

**Minutes of Special Assembly Meeting  
Held on August 4, 2020**

Mayor Stephen Prysunka called the Special Assembly meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., August 4, 2020, held by Zoom Teleconference.

PRESENT: PRYSUNKA, GILBERT, POWELL, MORRISON, HOWE

ABSENT: DECKER

Borough Manager Von Bargaen and Deputy Borough Clerk Mollen were also in attendance.

**PERSONS TO BE HEARD:**

**Michael Lockabey** – Does not support a public mask mandate. Supports common sense but does not think that the Assembly should mandate the beliefs on the community. Encouraged other people listening to speak up as well. Asked the Assembly to revisit the decision to allow written comment to be read into the record.

Mayor Prysunka and Manager Von Bargaen reviewed that written comments are welcome to be sent in and will be forwarded to the Assembly Members, just not read as part of the meeting.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST** – None.

**ITEM(s) OF BUSINESS:**

**5a Discussion Item: Potential Local Face Covering Mandate**

Von Bargaen stated that Captain Sprehe will have information for the Assembly and will be looking for direction at the end for action to be taken at the next meeting.

Sprehe recapped the course of the pandemic for Wrangell and the events that happened along the way. Sprehe also reviewed the ways that we can contain the spread of the disease through masks, washing hands, hand sanitizer, staying home when sick, etc. She stated that is was a good time to bring this idea forward.

Prysunka turned it to Von Bargaen to guide the discussion and she opened it to questions from the Assembly.

Gilbert asked about DHSS providing Juneau with cloth face masks and wanted to know if we have access to that supply. Sprehe stated that we do have those and were given 2,000 recently. We have access to those at the Fire Department and City Hall. Gilbert also asked what level of risk we are out in Southeast Alaska. Jamie Roberts, EOC, was on and stated that she would get back on that because the data hub had just been revised today.

Gilbert asked how effective the contact tracing is in town. Roberts stated that Public Health is overwhelmed, and they are asking positive individuals to contact their own contacts immediately to prevent spreads more quickly. Von Bargaen added that there is no local

participation in contact tracing.

Prysunka asked Sprehe to discuss the contact tracing efforts. Sprehe stated that as the numbers increased, Public Health realized their limitations and they have brought on the National Guard medical members, University of Alaska nursing students, school health nurses and volunteers to train as well to assist in this.

Morrison asked about the effectiveness of mask mandated in other communities. Sprehe stated that there are six communities that have mandated masks in indoor places and three that are in outdoor places as well. Cordova, Dillingham, and Seward are like-sized communities with mandates for indoor places. Morrison asked how that is being enforced, but no information was available.

Powell mentioned that he heard Petersburg passed a mandate and rescinded it. Sprehe stated that they did have one on April 23<sup>rd</sup> and did not renew it due to divisiveness. Von Bargaen stated that her sister in Valdez commented on the enforcement and that although fines are an option, the police are not enforcing those. She also stated that if they have a medical reason not to wear a mask, they cannot ask about that.

Prysunka asked why this is a recommendation now and Sprehe stated that it is because of the community spread and symptomatic local cases now.

Howe asked the scope and the duration of a proposed mandate. Prysunka stated that this discussion was to understand where everyone is, and the next step would be to bring forward an ordinance to the Assembly for a full vote at the next meeting. He would recommend a sunset date or period at that time as well.

Gilbert stated that community members have mentioned that they have walked into businesses that are not using masks and they left. She asked if the businesses have reached out to the EOC for assistance. Sprehe stated that they have not reached out to her, but there are other members as well that may have been asked. Sprehe stated that they have asked for masks, but not support.

Gilbert stated that a community member asked if the City has a policy for employees for masks. Von Bargaen stated that a city-wide employee mask policy is in effect starting today and that customer-facing locations have had a mask policy since May 6<sup>th</sup> when the buildings opened.

Morrison stated that she wears a mask when she goes out but felt that it is up to each business to enforce if they want to have a policy for their business. She felt that it was the Assembly's job to encourage, not mandate.

Howe asked if there were any legal challenges to this yet. Von Bargaen stated that the Governor has expressed that each community needs to address this on their own and the Attorney General supported this. As a Home-Rule Borough, we have the authority to make a law regarding this.

Powell stated that he agreed with Morrison but thinks that people do not understand what

will happen if there are further breaks-outs. Specifically, the state could shut down businesses again and he would like to avoid that. He recommends the Mayor make a Proclamation encouraging this. He thinks that the enforcement will be difficult.

Sprehe mentioned that Sitka had a mandate that failed 3-4 and they brought it back as a Proclamation to try to keep businesses open.

Gilbert stated that she has had a lot of conversations with people that want the mandate but does not think that is the way to go. Also noted that Wrangell is in a unique spot because cases may need to be medevacked. Would like to see a Medivac Preparedness Checklist from the EOC so that people know what is involved in medevacking patients. She also suggested "Mask Mornings" where people who want a mask while being out could do so during a specific time frame. She also noted that kids will be expected to wear masks when school starts back soon.

