

CITY OF POCATELLO, IDAHO
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
FACE COVERING RESOLUTION-
CITYWIDE HEALTH EMERGENCY
AUGUST 6, 2020

ROLL CALL The Special City Council meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m. by Mayor Brian Blad. Council members present were Heidi Adamson, Roger Bray, Rick Cheatum, Linda Leeuwrik, Claudia Ortega and Chris Stevens. Also in attendance were Jared Johnson, City Attorney and Ruth Newsom, City Clerk.

Mayor Blad stated that the meeting was being held for City Council to review wording for an emergency Citywide health plan resolution. The resolution will encourage face coverings for individuals when they are in public places as well as other mitigation strategies to prevent the further spread of COVID-19; to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents and visitors to the City of Pocatello and providing an effective date.

The draft resolution states the following:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that people are most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest), however spread is possible before people show symptoms or by those that are asymptomatic. The CDC recommends that people wear face coverings in public settings, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Both local and national experts agree wearing face coverings significantly reduces the transmission of COVID-19. Southeastern Idaho Public Health has issued a COVID-19 Regional Response Plan, effective July 24, 2020 and asks everyone to wear face coverings in public when physical distancing is not possible.

The Mayor and City Council desire to provide recommendations to slow the community spread and protect the health, safety and welfare of individuals living, working and visiting the City of Pocatello. If adopted, the following recommendations shall be in effect for as long as necessary in the fight against COVID-19.

- 1) Urge citizens, business owners, and visitors to the City of Pocatello to heed the advice of local health experts, Southeastern Idaho Public Health, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who all advise that while in public, if unable to practice physically distancing, people should wear a face covering;
- 2) Strongly encourage citizens, business owners, and visitors in the City of Pocatello to follow the mitigation strategies recommended by Southeastern Idaho Public Health, pursuant to its COVID-19 Regional Response Plan issued July 24, 2020, as follows: a) Stay at home if you are sick; b) maintain physical distance of six feet from others (outside of immediate family) whenever possible; c) Wear face coverings in public when physical distancing is not possible; d) wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer; e) large gatherings are asked to implement: physical distancing, use of face coverings by staff and participants, increased sanitation measures and increased personal hygiene measures (handwashing/hand sanitizing.); and

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f) carefully monitor your health (refer to <https://cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html> for more information);

3) This Resolution shall be effective upon its adoption and approval.

Council discussion regarding Bannock County and Idaho being a hot spot in the nation for COVID-19 outbreaks followed.

A motion was made by Ms. Stevens to include wording in the proposed resolution that the Whitehouse Task Force has identified Bannock County as a hotspot.

Council discussion regarding the rating of Bannock County and the situation as a whole followed. Since the status of areas change quickly, how to identify areas continually evolving due to the outbreak would be difficult.

Ms. Stevens amended her motion to change the word “hotspot” to “an area of concern”. The amended motion was seconded by Mrs. Ortega.

In response to questions from Council, Jared Johnson, City Attorney, clarified the date of the resolution will continue as long as needed such as when the COVID-19 pandemic has subsided. He encouraged the Council to pass a resolution to end the Face Coverings resolution once they feel it is appropriate. He also suggested that a date when Bannock County was identified as an area of concern could be added to the proposed resolution.

Ms. Stevens motion was voted upon at this time. Those voting in favor were Stevens, Ortega, Adamson, Bray, Cheatum and Leeuwrik.

A motion was made by Mr. Bray, seconded by Mrs. Ortega, to add the following quote from Dr. Deborah Birx to the proposed resolution: “To everybody who lives in a rural area, you are not immune or protected from this virus,” Birx said. “If you’re in multi-generational households, and there’s an outbreak in your rural area or in your city, you need to really consider wearing a mask at home, assuming that your’re positive, if you have individuals in your household with comorbidities.” (Dr. Birx is the White House Coronavirus coordinator.)

Council discussion regarding the proposed quote followed.

