



**WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2020**

This meeting was held on Google Hangout Meet  
Meeting ID: <https://meet.google.com/joo-mudn-vpm?hs=122>  
or call in to [1-502-382-4610](tel:1-502-382-4610) PIN: 321 403 268#

**PRESENT:** Scott Hege, Chair  
Kathy Schwartz, Vice-Chair  
Steve Kramer, County Commissioner

**STAFF:** Kathy Clark, Executive Assistant  
Tyler Stone, Administrative Officer

**Agenda Item – COVID-19 in Wasco County: A Discussion**

Wasco County Planning Director Angie Brewer stated that OSHA has issued new temporary guidelines for farm workers' housing needs; it dictates the numbers of people allowed per washing station/housing facility. RVs can be used or they can erect emergency stick-built housing. There is no predicting how long the emergency will last but if the need is there we can move forward. RVs would meet the immediate need but some want longer-lasting solutions. She noted that the Scenic Area Act has emergency provisions but we would have to enact emergency provisions for anything outside of that area.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked if our Emergency Declaration already addresses this. Ms. Brewer replied that we would need something more specific to land use. She went on to say that the Department of Land Conservation and Development would not allow us to go around the rules, but we could elect to not fine for certain infractions. The quickest solution would be RVs and then address the long-term needs through the normal process which would insure compliance. There are approximately 6500 in the migrant labor force and they will begin work June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Chair Hege commented that it seems unlikely that they could create permanent structures in that period of time. Ms. Brewer agreed noting that there is a construction labor shortage right now. She reported that she has taken calls from three orchardists inquiring about the possibility of emergency rules to allow them to go forward with stick-built construction now.

Mr. Stone said that OSHA's temporary rules were more around portable facilities;

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2020  
PAGE 2

they may be vague enough to allow for stick-built structures but there is not a specific waiver. Ms. Brewer added that temporary housing needs no permit from Planning. The Scenic Area allows for construction to begin prior to review but the same rules must be followed. The concern here is compliance.

Chair Hege said that he does not see a plan for building; if they do that in the next couple of weeks, we can address it then. He asked Ms. Brewer to give the Board an update at next week's Board Session.

Commissioner Kramer agreed, saying that this is temporary. If the permitting process takes longer than can allow for immediate construction, we need to look at the temporary housing.

Chair Hege welcomed everyone to the Session and outlined his plan for the discussion. He asked everyone to mute their phones and use the chat to ask a question, make a comment or indicate that they wish to speak.

North Central Public Health District (NCPHD) Executive Director Teri Thalhofer said that they have reviewed the Governor's draft planning documents for reopening; it follows the federal plan pretty closely. The Unified Command is thinking about how we can meet the requirements laid out in the draft document.

Public Health Officer Dr. Mimi McDonell said that as a result of COVID-19, we have had 13 cases and 1 death in Wasco County, 1 case in Sherman County and no cases in Gilliam County. We are working to prepare for the arrival of the migrant workforce – the state guidelines are helpful. For draft Phase One guidelines, we are ready to meet the need for testing; we have a 2.3% positive rate in Wasco County which is a low number. Personal protective equipment (PPE) is the area where the need may not yet be met. We are going to be allowing other medical offices and dental office to open which will require more PPE.

Mid-Columbia Medical Center (MCMC) President Dennis Knox stated that they are planning to open up elective procedures by this Friday. MCMC Chief Clinical Officer Don Wenzler agreed that PPE is our most worrisome supply need. We currently have a 30-day, but if the concern is as we open other areas of the community, the needs will go up. We have limited numbers of test kits. Until we come up with a vaccine or have herd-immunity, tests and PPE will be what limits the world in moving forward.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked if there is any kind of formula as to how much PPE we should have as we consider reopening the business sector. Mr. Wenzler replied that he has not seen the numbers in terms of opening the broader community. He said that the hospital is required to maintain at least a 14-day supply and would prefer to not go lower than a 30-day supply.

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2020  
PAGE 3

Vice-Chair Schwartz said that she was on a State call last week; Emergency Management is trying to get out of the business of managing the PPE supply chain. She asked if MCMC has an established supply. Mr. Wenzler replied affirmatively but went on to say that their normal vendor had a whole container ship coming in to the supplier but it was commandeered by the federal government.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked about contact tracing and quarantine readiness. Ms. Thalhofer responded that we have draft guidance from the State. Expectations will be more strenuous than they have been; all contacts will be identified and asked to self-quarantine for 14 days during which time they will be contacted daily. The bulk of work will be in supporting people in isolation, including working on child care and elder care and the logistics of where they will be located during isolation. The Unified Command has just secured isolation space – it was not an easy task. As we open our economy, those spaces may become unavailable. Unified Command is definitely thinking about that circumstance. We have capacity but the guidance is not yet final; this will take time.