Morrison agreed with Gilbert and stated that we cannot expect children to do what we will not do, and again, recommended a proclamation.

Prysunka stated that medical employees wear masks all day and we can wear a mask for a short period of time while shopping. He also noted that Anchorage is in the red currently and we need to do all we can to help the health care system.

Sprehe stated that they can put together a medivac checklist and that everyone should know that if you are medevacked out you are not a burden on another community and taking a bed away from them. She also noted that Wrangell is currently classified as intermediate.

Von Bargaen also noted the costs that can be associated with a medivac to the patient and community.

Gilbert asked if medivac with transport a medical advocate. Sprehe stated that you cannot and cannot have someone in the hospital unless you are a child.

Gilbert also asked about the doubling rate and Jamie Roberts stated that the information was not available yet with the redesigned dashboard.

Howe asked about enforcement.

Prysunka stated that he was in favor of the Assembly making a statement and that it would be a step forward for the Assembly. He was not in favor of a fine, though. Sprehe stated that the fines that she was aware of are in Juneau \$25, Dillingham \$100-\$1000 (progressive) and businesses can ask you to leave, State-wide Alaska Airlines has a no service policy and you can end up on the "No-Fly" List.

Gilbert stated that calling it a "Directive" instead of a Proclamation might mean more. Von Bargaen stated that she has never seen a Directive, but Sitka's is called a Resolution. It is very well-written and includes how masks should be worn, no fines, and no shaming people that do not wear masks.

Prysunka stated that he was leery of the travel testing, but it has been effective as we have 4 cases from the airport testing. He wants to support the work of the EOC and is in favor of this as a way to do that.

Gilbert stated that the EOC was working well with the school to reopen safely.

Morrison asked for the next step. Prysunka asked to give direction to the City Manager to draft a Resolution and bring it before the Assembly at the next meeting on August 11<sup>th</sup>.

Gilbert stated that she would like a Public Hearing for this Resolution, even though we do not normally do a Public Hearing for Resolutions.

Von Bargaen stated that in lieu of a Public Hearing, the Mayor can just open the floor at that item. After discussion, the Public Hearing was decided on.

Powell asked for Sitka's Resolution to be sent out for review. Von Bargaen will send it out.

Sprehe discussed isolation and quarantine and the difference between the two. People in isolation have been tested positive and should stay home except for emergency care. Positive cases are asked to isolate for 10 days and until fever-free for 24 hours as well as a reduction of symptoms. Quarantine is for close contacts who have potentially been exposed. They should stay home for 14 days from the last contact with the person and should watch for any symptoms. Testing is NOT a substitute for quarantine.


Howe asked Sprehe about testing and if it shows if you had it previously or only currently. Sprehe stated that epidemiology has determined that the test can pick up "litter" from a previous infection, but more information would be needed from epidemiology.

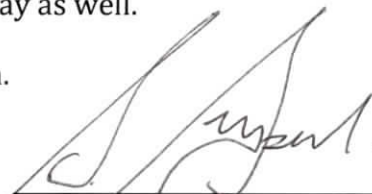
Von Bargaen stated that Clerk Lane mentioned that Public Hearings require notice that we cannot meet before next week. It was decided to open the floor before that item and publish this as well.

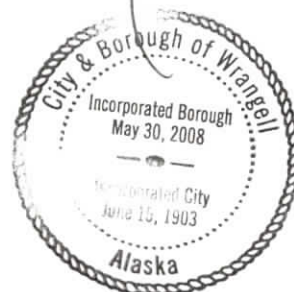
Sprehe noted that people can get masks through her by calling the Fire Hall. The Library also has adult masks and children's masks to give away as well.

Special Assembly meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

  
Kim Lane, MMC, Borough Clerk

  
Stephen Prysunka, Mayor



**REQUEST FOR SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MEETING**

I, (We), Lisa Von Bargaen, DO HEREBY REQUEST THAT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE WRANGELL BOROUGH ASSEMBLY BE CALLED BY THE BOROUGH CLERK, ACCORDING TO WRANGELL MUNICIPAL CODE, SECTION 3.04.090, FOR CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING SUBJECT MATTER(S):

- a. Discussion Item: Potential Local Face Covering Mandate

SPECIAL MEETING WAS REQUESTED BY **Lisa Von Bargaen** (Two Assembly Members, Mayor, or Borough Manager to Sign)

  
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Signature/ Lisa Von Bargaen, Manager


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Signature (If Assembly Member)

Signed July 29, 2020

(Sec. 3.04.090: Special meetings shall be called by the Borough Clerk on the written request of the MAYOR, BOROUGH MANAGER, or of any TWO MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY. At least forty-eight (48) hours written notice shall be given designating the time and purpose of a special meeting.)

Received/Date: July 29, 2020

Borough Clerk: 

Date assigned: August 04, 2020

Time assigned: 6:00 p.m.

Notice out: July 29, 2020 @ 12:00p.m.