Mr. Johnson stated if the quote is used, the full quote by Dr. Birx would need to be included.

Ms. Adamson shared her concerns with making the resolution longer by adding a long list of quotes.

Mr. Bray shared his concerns with actions taken by the Health Task Force for the Pocatello area. He feels they are not showing enough seriousness to the problem.

Mayor Blad shared that he understands the intent that Mr. Bray is saying. However, he is concerned that the Council may be overreaching by addressing the use of face coverings in a person’s home.

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Mr. Bray noted that the “whereas” in the resolution is informational only. The statements/suggestions for the public by Council are what is being asked. He would rather over-reach and require someone wear a face covering than under-reach and not get the information to the public.

Mayor Blad feels many people do not have an understanding of the difference between an ordinance and a resolution. He understands the education piece of asking families to keep track of who is coming in and out of home. However, citizens have also stressed their concerns about government over-reach.

Mr. Bray’s motion was voted upon at this time. Those voting in favor were Bray, Ortega and Stevens. Those voting in opposition to the motion was Adamson, Cheatum and Leeuwrik. Due to a tie in voting, Mayor Blad was required to cast the deciding vote. Mayor Blad voted in opposition to the motion. Therefore, the motion failed.

Council discussion regarding educating the public regarding multi-generational homes and the use of face coverings continued.

Ms. Adamson feels the resolution meets what the Council has asked.

A motion was made by Ms. Adamson, seconded by Ms. Leeuwrik, to have staff prepare the Face Covering resolution with the addition of the wording in Ms. Steven’s motion for Council’s consideration.

Mr. Bray does not feel that the proposed wording in the resolution is strong enough.

Ms. Adamson’s motion was voted upon at this time. Those voting in favor were Adamson, Leeuwrik, Bray, Cheatum, Ortega and Stevens.

Mrs. Ortega mentioned that she would like Council to look at requiring businesses to have their customers wear face coverings. She feels that small businesses need this type of support from the Council at this time.

It was clarified that the topic to discuss face coverings for the business community was not on the agenda and would need to be discussed at a future meeting.

Ms. Leeuwrik agreed the Council needs to support businesses. However, she did not feel the Council was interested in passing an ordinance to require face coverings.

Council discussion regarding the process to require businesses to mandate face coverings continued. Pros and cons of face coverings and enforcement was held.

In response to a question from Mayor Blad, Matt Hunter, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, noted he was not in attendance on behalf of the Chamber Board. However, he shared that the small business community is suffering. The issue of requiring face coverings – Mr. Hunter feels business owners know what is best for their business. If the owner feels they need to have a

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customer wear a face covering they will require it. Mr. Hunter encouraged the Council to continue supporting local businesses.

Council discussion regarding local business owners making decisions regarding face covering use in their business followed.

Mrs. Ortega withdrew her motion.

Council asked Mr. Hunter to have Chamber members complete a survey seeking the following: Would their business support the City Council passing an ordinance requiring their business to have customers wear a face covering? The results of the survey will be shared during the August 20, 2020 City Council Liaison/Work Session Clarification meeting.

A motion was made by Mrs. Ortega, seconded by Mr. Bray, to discuss the results of a survey by Chamber member businesses asking if they would be in favor of the Council requiring their business to have customers wear a face covering and if a City Ordinance requiring face coverings should be considered at a future meeting based upon results of the survey. Those voting in favor were Ortega, Bray, Cheatum, Leeuwrik and Stevens. Ms. Adamson voted in opposition to the motion. The motion passed.

In response to questions by Council, Mr. Johnson explained the proposed Face Covering Resolution can be modified to include additional wording regarding businesses if Council chooses this option.

ADJOURN Mayor Blad adjourned the meeting at 3:22 p.m.

APPROVED BY:

BRIAN C. BLAD, MAYOR

ATTEST AND PREPARED BY:

RUTH NEWSOM, CITY CLERK, C.C.