

Bluff Town Council Work Session
May 5, 2020
Bluff Community Center at 4:00 p.m.
190 N 3rd East P.O. Box 324
Bluff UT 84512
435-672-9990

Regular meetings are held the first three Tuesdays of every month at 6:00 p.m. at the Bluff Community Center. Requests to be on the agenda may be submitted in writing to Ann Leppanen (ann@townofbluff.org) at least 4 days before the meeting. Agendas and minutes are posted at:

townofbluff.org and audio, in addition, at the Utah Public Notice Website
This meeting was held electronically on Google Hangouts.

Minutes

The meeting started at 4:05 p.m.

Roll Call Mayor Ann K. Leppanen, Luanne Hook, Jim Sayers, Linda Sosa, Brant Murray

1. Review and Discussion on Town of Bluff Emergency Ordinance (All)

The Emergency Ordinance was passed March 25th and posted March 28th and covered a 45-day period that expires May 12th. The ordinance was modified and that passed April 4th but the Council chose to go with the earlier posting date. Leppanen explained that the Governor's new guidelines, from red risk level to orange, came out May 1st. Chris McAnany explained to her that our options are vote to: expire our deadline immediately, let it expire at the end of the time period, follow the Governor's guideline, or extend our closure. Multiple reasons include the high risk of a large population over 65, underlying health conditions, lack of medical resources, a border town to the Navajo reservation, etc. In their conversation McAnany stated the State has delegated authority to the County Health departments and every community is different. The Council could ask for a variance or we could ask to be put back in red risk. Leppanen attended a Business Owners of Bluff meeting and reported the general feeling was to open safely, a soft opening, perhaps at Memorial Day. They discussed plans. Restaurants would do take-out or limited outdoor seating, Restaurants would coordinate with lodging so guests would have food available. Safety, health, and welfare were prime concerns and included the safety of their employees; some don't feel comfortable coming back to work and have family across. Sayers knew the importance of opening but was concerned about the lack of testing, not knowing if we are spiking. Murray suggested meeting again, get more information and develop a plan to move forward. Hook mentioned some employees don't want to work because they don't feel safe. Jen Davila said the state government testing priority is red zones. Leppanen pointed out Blanding and Monticello have not had mobile testing for that reason so their data has a gap.

Hook wanted to let the date expire. Businesses can keep their businesses safe. Sosa agreed that the businesses would do a great job at following safety guidelines but was concerned about when they leave that property they are no longer contained. She supported the Memorial Day opening. Sayers was afraid some businesses could sustain permanent damage and we should open on a limited basis. Without testing we are blind, though. Leppanen suggested careful weighing of the pros and cons of protecting the entire community. McAnany stated the Town can require masks be worn. She has had conversations with Diana Davidson about how FEMA can help us by reimbursing a hire to work on health and welfare issues for the Town and businesses. Sayers pointed out the number of cases is continuing to go up and may not peak until June. Bill Crowder asked why we would consider opening when the numbers are still increasing. The Council considered meeting again Thursday.

2. Review and Discussion on Status of Opening the Bluff Community Center and Mesa Fire Kitchen for Use and Rental, Use of Community Center for San Juan County Early Voting (All)

These have been closed to the public and rentals since March. There are no reservations this month. The senior center is closed as are County offices. John David Nielson has asked to hold early voting in the CC for four days in June. Leppanen expressed her displeasure that there were local complaints about the CC being used to store food from the Food Pantry for distribution and not allowing classes to continue. This space allowed the food to be safely stored with minimum contact and distributed without people coming and waiting in line for food. No one should have been going into the CC. Storing food for hungry people should not be an issue during a pandemic.

3. Discussion on Resolution to Return Funds to the Bluff Service Area (Leppanen)

Because of a possible security breach with Wells Fargo the BSA transferred \$60,000 to the Town. This money would have been transferred when the BSA dissolved. That was expected to be decided at the June election but the County did not follow the process they should have and now November is the earliest it can happen. The BSA may need some of the funds and the cleanest way to transfer them, for the bookkeeping is give them all back and have the BSA get a new account for them Remaining funds will be transferred to the Town when they dissolve. The Council members agreed.

4. Discussion of Proposed Budget for the July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 Fiscal Year Which Includes Truth-In-Taxation Process (Leppanen/Sosa/Richmond)

Leppanen, Sosa, and Linda Richmond worked on the proposed budget. Leppanen explained that because of the pandemic and the fact we are a tourist based town, the budget is based on austerity and the likelihood of low revenue. She is working with John David Nielson on the truth-in-taxation process. The BSA will put their taxation rate at zero and the Town will adopt a rate roughly the same as what people pay now. Because we are changing the property tax for the Town from zero to similar to what it is under the

BSA there must be a public hearing. The public hearing for the tax change will be July 21st at 6 p.m. at the CC. The proposed Town budget will be presented at tonight's regular meeting and passed in August. Between now and the public hearing there will be a certified tax rate that the County will provide to us by June 8th. The Town is required to provide a report to the County providing the amount and purpose of by June 22nd and the County reports that to the State. On or before June 30th we adopt a proposed tax rate and tentative budget. John David sends out notices prior to the hearing. Leppanen publishes in the San Juan Record two times in a row, July 1st and 8th. It goes on the Utah Public Notice Website, our website, and the Post Office and CC. We hold the public hearing July 21st and at some point, adopt the budget and the tax resolution. Nielson can generate the resolution for the Town.

Richmond completed the proposed budget yesterday, after several days of meeting, and no further action has to be taken at this time, we have several months to watch the numbers. Council Members agreed it looked good and remarked that we have no debt, except what we owe the Sate for incorporation costs. Cheryl Bowers called Leppanen to talk about budgets and said Blanding's budget dropped to 15% of last year.

5. Need for an Engineer/Surveyor for Proof of Water Application Number 09-1853 by June 30, 2020 (Leppanen)

Leppanen explained we have a water right to proof before June 30th or we lose it. We can apply for an extension, which is common, but we need an engineer to do it. It will cast \$150 to extend it. Leppanen suggested getting a quote from Sunrise Engineering, who is doing our 50-year water plan.

6. Discussion of Proposed Capital Projects (Murray)

Murray explained Planning and Zoning, Listening to Bluff, and the USU Regional Planning Study all have an open spaces component. He sees the importance of long term planning through a Capitol Projects Plan and would like the focus to be:

1. Town Hall Complex
2. Open Space Acquisition Fund
3. Community Center Complex,

and add it to the budget. Richmond said it couldn't be added to the budget because there must be a plan, a resolution and it must be adopted. Leppanen pointed out because of our austere budget it will not be feasible to put it in the budget this year with current unknowns. She thanked Murray for spearheading the plan and moving forward.

Adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Linda Sosa Recording Officer

This meeting took place electronically via Google Hangouts in order to follow the social distancing guidelines given by state and local authorities. The public was able to connect and participate by call in or video.