

APRIL 23, 2020

The Board of Chaves County Commissioners held a Special Commission meeting in the Commission Chamber of the Joe Skeen Building, #1 St. Mary's Place in Roswell, New Mexico. Chairman Cavin called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Corn led the pledge and Commissioner Bilberry led in prayer. Those present were Commissioners Bilberry, Dana, Ezzell, Corn and Cavin. Also present were County Manager Stan Riggs, Public Services Director Bill Williams, County Clerk Dave Kunko, news media, staff and guests.

AGENDA

Chairman Cavin stated prior to the resolution he wanted to here from Mike Espiritu from the EDC and Candace Purcell from the Chamber of Commerce in reference to the business climate currently in Chaves County.

PRESENTATION

Mike Espiritu stated it has been difficult the last few weeks and we will continue to face more challenges. He stated they have been very busy contacting businesses and gauging their needs. The EDC website has an abundance of information and links to assist businesses during this challenging time. They are assisting businesses in accessing federal funds and determining what their needs are. The EDC continues to receive calls for potential businesses in our county. He realizes some businesses may fail to come back and the EDC continues to help in any way they possibly can. They have partnered with the Saddle Barn and Church on the Move. They have started to make masks. Currently the masks are being provided for free. A company working on the Oso Grande Windfarm has donated \$5,000 to the EDC to help pay for the masks. Many of these are being provided to first responders. This virus situation has been very hard on people and it has created Behavior Health Opportunities. Commissioner Dana thanked Mike Espiritu and the EDC and Church on the Move for working together. People want to work, and this was a creative way of making that happen. She enjoyed her tour of the facility. Things like this give people hope. Commissioner Corn thanked Mike on behalf of all the Commissioners. This has been tough on businesses and employees. This virus will have an affect on the County finances as well. Commissioner Cavin stated Loveless Hospital was very quiet since elective procedures have been put on hold. He is not sure the hospital will survive. He said of the 21 Covid-19 cases in Chaves County only 3 of them have been hospitalized.

Candace Purcell thanked the Commission for inviting her to the meeting. She stated it has been a little depressing and unruly lately. We have been in contact with businesses and it is alarming to hear that some will not come back from closure due to Covid-19. The Chamber of Commerce is working hard to keep these businesses going and provide them with resources to assist them. She believes all of our businesses are essential and hopefully all of them will be able to open on May 15th. The Chamber is surveying businesses to see how they have been affected and will provide those number to the County. She has enjoyed the opportunity to work with the EDC and Mike Espiritu. There is a taskforce in place to assist with recovery. There have been several challenges and she appreciates the leadership and partnership with the County. We need to stay positive and get everyone back to work. Commissioner Bilberry thanked her for the hard work and asked if she had any numbers on how many businesses will stay shut down. Candace Purcell stated they are working on getting accurate numbers. Commissioner Dana stated the survey is a great idea. Commissioner Bilberry stated the taskforce needs to ramp up and let us know what we are up against. Chairman Cavin just asked that the Chamber keep the County in the loop.

Sheriff Herrington was asked to report on the affects of the virus on law enforcement. He thanked the Commission for taking action today. Sheriff Herrington mentioned numerous phone calls on why they are shut down when similar business are being allowed to operate. We understand social distancing and keeping our hands and surfaces clean. We are susceptible just like any other country. Many businesses that are closed can operate just as safe as those that are allowed to be open. Law enforcement is out there working and nothing has changed except the way we contact people. Crime does not stop and many people are taking advantage of this situation. Many deputies have been exposed to the virus and we have been fortunate to not have any deputies infected. This is a scary time

for all of us. Businesses must open to be able to provide goods and services to the county and wages to employees so they can feed their families and pay their bills. We must use common sense, be considerate to others, and stay out of large groups. Commissioner Corn stated we are lucky that employees have not contracted this virus. Commissioner Dana thanked the Sheriff and his staff because crime does not stop. Chairman Cavin stated it is good that all law enforcement is working together. Sheriff Herrington stated people need to understand that the State Police are being directed by the Governor. The State Police is using common sense.

