she is not intending to take formal action pending Council discussion.

Presentation and Discussion, Coronavirus (COVID-19) Regional Response Plan:

Ms. Rackow iterated the EIPH Board met on July 14 and voted to adopt the current plan. EIPH Board determined it was time to action several weeks ago when the governor delegated response efforts to the local health districts. Ms. Rackow stated the ultimate goal of public health is to prevent illness, protect lives, and prevent death and disability from communicable diseases. She also stated the goal is to maintain healthcare capacity through the State, this is not just for COVID patients, as resources are being stretched at this time. Ms. Rackow stated EIPH has tried to be very conservative in this plan as the goal is not to stop the illness, the goal is keep the illness manageable, and to ensure the economy can continue running. Simple measures now would prevent future action. A key part of these efforts is to ensure schools can be attended in the fall.

Ms. Rackow stated in addition to metrics, EIPH is also monitoring other factors on a daily basis, including input from healthcare providers. The preventive measures (washing hands, staying home when sick, physical distancing, and wearing a face covering when physical distance cannot be maintained) will help slow the pandemic and, testing for COVID is a key element to help slow the spread. The critical challenges in the region include testing and contact tracing. Ms. Rackow stated testing in this region has been limited from day one (1). The testing capacity gradually

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increased, however, as the illness has increased and more individuals are seeking testing, tests are not available. All health care facilities have seen an uptick in testing. Due to shortages in testing supplies, the majority of test samples must be sent to labs outside of Idaho. Therefore, the turn-around results have greatly increased, with some up to 14 days. Ms. Rackow believes due to this delay, a quicker growth rate of cases will be expected. She indicated another laboratory has been utilized, although there is still a backlog of several hundred tests. Ms. Rackow reviewed the contact tracing process, stating it could be 48 hours before an individual becomes systematic and, 14 days is the incubation period of the virus. She stated tracing is performed by EIPH staff and is based on individual information. She noted more challenge is created to identify the cause when EIPH does not receive responses from tracing. She also noted some individuals are still being required to work by their employers, which is very concerning. She believes it's important for the preventive measures to be in place to collectively, as a community, slow the spread. Unfortunately, there have been two (2) deaths in this area although, fortunately, there have been no outbreaks in assisted living facilities. Ms. Rackow reviewed the number of regional hospitalization cases, stating these are increasing. To the response of Councilor Radford, Ms. Rackow stated masks are not required for outside activities as long as social distancing can be obtained.

Mr. Corbett reiterated the preventative measures requested by EIPH. He stated, per the Moderate Risk level, the metrics that trigger/activate this level are a rate of active cases that are greater than ten (10) per 10,000 population and sustained for three (3) days. EIPH will reevaluate a location or an order for a geographic location after 14 days to prevent the bouncing in and out of the risk phase. Mr. Corbett stated EIPH tried not to use too many metrics. He noted the 'active' definition is the total number of cases that are currently under monitoring of EIPH (still in the contagious period). This rate is based off Idaho Intensive Care Unit (ICU) admissions rate, not local data. This could yield four (4) ICU cases every ten (10) days. A second metric is the hospital ICU bed occupancy reaching 90% 2-3 times per week (surge bed capacity could still be available). This is usually a short-term move.

Mr. Corbett reviewed mitigation strategies including mandatory face coverings when in public, limit events/gatherings to less than 150 people, extra precautions for vulnerable populations, telework where possible, minimize non-essential travel, implement strict health policies for congregate living facilities, and implement school strategies. He stated the goal with this plan is to make sure business and the economy are moving forward and to get kids back in school this fall. Councilor Freeman questioned outdoor activities that may exceed 150 individuals. Mr. Corbett stated the physical distancing is more of the concern than the exact number. Mr. Corbett reviewed High Risk metrics which is 20 active cases per 10,000. He noted the smaller counties will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Other metrics include outbreaks occurring at healthcare facilities, critical infrastructure services, congregate living facilities, schools, and mass gatherings/events or hospitals' total bed occupancy reaching 90% 2-3 times per week (surge bed capacity could still be available). Councilor Freeman noted the skill set of ICU nurses is very high, moving staff may take time to get up to speed. Mr. Corbett also noted staff-sharing within hospitals is not easily accomplished due to different policies and equipment. He stated hospitals have plans in place for a surge factor although the limiting factor is staffing. Mayor Casper stated 'outbreak' is not defined, therefore, she believes this plan allows flexibility. Mr. Corbett agreed. Mr. Corbett reviewed the mitigation strategies in the High Risk level, which is continued from the lower-risk levels. He stated any of the preventative strategies in each level will prevent moving on to the next level. Mr. Corbett stated EIPH is trying a systematic approach (the four (4) levels) instead of all at one (1) approach to avoid an economic shutdown. To the response of Councilor Hally, Mr. Corbett stated EIPH does not track individual traveling. To the response of Councilor Radford, Mr. Corbett stated Ada County required a mask order on July 14, it is too early to determine the response. He also stated mask wearing can and does limit the spread of this virus, is the most cost-effective way to stop the spread, and is a source-control measure. Mr. Corbett reviewed the Critical Risk level (trying hard to avoid this level). Metrics include hospital capacity, including ICU, consistently at or above 100% and surge capacity cannot be maintained, or crisis standards of care implemented. Mitigation strategies include stay-at-home order issued and schools implementing strategies. Mr. Corbett encouraged all individuals to take the measures to keep themselves, their families, and the community safe.

