

The Board of County Commissioners met in special session on March 16, 2020. Those present for the session were, Don Batchelder, Chair; Ben Tisdell, Vice-Chair; John E. Peters, Commissioner Member; Connie Hunt, County Administrator; Carol Viner, County Attorney; and Hannah Hollenbeck, Deputy Clerk of the Board.

- **Note – This meeting was recorded for reference purposes.**

A. 4:01PM The Board of County Commissioners met in a Special Meeting to receive updates on COVID-19, to discuss next steps, policies and protocol and to provide direction to staff: (Action may be taken by the Board of County Commissioners at this meeting relevant to the topic.)

Tanner Kingery, County Public Health Director, and Glenn Boyd, County Emergency Manager, were present.

Commissioner Batchelder explained that Kingery and Boyd would provide an update on the COVID-19 situation, after which the Board would have a discussion regarding emergency powers of the Board; the Board may take action after the discussion.

Kingery reported that both the Ouray and Ridgway School districts had closed due to concerns of COVID-19. He encouraged all community members to maintain good hygiene practices. Kingery explained that testing kits were extremely limited, and stated that medical professionals were recommending that anyone exhibiting symptoms isolate. Kingery added that, although there were currently no diagnosed cases in Ouray or San Miguel County, testing was too limited to be able to determine the actual number of cases. He said that the Colorado National Guard was currently in San Miguel County administering 100 tests to preselected patients. Kingery said that he had ordered 100 tests for Ouray County, but there was no guarantee that all 100 would be received.

Boyd explained that the virus could live on hard surfaces for three-to-five days. He said that the virus had a fatality rate of 3-5%, in comparison; the standard flu had a fatality rate of 1%. Boyd encouraged that people limit their social interactions as much as possible. Boyd explained that he was concerned about the impacts on resources including goods and supplies. Boyd informed the Board that the Ouray City Council had declared a local disaster emergency and encouraged the Board to do the same. He asked the Board if they would be willing to authorize a local radio provider to take over broadcast of KURA for the time being in order to standardize information dissemination. The Board agreed.

Commissioner Batchelder requested that Boyd explain the incident command (IC) structure. He asked for Boyd to emphasize who to direct questions to and how input was gathered for decisions. Boyd stated that Kingery was currently serving as the incident commander; Hunt served as the County's liaison to IC.

Kingery encouraged members of the public to contact him if they had questions; he said that he was not a medical practitioner, but that he could screen symptoms and make recommendations for next steps, if needed; however, he reiterated if someone had symptoms, they should isolate and contact their medical provider.

The Board agreed to direct staff to develop a COVID-19 informational resource page on the County's website.

Viner reviewed the statutory authorities for the Board to declare local emergency disaster. She provided a draft of the declaration.

Commissioner Batchelder asked if Kingery thought it was reasonable and warranted to declare a local disaster emergency. Kingery said that it was.

Commissioner Batchelder asked for public comments.

John Countryman, Ridgway resident, agreed that the state of emergency was appropriate. Countryman said that he was concerned about Kingery's effectiveness to lead during the emergency. Countryman felt that Kingery had not effectively lead the school districts and pool facilities to shut down in the appropriate timeframe.

Randy Knipe, Ouray County resident, asked if normal County business would be superseded by the emergency operations center (EOC). Commissioner Batchelder said that declaration of an emergency would not change the statutory responsibilities of elected or appointed officials.

John Wood, Ouray City Council Member, said that it was his preference to convene the unified command structure. He said that the unified command allowed the three jurisdictions to make unilateral decisions. Boyd pointed out that IC was solely focused on COVID-19.

Dawn Glanc, City of Ouray resident, suggested that daily updates be posted on the County website by a certain time every day. Kingery committed to posting daily updates by 12:00PM daily.

A person participating in the meeting on the phone stated that she was concerned about local Census workers knocking on doors and leaving census packets. Commissioner Batchelder said that the County Commissioners did not have control over federal census workers. He reiterated that all residents, including local census workers wear gloves and other personal protective equipment. Commissioner Tisdell added that the regional census office had delayed the in-person launch to April 13th. He added that the census could be filled out online and over-the-phone.

Roger Berry, Ridgway resident present via phone, inquired to know if the March 24, 2020 regular Board meeting was still scheduled. Commissioner Batchelder asked Berry to contact Hunt for any scheduling changes; currently, no changes to the schedule were anticipated.

Jane Holmes, Ouray County Court Clerk present via phone, asked if there were any plans to close County facilities to the public. Commissioner Batchelder said that the topic had not been discussed. He said that the Board would discuss the matter late in the meeting.

Commissioner Batchelder requested that Kingery solicit input from the Board when possible, noting that Kingery would have authority to make certain decisions if the Board adopted the local emergency declaration.

Viner and Hunt voiced their confidence in Kingery's abilities. Hunt noted that Kingery had been following protocol.

Boyd explained the incident command structure, the role that he played as the County Emergency Manager, and how Kingery sought input within an established hierarchy.

Greg Nelson, City of Ouray Mayor, said that he was comfortable with the current incident command structure, as it allowed the stakeholders to quickly make modifications if needed. He requested that all other stakeholders be included in the distribution of the daily briefings to ensure the City, Town and County to have similar messaging.

Beth Lakin, Town of Ridgway Council member, interrupted to report that the Colorado Governor had just instituted an executive order to close all bars and restaurants in the state.

Commissioner Batchelder said that he was comfortable moving forward with the declaration as drafted. Viner explained that if the declaration was adopted by the Board, it would be in effect until rescinded.

