



DATE: August 14, 2020
TO: Mayor and Council
FROM: Ryan Mahoney, Town Manager
RE: Weekly Update
CC: Department Heads

Independence Pass was closed earlier this week due to the closure of Interstate 70 related to the Grizzly Creek Fire. It will remain closed until Interstate 70 reopens. CDOT's [Travel Alerts](#) are a good resource for updated road conditions. Some traffic is being permitted to use the Pass, including outfitters who depend on the Pass to reach the Arkansas Valley and residents of Lake County that can prove residency. Additionally, it has reopened to bicycles.

Staff was out and about again last week talking to businesses and passing out some Basalt Bucks to finish out this program. We had good feedback from the businesses, and all were appreciative of the Town's efforts to support local businesses.

The Grizzly Creek Fire continues to burn and is expected to do so for some time. The Great Basin Type 1 Team, Incident Commander Marty Adell assumed command of the fire at 6 a.m. on August 13th. So far, 14,000 acres have burned. Most of the efforts to contain the fire are being done through aerial support. The terrain and unpredictability of the fire is keeping the firefighters away from the front lines. It is too dangerous for them currently. The ground crews are spending their time in advance of the fire trying to protect structures and critical infrastructure. The Grizzly Creek Fire [Facebook](#) page and [InciWeb](#) are good resources for public information.

COVID-19 disease spread has dropped since last week and the [Risk Meter](#) is now within the "cautious" stage for Eagle County. The good news is that there appears to be a meaningful decline in cases over the last week. The focus is to keep bringing the Risk Meter down which requires individuals to take personal responsibility. The [Five Commitments to Containment](#) are being reinforced as our best way to accomplish this goal. The focus is now working with the schools to begin planning for a reopening.

Pitkin County is also experiencing a decreasing trend in cases according to their [COVID – 19 Stats](#) page but they are still cautious in their outlook. There were five new cases reported on August 4th with a two-week average of one new case per day.

In both counties, there continues to be challenges with contact tracing and the "box it in" strategy. This is in part due to the reluctance of some to share information or not knowing the source of infection. The latter being an indicator of community spread. Additionally, testing turnaround times remain a challenge. Some reports indicate that it takes up to ten days to get test results.

I participated on a panel this week with the private donors who generously contributed money to an Aspen Community Foundation fund to support Basalt restaurants. We reviewed 14 applications and all received money through the ACF fund. The original plan was to provide ten restaurants with \$8,000, but the donors very generously added more money so that the remaining four restaurants would also receive a donation. In the end, ten restaurants received \$8,000 and four restaurants received \$4,000. Those checks will be going out to those owners very soon. Thanks to the donors for their generosity.

The buskers continue to perform each Wednesday evening through the 19th of August. Here is a great photo taken by Rachel Shechtman during this week's activities:



Police

We assisted Food Bank of the Rockies and Aspen Skiing Company personnel at the Basalt food distribution. Thursday was the last food distribution at our middle school site. Starting next week, food distribution will take place at Crown Mountain Park on Thursday afternoons. Food distribution is expected to last through October. Food Bank of the Rockies and Aspen Skiing Company employees have done an outstanding job assisting our community members over the past few months.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife notified us the Lake Christine Range would temporarily close on Tuesday due to high fire danger. The gate to the range has been locked. Starting Friday morning, at 12:01 a.m., Stage 2 Fire Restrictions were implemented in Pitkin and Eagle Counties along with all Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands. We have posted Stage 2 Fire Restriction information on our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BasaltPolice/>

We have been helping the Garfield County Sheriff's Office during the Grizzly Creek Fire. We have helped with evacuations, traffic control and property protection in evacuated areas. We will continue to help as needed.

Public Works

This week we have been busy with budget planning. Public Works does not have the biggest overall budget but the most divisions to budget for. Public Works consists of 10 discrete service areas with a total of 10 staff members. It is a challenge to do an individual budget for each, but the staff has been with the Town long enough we have it figured out. Occasionally we have a surprise expenses, like a water main break, so we try to budget for the unknowns. The department heads, Christy and Ryan review the budget and set up a five-year Capital improvement Plan (CIP) to plan finances going forward.

