
MEMORANDUM TO COUNCIL

To: Mayor and City Council Members
From: Erin Reinders, City Manager
Date: January 8, 2021
Re: Resolution 2021-01: Continuing measures to protect public health

SUMMARY: Council has been considering resolutions instituting local mitigation strategies to protect the public health. Focus remains on what we can do to protect the health of our community and not overwhelm our health care system. By doing so, we also protect our local economy. We have demonstrated that mitigation strategies work, and it is important that we remain diligent in our efforts.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION: On March 18, 2020, the Unalaska City Council passed Resolution 2020-16, declaring a local emergency to remain in effect for so long as the declaration of a Public Health Disaster in the State of Alaska Remains in effect.

Council approved Resolution 2020-17 on March 24, 2020. The focus of Resolution 2020-17 was on hunkering down, traveler quarantine and the closure of non-essential business. The resolution expired April 15.

Council approved Resolution 2020-19 on April 14, extending and clarifying the orders outlined in Resolution 2020-17, and instituted additional measures protecting the public health. The resolution expired April 29, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-25 on April 28, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-19. This resolution expired May 13, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-34 on May 12, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-25 and replacing the “Hunker Down” section with a “Social Distancing” section. This resolution expired May 27, 2020. Also on May 12, Council discussed the topic of Cruise Ships and the Alaska Marine Highway System passengers.

Council approved Resolution 2020-36 on May 26, extending and clarifying the orders in Resolution 2020-34 and specifically addressing the Alaska Marine Highway System. This resolution expired June 10, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-38 on June 9, extending and clarifying the orders in Resolution 2020-36 and removed the reference to the Alaska Marine Highway System. This resolution expired June 24, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-41 on June 23, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-38 and allowing for individuals in traveler self-quarantine to go outside or in their personal vehicles and vessels with certain limitations. This resolution expired July 15, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-45 on July 14, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-41 and clarified that time at sea counted toward the 14 day traveler self-quarantine time period. This resolution expired July 29, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-49 on July 28, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-45, and removed a number of the “whereas” background statements to focus on the mitigation strategies and reduce the length of the document. This resolution expired August 12, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-51 on August 11, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-49. This resolution expired August 26, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-54 on August 25, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-51. This resolution expired September 9, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-58 on September 8, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-54. This resolution expired September 23, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-63 on September 22, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-58. This resolution expired October 14, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-66 on October 13, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-63. This resolution expired October 28, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-70 on October 27, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-66. This resolution expired November 11, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-71 on November 10, 2020 extending the local declaration of the public health emergency through June 30, 2021. On that same date, Council approved Resolution 2020-72, extending the orders in Resolution 2020-70 and revising it to provide additional clarity if there is a change the State’s declaration of emergency. This resolution expired November 25, 2020.

Council approved Resolution 2020-73 on November 24, 2020, extending and further clarifying the orders in Resolution 2020-72. This resolution was set to expire on December 9 so that Council could reconsider the action at the December 8 Council Meeting.

In response to the change in the local risk level, Council approved Resolution 2020-74 at a Special meeting on December 1, 2020 extending the orders in Resolution 2020-73 and adding sections addressing a hunker down order, limits to public gatherings, and temporarily closing in person service at bars and restaurants.

Council approved Resolution 2020-77 on December 15, 2020 extending the orders in Resolution 2020-73 and revising it to provide additional clarity if there is a change the State’s declaration of emergency. This resolution was set to expire on January 13, 2021. Council decided it would call a Special Meeting to reconsider the restrictions if the local risk level was changed before then. The allowance for time spent at sea to count toward the local traveler self-quarantine was removed.

In response to the change in the local risk level, Council approved Resolution 2020-79 at a Special meeting on December 30, 2020. This resolution removed the hunker down order and limits to public gatherings, allowed for in person service at bars and restaurants to open to 50% capacity,

and added back in the allotment for time at sea to count toward the local traveler self-quarantine. Additional clarification was also included for critical infrastructure industries in the traveler quarantine section.

BACKGROUND: The nation, state and our city are in a state of emergency and in the midst of a public health crisis. On November 6, the Governor announced a new 30-day Public Health Disaster Emergency, effective November 16 and extending to December 15, 2020. The Governor then issued a new emergency declaration effective until January 15, 2021. On November 10, the City Council declared a local state of emergency through June 30, 2021, and has continued passing resolutions addressing local public health protective measures for the community.

Together, Unalaska has been able to keep multiple cases or outbreaks limited and isolated since the beginning of this pandemic. In December, Unalaska was able to stop community transmission of the virus. We have demonstrated that mitigation strategies work. No single tool is enough. Hand washing, face coverings, getting the flu shot, keeping social circles small, and social distancing measures are effective strategies and things we can all do to help. These strategies are further complimented by other tools such as testing and contact tracing. The mitigation strategies outlined in local resolutions (face coverings, quarantine, and safety protocols) are other tools aimed to help us keep our community and economy healthy. As exposure to this virus increases locally, additional mitigation strategies (hunkering down, limits to gathering sizes, and closure to in person service at bars and restaurants) are also warranted and effective. All of these are further strengthened by statewide Health Orders and the local protective measures instituted by other municipalities throughout the state.