Mr. Wenzler said that we hope that all community partners are preparing for a surge that will never happen. MCMC Medical Officer Dr. Serene Perkins commented that our community has done a good job of pulling together as a team with partners. As we reopen, we will need to communicate more frequently. Mr. Wenzler added that this is like an accelerator; we are stepping on the gas a bit but will slow down if needed. Incident Command/Unified Command has been in place since early March; we are well-prepared if we can get the proper supplies.

Maupin Mayor Lynn Ewing asked when we can allow businesses to reopen; how will we know when we are ready? Dr. McDonell replied that the number of cases needs to be trending downward and that appears to be the circumstance. Testing and PPE are key. Business will need guidance and that has been released as of yesterday; we are looking at those and hope to get it pushed out to the community in the next couple of days. The PPE is a difficult problem to solve.

Mr. Knox reported that MCMC is participating with Deschutes Rim Clinic and will be providers through telehealth. He said that he has been in touch with Dennis Beechler to fashion that coverage.

Dr. Perkins said that she understands the desire to reopen. We can still do things with a lot of common sense such as wearing masks, social distancing and not traveling outside of your community; those guidelines would have to be followed 100% of the time.

Chair Hege commented that it seems we have most of the gating criteria met with the exception of PPE. He asked if we know when we might be able to meet that. Ms. Thalhofer replied that even our PPE supply through the State is limited. Oregon is getting less than other states and the issue has become politicized. She reported

that NCPHD has a long-standing relationship with a private contractor and tries to continuously order. She said NCPHD is getting requests from dentist offices and is trying to help them. We also need to make sure that MCMC gets what they need – that is the highest priority. MCMC is a regional hospital; we also have to consider communities across the river. We are not getting any assurances that those supplies will be adequate. She said they are cautiously optimistic and trying to move in a way that will not cause another lockdown.

Mr. Knox noted that the circumstances are always changing. Ms. Thalhofer agreed saying that testing is a big undertaking; fit-testing of masks had to be repeated. We are trying to move forward. For those of us in Unified Command there is an understanding of the struggles in the community. Members of Unified Command are part of the community have friends and neighbors losing jobs and businesses. We want to move this forward and move it safely. She added that they are working with economic development and looking at the situation holistically.

Chair Hege observed that Maupin's economy is dependent on summer income which is happening soon. He asked how they can do that with a balance of safety and fiscal health. Ms. Thalhofer reported that prior to COVID-19, NCPHD had been working with first responders who felt they did not have the resources to serve the influx of summer people. It is different than the migrant worker population which enters the community and goes to camps where you can isolate. With the summer tourism, it is a variety outsiders coming in weekend after weekend.

Chair Hege asked if there is a way Maupin can work with Unified Command directly. Dr. McDonell said they absolutely can. Unified Command wants to work to get people prepared as possible. We need to also look at what economic relief might be available.

Vice-Chair Schwartz said that this ties into what the State is working on in sector openings to develop guidelines so we can know what it looks like. She committed to finding out when the State will be releasing those guidelines for specific sectors. She commented that the Governor's executive orders did not shut down agriculture. The State has the experts working with businesses and health officials to develop those guidelines.

Chair Hege commented that Mosier is not too different as they also have a seasonal economy.

Commissioner Kramer asked if we were to take the criteria we have in draft form, would we meet any or all of those. Dr. McDonell replied that in terms of the gating criteria the case numbers are declining and we are meeting the current testing criteria. It is the ability to reliably secure PPE that is the sticking point. Mr. Knox observed that we currently are meeting the criteria for PPE but have to constantly monitor that.

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2020  
PAGE 5

Chair Hege asked if we can move forward or are there still concerns. Mr. Knox responded that we can open elective procedures but are cautiously moving that forward at 50% capacity. Mr. Wenzler added that they will reassess and open in a larger way as they monitor the situation.

Ms. Thalhofer stated that they want to make sure they can test adequately; contact tracing is not ready; PPE is not ready. She said they are working on plans for health and safety.

Chair Hege asked which of the core preparedness issues is the most difficult. Ms. Thalhofer responded that although she is hopeful, the PPE is the unknown. Once the State issues guidance, getting contact tracing online should take only a couple of weeks. The PPE is the biggest challenge. NCPHD is contacting dental offices and others to gauge the need. If for the private sectors, such as restaurants, we need other than cloth masks, we may need to insert them into the supply chain.

