



WRITTEN REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor Clark and Ridgway Town Council
From: Preston Neill, Town Manager
Date: June 8, 2020
RE: **Town Manager's Report**

INTRODUCTION

This report serves as an update to Council on key projects, activities and community issues.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC UPDATE

As you all know, Governor Polis issued **Executive Order D 2020 091 Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors** on June 1st. It implements a number of measures that allow many Coloradans to return to work and recreation in the great outdoors while we maintain a sustainable level of social distancing. The accompanying Public Health Order 20-28 issued by CDPHE sets forth the requirements for implementation of Safer at Home and in the Vast, Great Outdoors. Individual restrictions remain in place concerning limitations on activities, travel, and public gatherings. Workplace restrictions remain necessary to implement standard social distancing requirements, cleaning standards, and other items necessary to reduce the possibility of disease spread. Additionally, certain businesses and activities require specific guidance based on their business practices, and those are included in the appendices to CDPHE Public Health Order 20-28.

Ouray County Unified Command is in the process of hosting another round of business sector meetings, through June 11th, to review guidance recently issued by CDPHE and answer questions from business owners and representatives. The PIOs on the Unified Command team have developed an inventory of resource materials and posters for the business community to use as they prepare to reopen. Those materials and the business sector meeting schedule are available on the home page of the Town's website.

RECAP OF TOWN COUNCIL ASSISTANCE MEASURES

- On April 8th, Council temporarily suspended water service shut offs and waived penalty and interest for water, sewer and trash collection utility services until June 1st.
- On May 13th, Council adopted, temporarily by way of an emergency ordinance, amendments to the Town's Sign Regulations in Section 7-3-12 of the Ridgway Municipal Code in order to relax certain signage requirements for lawfully operating businesses for a four-month period until September 13, 2020. Normally a business must apply for a sign permit before installing a portable sign within the Town right-of-way. In recognition of the difficult business environment created by the COVID-19 pandemic and orders related to business operations, the emergency ordinance waives the need for a portable sign on Town right-of-way proposal/sign permit application to be submitted to the Town with applicable fee and reviewed and approved by Town staff.



- On May 13th, Council approved a deferment of sales tax remittance and waiver of penalty and interest for qualifying businesses for the month of April. Businesses with tax filings for the month of April of \$2,000 or less were qualified to request to participate in the deferral program.
- On May 27th, Council approved a resolution that 1) streamlined the process for restaurants to apply for a permit to expand their outdoor dining offerings onto sidewalks, parking areas, streets and other areas adjacent to their properties, and 2) streamlined the process for restaurants to request a temporary modification of their premises for on-premises sales and consumption of alcoholic beverages.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

As directed by the Policy Group (Ridgway Town Council, Ouray City Council and Ouray County Board of County Commissioners), a Request for Proposals (RFP) has been developed and finalized that seeks proposals from experienced firms, groups or individuals to address County-wide economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The RFP has been issued by Ouray County and is available for public viewing at <https://ouraycountyco.gov/259/Bids-and-Request-for-Proposals-RFPs>. Some of the essential functions of the “Contract Economic Recovery Coordinator” include, but are not limited to:

- Participate in regional collaboration and planning efforts relating to mitigation, response, and recovery efforts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Coordinate with and provide technical assistance to Ouray County, municipalities, and other political subdivisions and organizations in implementing strategies and projects to assess and forecast the current and future economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This is an independent contractor/consulting position and the RFP proposes a contract of up to one year, which may be extended based on the mutual agreement of the parties for up to one additional year. At the last Joint Policy Group Work Session, the group discussed the prospect of each jurisdiction sharing the cost. More discussions on this topic and approaches to achieve collective goals will be held in the coming days.

CORONAVIRUS RELIEF FUND

The Department of Local Affairs recently announced plans to allocate \$275M in Coronavirus Relief Funds, and they have released details of the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CVRF) Local Government Distribution program and process. One of the critical aspects to the funding allocation is the requirement for municipalities and their respective counties to collaborate on how the total amount allocated per county for all municipal and county reimbursements will be utilized. Equally important is for municipalities to fully understand the variety of direct coronavirus-related costs that may be aggregated for reimbursement request discussions with the counties. We are currently working to understand what the eligible expenditures are based on the guidance that has been provided by the U.S. Treasury. It's worth noting that the Town's costs related to COVID-19 have been minimal outside of payroll expenses for services substantially dedicated to mitigating or responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency.



BUDGET UPDATE

In anticipation of negative financial impacts to the Town due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Council adapted the FY2020 Budget during the April 8 Regular meeting. Council reviewed line items in the General, Water and Sewer Funds that contain various projects and capital expenditures and elected to freeze a number of items for the time being totaling \$585,900 (\$335,900 in the General Fund and \$250,000 in the Water Fund). With General Fund Expenditures totaling \$3,086,682 in the FY2020 Adopted Budget, this equates to a 10.88% reduction in the General Fund. With Water Fund Expenditures totaling \$1,044,398, this equates to a 23.93% reduction in the Water Fund.

There were also a number of items that Council decided could potentially be reduced in scope and thus cost, if deemed necessary by staff. **Staff is planning to present updated financial reports and a progress report on the 2020 Strategic Plan at the July 8th Council meeting for review and discussion by Council.** While we anticipate we'll have several months and perhaps years of revenue impacts, we're starting from a sound financial position and have time to work through strategies to maintain our services to the community.

