

City to address reopening steps

Sisters may be able to begin “reopening” by degrees soon, as Deschutes County enters Phase I, according to the State of Oregon’s template.

On May 6, the Deschutes County Board of Commissioners approved and submitted the County’s reopening plan to the Governor. On May 7, the State finalized guidance for specific sectors to reopen if their County has been approved to move into Phase I reopening.

If approved, the County would be able to move into Phase I no earlier than May 15.

After 21 days in Phase I, counties continuing to meet the prerequisites may be able to enter Phase II.

The goal is to further expand gathering size, allow some office work, and begin to allow visitation to congregate care.

Governor Brown stated that Phase III concerts, conventions, festivals, and live audience sports will not resume until a reliable treatment or prevention for COVID-19 is available. It is unknown at this time when this will be. Therefore, their recommendation is that all large gatherings should be canceled or significantly modified through at least September (see related story, page 7).

Further guidance on large gatherings scheduled for later in the fall will be provided this summer.

In materials provided on the City of Sisters website in preparation for the City Council’s Wednesday, May 13 workshop, the City reports that:

“There is a coordinated understanding between local governments and chambers

of commerce/visitor’s centers that now is not the time to be encouraging tourism activity. The focus for now should be on shop-local initiatives and those within Central Oregon. Nonetheless, visitors will come to Central Oregon and Sisters — that is largely outside of our control.”

Going into the workshop, City staff provided a series of staff recommendations for Council consideration:

Staff recommends that City Hall remain closed to the public with a reopening date yet to be determined. When City Hall reopens staff recommends additional safety measures for distancing and sanitation.

Creekside Campground is recommended for opening after Memorial Day, subject to State and County restrictions. Staff has prepared a campground reopening plan for the Council with safety measures included.

The City’s recycling center could reopen on May 18 with additional safety measures in place.

The City of Sisters reports that staff is actively working with a variety of interest groups in its response to COVID-19. This includes proactive outreach and follow-up with:

- Medium, large, and City-wide event applicants to learn what their plans are regarding moving forward or not with their event, and to inquire about how the City can assist if needed.
- Other municipalities and event organizers throughout Deschutes County to learn how they are approaching their safety plans.
- Researching what services Deschutes County Environmental Health can provide small municipalities

who do not have the professional expertise to review and confirm compliance with COVID-19 protocols.

In addition, the City is consistently working to secure products such as portable hand-washing stations, protective face masks, and hand sanitizer. The procurement of those are for the downtown area and public spaces, regardless of public events while providing for and encouraging safety measures.

“These products are in very high demand and require consistent follow up with distributors to eventually secure a quantity for measured use over an extended period of time,” the City reports. “The goal being by the time the City is permitted to open and return to some level of activity we will have enough product on-hand to assist the community and staff.”

The City is also considering allowing businesses to use public right-of-way for seating to comply with distancing guidelines, and offering business license fee relief.

All of these topics will be discussed at the Wednesday, May 13, workshop at 5 p.m. (see agenda, page 5). To access meeting information, visit <https://www.ci.sisters.or.us>.

SISTERS City Situation Report

By Cory Misley
City Manager

The State of Oregon has received a Deschutes County plan for reopening of the regional economy and entering Phase One. As we head towards that date, perhaps as soon as Friday, May 15, pending State approval, the City of Sisters is brainstorming ways to continue to support our business community through these tough times.

City Council members made phone calls to dozens of retail, restaurant, and personal service businesses to hear how they were holding up and gather information on how the City could help. The resolve and resiliency of our local businesses is inspiring. We know reopening is critical to keeping businesses alive, people employed, and the vibrancy of Sisters. The City cares about all of our local businesses.

It will truly be a test of our balance to maintain public health and prosperity for the foreseeable future. The key ways of preventing COVID-19 are simple – yet

easier said than done. Some of the guidelines from the State will be challenging for businesses to implement and cut into revenues.

The City is identifying and exploring ways that we can support local businesses achieve this balance. We must do that for residents and visitors alike. Summer is right around the corner and we hope to have several options rolled out come June. Many of these options will be an experiment as we are in uncharted waters. If you have ideas, please contact us and share so we can explore if they are feasible and can be implemented.

Many updates and topics related to COVID-19 are scheduled for Council discussion on the May 13 meeting. The agenda and packet information can be found at www.ci.sisters.or.us under “Upcoming Events.”

As always, we encourage you to review the materials, participate in the meetings, and share your comments.

Thank you for your continued patience and perseverance through these trying times.

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