

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
GILPIN COUNTY, COLORADO

October 26, 2020

A special meeting of the Board of County Commissioners of Gilpin County was held on October 26, 2020, in an online format; no physical meeting was held. Chair Gail Watson called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. In attendance were Chair Watson, Commissioner Linda Isenhart, Commissioner Ron Engels, County Manager Abel Montoya, County Attorney Bradford Benning, and Deputy Clerk to the Board Sharon Cate.

**Agenda Review.** Commissioner Isenhart added two topics for discussion: how to disseminate official information about short-term rental business regulations to owners and operators; and an update on GCART's animal evacuees at the Exhibit Building.

**Disaster Declaration—Amended Fourth Continuation.** Commissioner Watson said the Board would consider the Amended Fourth Continuation of the County's Disaster Declaration in relation to COVID-19 and the County's emergency response resources being stretched thin in assisting neighboring counties with the Lefthand Canyon, Calwood and East Troublesome fires.

Emergency Manager Nathan Whittington thanked the Board for working alongside staff in accepting evacuees from Boulder County's Lefthand Canyon and East Troublesome fires, and for helping care for animals at the Exhibit Building. He and County Attorney Benning worked together to update Gilpin County's Disaster Declaration, Amended Fourth Continuation, to support the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and to facilitate work with the State to bring in more volunteers and other assistance. Emergency Manager Whittington stated that the evacuation activities quickly escalated above the one or two staff in the EOC, to a mass evacuation managed by the Red Cross. People were sheltered at the Isle and Ameristar casinos, which were able to provide rooms and meals in the rooms for families. The Gilpin County EOC is helping to keep all operations stabilized.

In response to a question from Commissioner Isenhart, County Manager Montoya stated that three of the four heaters in the Exhibit Building are operating again and providing warm shelter in the current minus 16-degree weather. Commissioner Watson said she was glad to see some kids helping at the Exhibit Building and learning to engage. Commissioner Engels said he was very impressed with how organized the operation to accept evacuees was; volunteers with the Gilpin County Animal Response Team (GCART) who were working at the Exhibit Building knew what they were doing, how to do it, and there was very little stress.

Commissioner Isenhart said the Disaster Declaration, Amended Fourth Continuation, document shows how our reality has changed this year; last year we could not have imagined it. She thanked all those who have been involved. Commissioner Isenhart moved to approve the Disaster Declaration, Amended Fourth Continuation, for Gilpin County. Commissioner Engels seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 3 to 0.

Commissioner Watson thanked Jenny Josselyn for coordinating the Food Bank activities and reminded everyone to remain vigilant about health safety measures. Coordinator Josselyn said it is well-stocked for now, and added that staples are always needed. Commissioner Watson said communications on the food bank need to be standardized and posted on the County's website and Facebook page. County Manager Montoya said he is working with staff on this task.

**Communications to Short Term Rental Business Owners.** County Manager Montoya informed the Board that County Planner Tami Archer continues her work on a growing list of short-term rental (STR) owners, and she has joined this group's Facebook page to share Gilpin County information with them. He said the new STR regulations become effective in January 2021 and communication efforts are off to a good start.

**GCART Update.** Commissioner Isenhart said she had been worried about the animals housed at the Exhibit Building during the current extremely cold temperatures, and wanted to make sure the animals have heat. She thanked all of the volunteers who worked to care for them.

**COVID-19 Update.**

Public Health Coordinator Bonnie Albrecht:

- Gilpin County's confirmed case count is 28; she is working on mitigation strategies.

Emergency Manager Nathan Whittington:

- Fires statewide: the recent snowstorm helped the fires to lay down somewhat, but close monitoring will continue. A fire that jumps the tree line is unprecedented.
  - During the recent extremely cold temperatures, firefighting is particularly difficult, because the water in the pump trucks freezes, which fire crews are trying to address. As to Facebook communications, one of the EOC's posts reached 46,000 or more people.
  - Currently evacuees of the fires are housed in 109 rooms at two casinos; the total number of people should be available later today.
  - One hotel in Loveland and two or three in Boulder are also accepting evacuees.

- The Red Cross is excited about the evacuation process these past few days and intends to return after the emergency subsides to build on the current lessons learned. There has been a surge in Red Cross volunteers.

County Attorney Benning will draft a letter to Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Governor requesting that Golden Gate Canyon State Park be closed during the high fire danger.

**Public / Press Comment.** Marc Gates, 12655 W. Bayaud, Lakewood, Colorado, asked if the casino table games might be closing. Commissioner Watson said it was not the Board's plan at this time, but if the number of COVID-19 cases continues to rise, that could be the case. Public Health Coordinator Bonnie Albrecht said the case count is rising and officials might have to take steps to address it. Mr. Gates asked if alcohol service in casinos was still allowed until 2:00 a.m. Commissioner Watson said it was and that the County is monitoring the impact through local police agencies to try to determine the number of people that might be coming to Gilpin County casinos for this service.

**Adjourn Meeting.** There being no further business to come before the Board, they adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Signed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of November 2020.