We remain optimistic about the approval and distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. The vaccine is a game changing tool in our efforts to slow the spread of the virus, and keep our schools and businesses open. The vaccine rollout will take time, however, and it is important that we remain vigilant in practicing other mitigation strategies and safety measures.

On January 7, 2021 the local Risk Level was increased to High from Medium due to additional newly community acquired COVID-19 cases that could no longer be defined as isolated cases.

DISCUSSION: Resolution 2021-01 is set expire January 27, 2021 and will be revisited at the Council Meeting on January 26, 2021. This date coincided with a regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

City Council could call a special meeting to reconsider protective measures loosening restrictions in response to a reduction in the local risk level prior to that point. Since the pandemic began this has been addressed with a two-step process that includes the risk level and the community wide protective measures. Risk level gets determined by the Unified Command based on cases and related information. The community wide protective measures are approved through a resolution Council. Ultimately, the decisions on what is contained in the resolutions and when those details change are policy decisions made by Council.

The following protective measures from previous Resolution 2020-79 remain in Resolution 2021-01, with the revisions noted:

- **Face Coverings** - Customers and visitors of businesses and organizations must wear a covering over their nose and mouth. Additionally, employees or volunteers of businesses and organizations to wear a face covering when interacting with customers or visitors. This section has not been changed.

- **14 Day Traveler Self Quarantine** - Individuals traveling into the City by vessel or airplane must self-quarantine, with limited exceptions. This section has not been changed.

Though still a safeguard measure, given what we now know about large vessel transmission the exception for time spent at sea to count toward the 14 day traveler quarantine may not be as effective as we once thought. However, Council did amend resolution 2020-79 to revert back language similar from previous resolutions allowing for time spent at sea to count toward the 14 day quarantine. This resolution includes this amendment.

As a reminder, the 14-day traveler self-quarantine remains the gold standard and the CDC's recommendation. Local health care professionals have reviewed the latest CDC options related to quarantine periods for those that come in close contact with individuals who test positive. These options include a 10-day quarantine with no test and a 7-day quarantine with test approach, in combination with monitoring for symptoms for the remainder the 14-day time period. With a 10-12% post quarantine infection rate predicted with the two CDC options, local health care professionals feel that a 10-day traveler self-quarantine with a test approach would be a step down from our current 14-day no test, but one that provides more protection than the two CDC options.

- **Essential Services/Critical Infrastructure Plan Submittal** - Business that are required to submit plans to the State, must submit those to the City. This section has not been changed.
- **Protective Protocols** - All business open to the public must post their basic measures to protect the public health on their doors. The 50% occupancy limit at bars and restaurants that Council added at the last meeting has been removed from this resolution because the resolution proposes the temporary closure to in-person service at bars and restaurants. This wording was going to read: "Bars and restaurants are to restrict clientele to fifty percent (50%) of building occupancy, and provide six feet of separation between customer tables." Other than this deletion, this section has not been changed.

The following additional protective measures are also included in Resolution 2021-01, and are consistent with what was in previous resolutions when the local risk level was at High.

- **Hunker Down** - Everyone in the City is to stay at home as much as possible.
- **Public Gathering Limitations** – When gathering in person is necessary, individuals are to wear face coverings and maintain distance between household groups. The gathering size for meeting and events is limited to 10. The limitation is based on research and consultation with local public health officials.

While this section may seem to conflict with the Hunker Down section, it is designed to allow for businesses and organizations to continue operating. Alternately, Council could decide to close all non-essential businesses. However, research indicates that limited gatherings and temporarily closing in-person services at bars and restaurants is a sound and effective approach to mitigating transmission of the virus with less negative impacts to local businesses and community well-being.

- **Temporary Closure to In-Person Services at Bars and Restaurants** - Establishments serving food and beverages are to be closed to in-person service. Delivery and take out options are encouraged.

Again, research indicates that limited gatherings and temporarily closing in-person services at bars and restaurants is a sound and effective approach to mitigating transmission of the virus with less negative impacts to local businesses and community well-being than fully closing down all non-essential businesses.

ALTERNATIVES: Council may choose to approve, amend or disapprove this resolution. Ultimately, the decisions on what is contained in the resolutions addressing community wide protective measures – regardless of risk level – are policy decisions made by Council.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Unknown at this time.

LEGAL: This resolution, like all the other resolutions protecting public health that Council has considered during this pandemic, was drafted in close collaboration with Sam Severin, one of our City Attorneys.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: With heavy consideration of our local health care professionals, the City Manager recommends approval.

PROPOSED MOTION: I move to adopt Resolution 2021-01.