



STOREY COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE

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Marshall McBride, Chair
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April 27, 2020

Honorable Governor Steve Sisolak
Grant Sawyer State Office Building
555 East Washington Ave., Suite 5100
Las Vegas, Nevada 89101

Re: Plan for Limited and Restricted Reopening of Virginia City Commercial Business

Governor Sisolak:

I appreciate your leadership and prompt response to the COVID-19 emergency. Your directives to protect our health and safety are highly appreciated. This letter, with respect, outlines a developing plan by Storey County to reopen business in Virginia City in a safe, phased, and restrictive manner that conforms to COVID-19 guidelines of the CDC and your office. I request you to consider the merits of the draft plan in your decisions about reopening the business community across rural areas of the state. Please note that this draft plan has not yet been approved by the Storey County Commissioners.

This letter is not intended to argue for a return to normalcy or for full economic recovery anytime soon. Rather, I request you to consider expediting partial reopening – even under stringent conditions – of non-essential businesses so that they may safely generate enough revenue to survive this emergency.

Storey County and its agency partners are developing a phased reopening plan for Virginia City business under a highly restrictive framework. The plan will include the following.

- **Phased Opening** – There should be similar treatment between grocery and hardware stores, and all other retail establishments. The plan will consider how “non-essential” retail establishments like giftshops in Virginia City may open under similar restrictions already in place for essential retail establishments.
- **Restaurants** – Food and beverage establishments will continue to provide take-out and curbside service. On-site consumption may be considered in outdoor areas or indoors at half or less capacity with distancing.
- **High-Risk Businesses** – Reopening certain businesses identified in Directive 003 as especially high-risk for COVID-19 may be considered in the latter stages of recovery, and under protective measures exceeding those of other businesses.
- **Hygiene** – Prior to Directive 003, Storey County installed handwashing and hand sanitizing stations throughout Virginia City’s commercial district and in all government facilities. These stations remain in-place today and will continue to be maintained for use by the public throughout the COVID-19 season. The county also maintains public restrooms in the commercial district which are sanitized twice per day. Adding portable restrooms in the commercial core in order to reduce loads on existing facilities is being considered.
- **Education** – Public outreach regarding COVID-19 cases and Quad-County EOC efforts will continue through social media, web services, virtual town halls, and other methods.
- **Compliance** – Enforcement of occupancy restrictions, social distancing, enhanced hygiene, use of face masks and PPE, and other best practices will persist ranging from friendly visits to license suspensions and other penalties per local code.
- **Essential Businesses** – Essential businesses will continue to operate under existing COVID-19 protective guidelines. These businesses will be monitored to ensure that they are operating safely.

A comprehensive plan will be completed shortly, and a copy will be immediately furnished to your office for consideration or for follow-up discussion. The draft plan is in response to the business community affected by ongoing economic constraints that were set to expire mid-April and for which there is currently no known end.

Virginia City, like many rural Nevada communities, is remote and is composed exclusively of small businesses. As demonstrated in the enclosed survey of local businesses, SBA loans and grants, the Payroll Protection Program, unemployment insurance, and other federal and state safety-net programs are exhausted, overwhelmed, or are otherwise inaccessible.

Several businesses in Virginia City (roughly five) have been able to partially operate within Directive 003 guidelines. Those business are reportedly turning little to no profit; however, the limited income they generate may offset enough fixed costs – mortgages, utilities, insurance, etc. – to endure the emergency. Many of these businesses double as the sole residences of their proprietors and families, as they did a century ago. Loss of business for these families also means the loss of their home.

Storey County is unified with the Quad-County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), including Carson City, Lyon, Douglas, and Storey counties, and the Carson City Health District. Storey County and the EOC are monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 situation and are communicating with the public daily. COVID-19 testing centers will be operational next week, and your office will be furnished results quickly.

Storey County and Virginia City, like many rural communities in Nevada, are grateful to have zero cases of COVID-19. Sparse population, conformance with preventative measures, and effective regional emergency management efforts are likely contributing factors.

Prior to Directive 003, Storey County had already canceled special events, installed outdoor hand-washing stations in commercial areas, encouraged social distancing, imposed occupancy limitations, initiated protective measures and acquisition of PPE, and launched a countywide education and outreach campaign about COVID-19. The draft plan outline above, subject to board approval, illustrates the county's draft plan to help business recover while protecting the health and safety of our community.

Thank you for taking your time to review this letter and for considering expedited reopening of certain businesses when proper protective plans and restrictions are implemented and effectively managed.

I appreciate your time reviewing this letter and welcome an opportunity to address any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,



Marshall McBride, Chairman
Storey County Commission

Enc: Virginia City COVID-19 Business Community Survey

Cc.: Rob Hooper, Northern Nevada Development Authority (NNDA), CEO
Mike Kazmierski, Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada (EDAWN), President and CEO
Austin Osborne, Storey County Manager
Joe Curtis, Storey County Emergency Management Director
Gerald Antinoro, Storey County Sheriff
Arika Perry, Virginia City Tourism Commission Chair
Deny Dotson, Virginia City Tourism Commission Director