M/SIP – Motion was made by Commissioner Tisdel and seconded by Commissioner Peters to adopt a Local Disaster Emergency Declaration and authorized the Chair's signature on the Declaration. The motion carried unanimously.

Wood was concerned about the supply chain for local grocery stores. He said that the operator of Duckett's Market had been notified by a bread supplier that they would not be delivering bread to Ouray for the foreseeable future. He said that the County had a supply chain issue and that the government structure was going to need to step in to figure out a solution. Commissioner Tisdel said that if there was a supply shock issue, the State would be responsible for resolving the situation. He encouraged residents not to panic shop.

Tammee Tuttle, Ridgway resident and restaurant operator, stated that none of her suppliers had notified her of any changes to their schedule. Tuttle said that she purchased goods in bulk and inquired if she could sell grocery staples to residents. Kingery said that it was possible, but that he needed to follow up with state officials to be sure.

Nicole Wilson, Ridgway resident, asked if non-restaurant businesses with ten or more employees could continue to operate, given the limitation on gatherings. Commissioner Tisdel said that if employees could maintain distance from one another, and safety protocols were adhered to, it was possible that the business could continue to operate.

Dan Hughes, County Fairgrounds Assistant, asked if all future events hosted at the Ouray County 4-H Event Center should be cancelled. Hunt said that it needed to be discussed by the Board.

Commissioner Batchelder asked Kingery if there were resources available to local businesses on what they could do to make their businesses safer for employees and patrons. Kingery said that there were resources available on the CDC's website.

Wood asked about the impacts to public safety from tourism. He asked if the Board had thought about any policies. Commissioner Tisdel noted that March-May was Ouray County's shoulder season, and tourism typically slowed during those months. He said that resort towns in Colorado may see decreased early summer tourism. He said that there were no clear answers yet.

Nelson said that he conducted an unofficial tour of Main Street in Ouray and was surprised to hear that many visitors felt as if Ouray County was a safe place to be due to the lack of diagnosed cases. Nelson said that there was going to be an influx of visitors unless messaging discouraged visitors from coming to Ouray.

Dolgio Nergui, Ouray resident, suggested that all public facilities, including libraries, recreational centers, and other attractions be closed. She said that it was important to send a message to visitors that Ouray County was closed to vacationers.

Boyd said that the City of Ouray had closed the Hot Springs Pool, Box Canyon Visitors Center, and the City of Ouray Visitors Center, in addition to all City offices. He said that most City employees were working remotely.

Bette Maurer, Ouray resident, asked who was responsible for visitors currently in hotel rooms. She asked if the City of Ouray was obligated to pay for hotel rooms and additional cleaning if a visitor got sick. Viner said that no entity would be responsible for paying for hotel rooms. Boyd added that the State had asked for schools and hotels to volunteer as isolation centers, if needed. He said that the State would be responsible for paying for those services.

Countryman stated that he was hearing municipal representatives and residents requesting leadership; he said that he wanted the direction to be healthy and requested that the Board step up.

Viner cautioned that government entities could not close down private industries. She said that Kingery had the authority under the declaration to close schools and public places, in addition to limiting gathering when it was necessary to protect public health.

Wood asked if Kingery had established priorities and objectives for response. Commissioner Batchelder said that a MAC meeting was scheduled for the next day to discuss those topics

Commissioner Batchelder said that it seemed to be the consensus to move away from in-person public meetings. Hunt said that the County would start offering virtual attendance options for meetings. Viner said that all Board meetings needed to comply with open meetings law. She had drafted a virtual meetings resolution that the Board could consider during the March 17, 2020 regular meeting. She said that it was paramount that the public be able to participate in the meeting in all ways.

The Board agreed that all non-essential meetings and work sessions be postponed to a later date. Viner said that the Board had the authority to close or limit public access to County facilities. Commissioner Batchelder suggested that the Board request recommendations from department heads and other elected officials. He said that certain government functions needed to be maintained. Susie Mayfield, County Assessor, said that the County Treasurer had suggested establishing protocol that limited one employee to the office. Hunt explained that she had requested that County departments draft office-specific protocols to allow for operations to continue, while adhering to health, safety and welfare of employees. Michelle Nauer, County Clerk & Recorder, said that several Colorado Clerks had closed their offices to the public. Nauer added that she had opened the election dropboxes to allow for people to limit their interactions with the public.

Carol Friedrich, County Social Services Director, clarified that employees would still be paid if they were working from home; if an employee was sick and unable to work, they would utilize accrued sick leave.

Commissioner Tisdel said that County staff needed to be flexible. He said that many other counties were in similar circumstances. He encouraged department heads and elected officials to reach out to their counterparts to share resources and information.

After a discussion, the Board agreed that closing all County offices to the public was the best solution.

M/S/P – Motion was made by Commissioner Tisdel and seconded by Commissioner Peters to close all County offices to the public, effective Wednesday March 18, 2020. Staff was directed to develop recommendations specifying how each office would continue to offer services to the public. The motion for closure was subject to modification as needed. The motion carried unanimously.

After the motion carried, Commissioner Batchelder clarified that all events to be hosted at the Ouray County 4-H Event were cancelled.

The Board of County Commissioners adjourned the special session.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF OURAY COUNTY, COLORADO

Attest:



[Handwritten signature]

Michelle Nauer, Clerk and Recorder
By: Hannah Hollenbeck, Deputy Clerk of the Board

[Handwritten signature]

Don Batchelder, Chair

[Handwritten signature]

Ben Tisdel, Vice-Chair

[Handwritten signature]

John E. Peters, Commissioner Member