Mr. Corbett reviewed the number of COVID cases and the data dashboard link/information from the EIPH website. He noted this information is updated as soon as available. Councilor Hally questioned individuals who may be required to work but may not feel well. Mr. Corbett stated EIPH does not perform testing, he recommended any

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symptomatic individuals be tested. To the response of Councilor Francis, Mr. Corbett stated hospital capacity may have to be reviewed on a regional level. To the response of Councilor Freeman, Mr. Corbett confirmed EIPH has no enforcement. Ms. Rackow reiterated this, she stated EIPH does their best to educate so the recommendations are followed. Commissioner Reed highly commended Ms. Rackow and Mr. Corbett. He also stated it is unreasonable to expect the City and County to enforce. He requested the public to self-enforce for the right reason and not to overwhelm emergency services with reports of non-compliance. The reason for this order is to protect individuals' rights so they can continue to live as normal as possible, keep stores open, do smaller events, and prevent a strain on the health system. Mayor Casper requested businesses self-enforce as well as she believes this would be in their best interest. This would allow businesses to stay open as long as possible. Chief Johnson stated this enforcement would be similar to the stay-home order. He believes any infraction would be a misdemeanor, however, the Idaho Falls Police Department (IFPD) would not be taking individuals to jail although a citation could be issued in egregious situations. He stated the message, as similar to EIPH, would be education. There will be a coordinated response with dispatch as dispatch serves City and County residents. Chief Johnson requested individuals not to call dispatch for failure to wear a mask as this could tie up the phones for other priority emergencies. He noted there would be assistance with private property owners with any trespass issues. He requested the public to maintain the social distancing. To the response of Councilor Francis, Chief Johnson stated he prefers any business out of compliance be referred to EIPH. Councilor Francis questioned any liquor license establishment not in compliance. Mr. Fife stated the specific authority would need to review. Chief Johnson noted in the previous order, this information was given to the State. Council President Dingman believes organizations and individuals who were skeptical of wearing a mask may be moving in this direction to preserve the life and liberty of the residents. She also believes the ability to go to school, to function as normal as possible, and to go to a business is vital. Councilor Radford believes there needs to be some risk that individuals may need to be cited although he will defer to Chief Johnson. He also believes this is a serious issue. Councilor Freeman is flabbergasted there is so much push back for mask wearing as he believes this is a simple thing to do. Mayor Casper believes mask wearing will prevent an economy shutdown, however, she stated individuals will find a study to counter this point of view. She expressed her appreciation to the professionals who supply the data. Mr. Corbett stated certain studies are more valuable than others and this is a problem with researchers. He suggested individuals pay attention to the limitations and the organization that supplied the study. Councilor Smede referred to the 9/11 events that brought individuals together and kept them safe. She believes this situation is similar. She stated she would back friends, community members, and neighbors in a peaceful way. She requested business owners not be abused. Ms. Rackow stated EIPH's next step is an education campaign. She requested City assistance to share this education. Councilor Hally believes education with compassion is the best resort. He also believes mandates create fear. He requested individuals take the time to express their appreciation to the businesses. Mayor Casper believes there is frustration for the notion of orders. She stated, as elected officials, they have taken an oath to uphold laws although measures can be taken by individuals to change the law and/or constitution. She encouraged individuals to take the steps for their desired permanent change. Councilor Francis believes there should be respect for law.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

s/ Kathy Hampton
Kathy Hampton, City Clerk

s/ Rebecca L. Noah Casper
Rebecca L. Noah Casper, Mayor