CONCERT SERIES CANCELLATION

A few weeks ago, given the current conditions regarding COVID-19 and our top priority of keeping our residents and visitors safe and healthy, we made the difficult decision to postpone this year's Ridgway Concert Series. We are hoping to rebook the same lineup of musicians for 2021. We are also hoping to put something special together when circumstances allow in lieu of this beloved summer event. Stay tuned!

TOWN OF RIDGWAY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

This is reminder about the Town's new YouTube channel. We have integrated our video recordings from the Zoom video conferencing platform with YouTube so that residents can watch past meetings online. Check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCtwVSRIxtjKbTpy5sHw42EQ>. You can also watch meetings from the Town's website at <https://townofridgway.colorado.gov/i-want-to/ridgway-town-council> thanks to the Open Media Foundation's online video platform that we've embedded onto that webpage.

PLANNING UPDATE

From Shay Coburn, Town Planner:

Signs Directing Traffic to Industrial Park

At the March 11, 2020 Council meeting, Annabel Clarke spoke during the public comment period and requested some signage to try to direct trucks to the industrial park and not to the Otto and N Cora intersection. She noted it has been a bit of a problem with trucks trying to turn around in the intersection and using these mostly residential streets to access the industrial park. Staff came up with the following plan:



1. We can use our somewhat standard sign format, which looks something like the signs in the image below.



2. The majority of traffic likely comes from Railroad St. and maybe Lena St., so the proposal is:
 - a. One sign on the NE corner of Lena and Otto facing east to direct westbound traffic on Otto to go right to the industrial park. This would require a new post. This sign could be double sided if Council prefers.
 - b. One sign on the SE corner of Lena and Otto facing south to direct northbound traffic to go straight to the industrial park. This could likely be attached to the existing Stop sign post.

Athletic Park Pavilion

We are under construction! Kuboske Construction, LLC fenced off the construction area and started to excavate for the foundation. The crew ran into some ground water, so staff has been working with the designer to rework the foundation design a bit to ensure the building is totally secure. Construction should fully resume shortly without much delay.

2020 Census

The Colorado Census response rate was 63.0% on May 31, 2020. Colorado has fallen in state ranking to 18th. We all need to work hard together to increase the self-response rate. The Census Bureau resumed its field operations in Colorado on May 18, 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic delayed many operations in April and May. This includes full staffing of Census field offices and hand-delivery of Census packets to rural households. Census enumerators will be in rural areas throughout the months of June and July dropping off forms and updating their records to count rural residents in the right place.



The Non-Response Follow-Up (NRFU) operation will begin on August 11, 2020. This means Census workers showing up to nonresponsive households. For everyone's health, it is best if people respond before this date. Encourage everyone you know to respond today online, by phone, or by mail. It is not too late to be counted (and avoid having someone show up at your door)!

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES UPDATE

From Diedra Silbert, Community Initiatives Facilitator:

Ridgway Space to Create

HUGE news! After interviewing with the Colorado Housing Finance Authority (CHFA), the Town was notified of a successful Artspace application for low-income housing tax credits for the Town's Space to Create facility project. The CHFA award of \$800,081 annually for 10 years in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits has allowed planning for the project to move forward toward developing construction documents and finalizing funding, possibly with closings by the end of the year and groundbreaking by spring 2021.

Business Grant Program

Through repurposed grant funding from Colorado Creative Industries, the Town and Ridgway Creative District are in the process of awarding up to \$350 per application to assist businesses, organizations, and creative enterprises with re-opening or restarting costs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 13 applications have been received since the grant opportunity was initially publicized on May 20, primarily requesting reimbursement for masks, disinfectants, hand sanitizer, and specialized thermometers. Awards will continue to be made until the funds run out.

Heritage Park Improvements

The Colorado Main Street 2019 mini-grant will allow the Town to clean up, level, lay gravel, and place picnic tables in an area near the parking lot, south of the Visitor Center's pergola, with labor and equipment from Public Works used as the match for the \$5,000 grant. Though it's not the level of improvement to Heritage Park that was budgeted for 2020, it should at least take a step toward cleaning up the area with the funds available in this year's reduced Town budget. Plans are still being made for how best to utilize the 2020 mini-grant funds, given the pandemic's budgetary impacts.

Town Website Platform

The upgraded Town website went live on June 3! Many hours went into this project in response to the State's recommendation that the Town transition to a new website platform. We hope you like the new look. If you have any suggestions for updates or changes, please contact Diedra Silbert.

Town Council Workshop on Colorado Main Street and Ridgway Creative Main Street

Through Colorado Main Street technical assistance funds, consultant Melissa Antol from hrQ provided a workshop and discussion on May 27 with Town Council which functions as the Main Street program "board." Much information was shared about the national and State Main Street program, its purposes, and Ridgway's history and successes with it. Ridgway is now included in a small group of communities in the state which have achieved the highest level of standing in the program as a Graduate community.



Colorado Creative Corridor

Though tourism isn't the focus at the moment, the five communities on the Creative Corridor, including Ridgway, are moving toward the creation of a film featuring our creative districts and communities for future promotional purposes. Zach Wolfson of Infusion 5, who has filmed in town previously, will visit again this fall. Businesses that are interested in being featured in the film can apply by June 15 at the following link: <https://infusion5.com/corridor/>.

UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- **Regular Town Council Meeting** – June 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom
- **Planning Commission Regular Meeting** – June 30, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom
- **Regular Town Council Meeting** – July 8, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom

JOKE OF THE DAY

What do lawyers wear to work?

Lawsuits