Chair Hege asked how we can know when we have enough; is there a number? Ms. Thalhofer replied that all clinics have reported a burn rate for normal operations and scaled-down operations which gives NCPHD the data to know what is needed. A 14-day supply is the guidance; a 30-day supply is the goal.

Chair Hege asked if we have that 14-day supply. Mr. Wenzler responded that they monitor the supply daily. They match the metrics and will do so as we move forward. That monitoring is necessary so we know when we are getting ahead of the supplies on-hand. The problem is that we do not have a supply chain that we can trust. Mr. Knox stated that although we have more than a 30-day supply right now, that can turn on a dime.

Chair Hege asked if we have PPE for those outside MCMC. He followed up by asking if we will be opening and closing as that bar moves. Dr. McDonell replied that today MCMC has an adequate supply but will be increasing their burn rate and will have to monitor that. In addition, all the other offices will increase their need as they increase clinic visits. Dentists were very generous in donating their supplies when the pandemic broke out and are now without the needed supplies. She said she does not think the ups and downs will be daily, but each step is a step and they will be observing the impact of each one. She observed that it would be very challenging to have to go backwards with all the pain that that causes.

Chair Hege asked if they are able to estimate vulnerability and self-isolation. Dr. McDonell said that we can know the number of the population that is over 60 and/or have morbidity factors; it is around 25% of the population.

Chair Hege noted that there is a lot of uncertainty. He said the question is what will happen next and how will people know. Ms. Thalhofer replied that once we see the final guidance from the State, we can look at where we are and what else we need

to happen to reopen. We have a communication system set up through the Unified Command; NCPHD has access to all commissioners, the hospital, One Community Health and the Hood River health system. Guidance may be county by county or region by region. If it is regional, we will have to consider broader data.

Chair Hege asked what guidance we are waiting for. Ms. Thalsofer said we are waiting for the Governor's final plan. What we have is a draft that was asking for feedback from around the state. That input will be integrated into a final plan. As soon as we receive that final plan, we will draft a response.

Vice-Chair Schwartz asked what guidance was released yesterday. Ms. Thalsofer stated that OSHA approved rules for migrant workers. We will respond to and work with that. Shellie Campbell is the lead for that. We are still waiting for farm workers guidance from Oregon Health Authority.

Mr. Stone stated that Unified Command is not just sitting around waiting. The migrant plan is a great example; we have been working on a plan for our orchardists for 3 or 4 weeks and are ahead of the OSHA schedule. The day before the OSHA guidance was released, we put out guidance to orchardists. In the most recent UC plan, we have tasked people to review other county plans and look for resources for bulk-purchase PPE for all sectors. There is a lot of work going on toward reopening. The wild card is the State plan. He said that his sense is that we will have a lot of the work done and will just have to grab and address little pieces. NCPHD and Emergency Management are daily engaged with the State and that gives us a sense of what we need to plan for so we can be ready to pull the trigger.

Chair Hege noted that other counties have submitted a plan for reopening and asked if we are working on that, noting that those counties may have been a bit premature. Mr. Stone stated that those plans were submitted to the Association of Oregon Counties at their request; the Governor did not ask for those. They are available and helpful for us to look at how others are thinking.

Chair Hege asked if we will be developing a plan. Mr. Stone replied that we will. NCPHD, following direction from the State, will be the lead agency; but there are a lot of non-public health issues and we are working on those. Ms. Thalsofer added that we are ready when the guidance comes.

Chair Hege commented that it seems everyone is on the same page – we want to move forward as quickly as possible as long as we can make it as safe as possible. He said he would encourage direct communication with Unified Command. We will have to be patient and understand that there will be a little more pain to come.

Ms. Thalsofer expressed her appreciation for Vice-Chair Schwartz volunteering to help with the recreation sector. Our area and the coastal counties are in an interesting position of having an influx of outsiders that bring their germs with

WASCO COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL SESSION  
APRIL 29, 2020  
PAGE 7

them.

Chair Hege announced that the Forest Service will be meeting Friday to talk about that sector. State Parks is looking for input – some want to open, but just for local traffic.


Chair Hege thanked everyone and told the public to keep the questions coming. We will get through this and hopefully, with the least amount of pain.

Chair Hege adjourned the session at 10:14 a.m.

Wasco County  
Board of Commissioners



\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott C. Hege, Board Chair



\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen B. Schwartz, Vice-Chair



\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven D. Kramer, County Commissioner