Commissioner Dana read a letter from U. S. Representative candidate Clair Chase supporting reopening businesses in Chaves County. Commissioner Bilberry read a letter from State Senator Cliff Pirtle also supporting reopening business because all businesses are essential.

RESOLUTION R-20-15 REQUESTING THE GOVERNOR RE-OPEN BUSINESSES CLOSED BY EXECUTIVE AND PUBLIC HEALTH ORDERS

Stan Riggs read the title of the resolution and stated staff recommends approval. The Commissioners read the resolution to the audience. Commissioner Corn moved to adopt Resolution R-20-15. Commissioner Ezzell seconded the motion. Commissioner Corn mentioned a nice letter they received from Bobby Arnett in reference to his wife, Dr. Arnett's clinic in the valley and things they are doing for the citizens. He stated there are a lot of businesses in New Mexico and Chaves County that are open but unable to sell their product. When farmers and ranchers are ready to sell, they have no place to go. There is a chain of events that occurs when portions of the economy are shut down. Chairman Cavin asked for a roll call vote. All 5 Commissioners voted yes supporting Resolution R-20-15.

UNSCHEDULED COMMUNICATIONS

Chairman Cavin asked Stan Riggs if we had any comments on the County's Facebook account. Mr. Riggs stated not at this time. Mr. Riggs stated he did receive an email from Rita Kane Doerhoefer. The email stated she was not allowed to attend the meeting due to her medical condition. She stated they had spent an additional \$2100 on beautifying the Administrative Building grounds. She thanked George and Georgianna for their help. She mentioned an open meeting scheduled at Copyrite on Saturday. She asked if the Sheriff would be there to make sure citizens are following the rules. She thanked the Commission and County for all they do. The Sheriff stated he would be present. She hoped she could come to the next meeting.

Dave Kunko stated, should the State remain closed until May 15th it will affect early voting at the Administrative Center, Area D since early voting begins May 5th. We are taking protective measures to protect poll workers as well as voters. Should we continue these constraints on access we may need assistance controlling larger numbers of voters, should we have them. Mr. Kunko stated it is impossible at this point to keep his office at 5 employees due to the Primary Election. They are practicing distancing as much as possible. Mr. Kunko mentioned the Alternate Early Voting site at the Roswell Mall. At this time, they intend to remain closed until after the Governor's closure date of May 15th. We are looking at Berrendo Elementary as our alternate site and will have it looked at for ADA compliance. Commissioner Corn mentioned the possibility of Election Day Polling Place issues. Election Day polling place changes would require a court order. He stated the Governor's May 15th date could change to May 30th which could cause a lot of problems. Commissioner Corn asked about election workers. Mr. Kunko stated they have reached out to them and are slowly getting confirmation as to their willingness to work during this pandemic. Commissioner Corn wished the Clerk's Office the best in getting everything accomplished. Mr. Kunko stated there was a lot of stress at his office right now, but they would get the job done. Mr. Kunko stated the Secretary of State is intending to begin mailing the absentee applications early next week. Commissioner Cavin told Mr. Kunko not to worry about increasing the number of employees, just take care of business.

MANAGER COMMUNICATIONS

Stan Riggs stated there is overwhelming appreciation on facebook for the action taken by the Commission. Businesses want equal treatment. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 1st. There will be a full agenda. Social distancing will be in affect and you can wear masks is you

pandemic. People are scared. We need to calm the waters. Kids are out of school and being home schooled. This is not an easy job. We must get our letters and documentation to the Governor and President. The presentation from Dr. Khorsand and Dr. Jewel showed us how to be smart and to take this seriously. He thanked everyone for wearing a mask at the meeting because his wife's health has been compromised. He thanked Mike Espiritu, Candace Purcell, the Sheriff, the Commission and County staff. We need to make people feel safe. He mentioned the Governor's Task Force and the fact Brian Moore is a member. He is a great advocate of local government. He closed with God Bless America and Chaves County.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.




BOARD OF CHAVES COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



William E. Cavin, Chairman



Jeff Bilberry, Vice Chairman



Dara Dana, Member



T. Calder Ezzell Jr, Member



Robert Corn, Member



Dave Kunko
County Clerk