

**March 19, 2020**

The City Council of the City of Idaho Falls met in Council Work Session, Thursday, March 19, 2020, in the Council Chambers in the City Annex Building located at 680 Park Avenue in Idaho Falls, Idaho at 7:30 a.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call:

There were present:

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

Also present:

Bear Prairie, Idaho Falls Power Director  
Chris Fredericksen, Public Works Director  
Duane Nelson, Fire Chief  
Pamela Alexander, Municipal Services Director  
Mark Hagedorn, Controller  
Carla Bruington, Mayor's Executive Assistant  
Joseph Nilsson, Chief Information Technology Officer  
Randy Fife, City Attorney  
Kathy Hampton, City Clerk

Mayor Casper called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m. The following items were reviewed with general comments and discussion throughout:

Update on Coronavirus (COVID-19) Unified Command, Community Response and City Contingency Planning:

Mayor Casper stated the White House has been taking this issue more serious over the previous two (2) weeks. President Donald Trump will be meeting with governors and activating a response.

Primary Objectives:

- Be informed – State of our community
- Be prepared – State of readiness (physical, financial, legal policy)

State of our Community:

Idaho – currently 11 cases, limited testing availability (the hospitals have their own protocol), Governor is not mandating closures (following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC))

Unified Command (UC) – this was set up on March 13 and has been reorganized since that time. The UC is heavily supported by Idaho Falls with six (6) personnel, including Public Information Office (PIO) skills that will be important. Unique in the State - most efficient way to distribute information.

Chief Nelson stated the UC is built around emergencies. A pandemic is not practiced as it is an 'unknown enemy' although a typical plan is being slightly modified and is working well. He believes the UC is a step ahead with logistics, planning and operations, and, is heavily invested in the community and the region. Liaisons have been established and will report daily from other counties, hospitals, and, businesses. Information will be compiled daily with new objectives set for the State and the community. Mayor Casper commended the organization. Chief Nelson stated it is very important to capture the financial information/financial impact to the City as the declarations will open the availability for State and Federal funding. These costs will be reimbursable through the government. This will protect taxpayers' money and will help recover costs as much as possible. Director Alexander stated work orders are being created.

March 19, 2020

UC priority is accurate messaging to the public – there is emphasis on protecting the vulnerable and slowing the spread, NOT preventing the illness (want to ensure hospital care is available). There is also sensitivity to optics, concerns, etc.

Other Concerns/Questions – self-appointed volunteers (precautions may be needed); Social Services Agencies (currently these efforts are self-coordinated, Chief Nelson stated the UC has not been linked with these agencies); and, economic impacts to area businesses (Mayor Casper believes the economic recession will be impacted for future years, this will be difficult to help everyone. The Small Business Administration has a program to help although this does not apply to cities or any employer with more than 500 employees.)

Temporary City Policy Considerations/Recommendations:

Idaho Falls Readiness:

City department planning – master plans are being collected on a shared spreadsheet, located where Tier-1 employees can access

Exercise: identifying essential personnel – this is also being collected on a spreadsheet, used for estimating numbers and costs if quarantining goes critical

Policy Review:

Council-level decisions – Mayor Casper reviewed upcoming meetings schedule

State-level policy concerns – open meetings (only one (1) person is required to be presented, all others can be remote); public hearings (technology can be tricky, law does not just allow written testimony, timeframe of public hearings for appeals, etc. may need to be addressed)

Temporary Personnel Policy Adjustments:

Regular employees with diagnosed cases of COVID-19 and who have been instructed to stay home by public health authorities may receive up to 80 hours of paid leave. Use of this leave will not affect existing paid leave balances (supervisor approved work-from-home arrangements do not require use of leave).

Employees may use existing sick leave to care for children who are required to be at home due to school or daycare closures. Use of such leave will depend upon existing staffing levels and, as always, employees must coordinate use of leave or absences with supervisors.

For the present, supervisors and directors will manage instances of employee illness and quarantines, etc. on a case-by-case basis with advice from Human Resources (HR) and Legal Services.

Implications of proposed temporary sick-leave policy modifications: General Fund, Enterprise Fund, morale, other impacts.

