

O P I N I O N

Editorial...

City's role to grow as Sisters recovers

Sisters' city government will have a bigger and bigger role to play as Sisters moves from hunkering down and trying to weather the COVID-19 storm toward navigating the changed landscape the storm has left behind.

The City used its very limited capabilities to respond to the rapidly-unfolding crisis in a timely and judicious manner, taking early precautions for the health and safety of staff and public; discouraging but not aggressively shutting down travel to Sisters; working with suddenly shuttered or interrupted businesses and out-of-work residents to manage utility billing and the like.

Civic leaders and staff have worked hard to make sure that Sisters has a seat at the table, access to resources, and a voice in decisions that will have a profound effect on the community — though Sisters must recognize that we are one very small voice amid a great clamor.

Going forward, the City will need to maintain a fine balance between consistency and flexibility when it comes to enacting or

modifying policies to help residents and businesses recover. The City will have to communicate very clearly and consistently with local residents, visitors and businesses in an environment where information can be confusing, contradictory — and can change quickly.

Effective communication is a two-way street; the City needs to hear from its constituents regarding their circumstances and needs, always recognizing that the City has limited resources and capabilities and is constrained by the requirements of county and state authorities.

Right now, it's easy to get frustrated to the point of fury and despair with government action or inaction that seems confused, out-of-touch and often counterproductive. Here in Sisters, we can make sure that we're *all* pulling in the same positive direction, working in good faith under profoundly trying circumstances to do what we can with what we have.

*Jim Cornelius,
Editor in Chief*

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

To the Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers who provide such an excellent education to our children. As a grandparent raising three kids I have watched for eight years these dedicated professionals going above and beyond expectations to expand these young minds. In so many creative and innovated ways they create an atmosphere where children are eager to go to school and learn.

These days, the schools are closed and we are all learning from a distance. I have heard stories from parents in other districts who say that their children are struggling, that the way lessons are set up is a nightmare. My children have concise lesson plans and a flexible schedule. Teachers want their students to continue to learn but not get too stressed out about it. The well-being of everyone is taken into account.

I moved here when my oldest granddaughter was starting seventh grade. The district we were living in had a seventh through twelfth combined middle school/high school. It was not a place I wanted her to go. I knew the reputation of the Sisters schools and had to get these kids over here for their education. I have never regretted this move. Having been an educator myself for 30 years I realized immediately the dedication these amazing people have toward their students.

As we navigate through these strange times our teachers are a lifeline connecting us to a sense of normalcy. They work harder now providing students an education than they did in the classroom. I know how much my kids miss their teachers and classroom and I know how much the teachers wish they could greet their

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Communication is key as Sisters 'reopens'

By Mayor Chuck Ryan and City Manager Cory Misley

During these challenging times, one thing that cannot be overstressed is communication. In that regard, the City is determined to keep everyone as informed as possible as we progress through this pandemic. You can be assured that we are in sync with many decision-making bodies whose guidance and recommendations are being shared daily and the City is committed to present that data in an organized format every week in cooperation with *The Nugget*.

While public safety has been the first priority, our businesses are clearly struggling during these challenging times and the City is reaching out to many of them in order to better understand their situation firsthand. Again, this communication can only enhance informed decision making through this process. In our next weekly article, we will share some of the key themes from these discussions. But one thing that is clear, the resolve and ingenuity of our small businesses is frankly amazing. Their positive attitude and complete understanding of the severity of the situation is to be commended.

In the meantime, let us attempt to summarize the latest thinking from the Governor's office in regard to the phased re-opening of our economy in Oregon.

The Federal Government is giving authority to each state in regards to setting the parameters for re-opening of our businesses. The Governor has established a three-phase approach to this re-opening. The first phase includes restaurants and bars, most retail, childcare, outdoor recreation, and other personal services (hair/nail salons, etc.).

This phase is targeted for completion sometime in the second half of May but there are prerequisites that

must be met before a county or region can initiate Phase 1. While many of these prerequisites are set at the county level, some are set at a health region (Deschutes County is in Health Region 7 that includes seven other Central and Eastern Oregon counties).

Deschutes County has been working on a "Reopening Framework" they plan to get to the State by the end of this week. As they are available, we will post the latest drafts of these prerequisites in detail on the City's website. For brevity, we listed the seven criteria but will not get into details for this column:

1. Declining Prevalence of COVID-19 (from a statistical standpoint)
2. Minimum Testing Regimen
3. Contact Tracing System
4. Isolation Facilities
5. Finalized Statewide Sector Guidelines
6. Sufficient Healthcare Capacity
7. Sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Supply

Once the above prerequisites have been met, a county will be allowed to initiate re-opening of the businesses that are qualified in Phase 1. The final step will be public safety requirements that businesses (sector by sector) must follow which again will be dictated at the State level. These include social distancing factors, PPE (like masks, gloves, and sanitation) and capacity constraints of the particular business. A final recommendation on public safety requirements is forthcoming from the State and will be published in a future article. Another thing that is clear from our recent discussions with our businesses is that they are more than willing to follow these parameters and keep our community safe.

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.

Sisters Weather Forecast
Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday Partly Cloudy 58/32	Thursday Partly Cloudy 68/39	Friday Sunny 75/44	Saturday Partly Cloudy 79/49	Sunday Mostly Cloudy 76/48	Monday Mostly Cloudy 71/43
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