Director Tew reiterated this will be as a case-by-case basis. HR will be referring those employees back to the director, the director will then have discussion with HR. HR will not be making those difficult calls. Director Alexander stated Mr. Hagedorn has researched preliminary estimates for those out of the office. She reiterated work orders have been created to document and track costs. Mr. Hagedorn stated granting additional time off does not affect the budget as personnel are already planned to be paid. He also stated paying someone not to work could be significant. One of those significant costs is back-filling for public safety personnel. These costs will be ranged based on the necessary positions and the number of personnel. Costs of other personnel are unknown. Director Fredericksen stated Public Works would be skeleton staff although the basic utilities will be met. Cross training is occurring with sanitation drivers. Director Prairie concurred. He also stated there are routine safety checks to ensure compliance and capital projects are typically adjusted. Mayor Casper believes other back-filling is minimal. Councilmember Freeman questioned City projects being delayed. Mayor Casper stated as of March 16 the work of the City is not changing although this could impact the future budget. She also stated a balance of morale, safety, and, fiscal economics must be created. To the response of Councilmember Radford, Mayor Casper stated a hiring freeze is in effect. Director Tew stated assurance must be provided to prevent sickness in the work place. Mayor Casper stated decisions must be made realistically.

March 19, 2020

Discussion: Declaration of Emergency:

Mayor Casper stated a State of Emergency has been declared by the president and the governor. The County will issue a declaration by the end of the week. This must be declared for funding for disaster emergencies. A declaration of Local Disaster Emergency has been declared for the City. This declaration has the ability to diminish liability, has access to the budget for purchasing, and, has access to funding-split 75/15/10 for qualified expenditures. This declaration is in effect for seven (7) days. The Council can choose to extend the declaration by a resolution. Mayor Casper stated Mr. Fife has recommended to extend the declaration for 30 days. The declaration could be extended beyond that if needed. To the response of Councilmember Freeman, Mr. Fife stated the declaration could also be stopped before the 30 days. Councilmember Hally questioned personnel being paid for self-quarantine. Mayor Casper believes this needs to be tracked prior to determining the cost. Councilmember Dingman questioned non-essential personal and work-related travel. Mayor Casper stated most work-related travel has been cancelled although the City cannot restrict personal travel. Mr. Fife confirmed the City has no authority to control personal lives, there can only be a request or suggestion. Councilmember Smede noted school employees have been asked to follow CDC guidelines. Chief Nelson stated direct personal costs are not covered under the declaration. He believes all City travel has been discontinued and, essential travel due to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) operations may be cancelled. Personal travel is being handled on a case-by-case basis and any employee who may have to self-quarantine following travel from a confirmed COVID-19 area will be required to use their own leave time although there could be a difference of nuisances. There was recommendation to follow CDC guidelines for personal travel. Mayor Casper stated WebEx will be available for future meetings. Training for WebEx will occur at the March 23 Council Work Session.

Other Policy-related Discussion:

Utilities – customer account management policies, this will be discussed at the March 26 Idaho Falls Power (IFP) Board Meeting.

City Childcare policy, State and local – Mayor Casper stated the City ordinance was adopted to protect children. The State standard is less stringent than Idaho Falls although Ammon is more stringent. Due to school and business closures there is a need for childcare. State ratios have been relaxed for school-aged children, however, standards established were based on safety for children. This will require future discussion including possible reciprocity with Ammon.

IF Fiber Development – will also be discussed at the upcoming IFP Board Meeting.

Councilmember Dingman questioned closure of the library. Mayor Casper stated the library is sequestering materials. Councilmember Dingman stated she is not supportive of the current direction of library. This will require future discussion. To the response of Councilmember Radford, Mayor Casper recommended the Council monitor their email on a regular basis regarding future meetings.

Chief Nelson stated, through UC discussions, as closures are considered with directors there should be a mind-set of using bench marks. Actions impact people and create a concept of being worse than they really are. This is already being seen in the community with hoarding. This community is currently at low-risk. The City has several open-area locations and citizens are encouraged to get out, use hygiene, and, social distancing. Mayor Casper noted the zoo and the golf courses are planning to open with social distancing.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:51 a.m.

s/ Kathy Hampton  
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CITY CLERK

s/ Rebecca L. Noah Casper  
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MAYOR