Public Works has been assisting the Eagle County emergency staff with the deployment and programming of the variable message boards. The big concern in our area is to try and keep oversize vehicles off the Frying Pan Road. Chief Knott said the Google mapping that people use is indicating that the unpaved passes are an option when they are not.

In our regular maintenance cycle Public Works is painting curbs, trimming trees and picking up a large amount of trash seven days a week. People are really utilizing the parks to enjoy their take-out meals.

Planning

BACH – The Commission discussed local housing needs at their meeting this Thursday. Pitkin County is no longer providing rental assistance, and both Eagle and Pitkin Counties are referring rental assistance inquiries to Catholic Charities. A representative from the Roaring Fork Apartments informed that rental assistance funds is not being released by Catholic Charities for those who have formerly received assistance through other sources. BACH directed Staff to focus time on understanding the current availability of housing assistance through state and federal programs. BACH also prepared for a discussion with Council on August 25th.

Green Team – The Green Team presented 2021 workplan proposals and preliminary budget request to Council at Tuesday's meeting, and received direction from Council regarding projects of interest. The Council also approved the resolution supporting CC4CA's 2020-2021 policy statement.

POST – The August 12th POST meeting opened with Gail Schwartz, presenting Habitat for Humanity's request for funding to assist the installation of the playground and play structures at Basalt Vista. The Committee supported the funding request after some discussion and clarifications. The preferred placement of the all-purpose court at the Stott's Mill project was approved. Brian Passenti, Recreation Director, updated POST on plans for the skateboard park and relayed how he gathered direct input on the project from skate park users. Two features were chosen by users for installation in the park's update. Timing of the updates were discussed in conjunction with concrete work being done for ADA improvements downtown and whether it made sense to make improvements right before winter. POST also heard an update from Jacob Baker from the Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers regarding the recent

site visit with the Town Staff, Challenge Aspen and Ascendigo about a plan to make Ponderosa Trail (from the Seed Garden to back behind the Real America project) into an accessible trail for those with sensor, motor, and vision challenges. He also provided an update to trail work on Light Hill, which is scheduled to be completed in 2021.

Basalt Early Childhood Coalition – At this morning’s meeting the Coalition focused most of its attention on its 2021 work plan and preparing to meet with Council on September 8th.

Pitkin County Growth Management Quota System (GMQS) – The topic of this week’s meeting (Meeting #8) was a continuation of last week’s meeting, exploring the three growth management scenarios provided by Staff, with a discussion on additional or hybrid scenarios that would reduce allowable home sizes in some or all locations of Pitkin County, reduce floor area allowed through TDRs or remove the program altogether, and relative impacts on climate change.

BPAC – Provided below are a couple pictures from the barrier beautification project in Willits and Downtown. Check out the Basalt Public Arts Commission on Facebook to see other pictures of the concrete barrier project. The Facebook page also has artwork collected during COVID.



P&Z - The P&Z is scheduled to have a worksession with the Council on Tuesday August 18th at Arbaney Park. This is the first opportunity of the P&Z to talk with the Council since the Master Plan was adopted and the election of Mayor and new Councilors.

Arbaney Pool Waterline - Construction of the new waterline is in full swing. Gould was scheduled to pave the school driveway and parking on Friday.

Fire Protection Code Amendments – The ordinance was passed by the Town Council on August 11th at first reading. The second reading is scheduled for August 25th. The Town Staff information meeting held last Friday may be accessed from the GrassRoots TV website (grassrootstv.org, choose Town of Basalt Meetings under the Government tab, then the Building Department heading).

Other Development Review/Applications – Staff spent considerable time on construction related items, special event activity permits, proposed projects and on responding to inquiries on properties for sale.

Recreation

The Basalt Arboney Park Pool is running its Summer 2020 modified schedule still this week and next week. We still have no clear explanation as to the high school student's availability. We have run Facebook ads for certified Lifeguards to help with the staffing. We have created a backup schedule that could be implemented if we are unsuccessful in finding adult staff.

The new water line installation connection from the Middle School fire hydrant to the pool's mechanical room is well underway. It appears the crew is close to making the connection in the middle of the school's side field.



Fall offerings for our youth are starting to gain traction:

We have partnered with the Roaring Fork Conservancy for two separate offerings. The first is Angling Adventures where the participants will learn all about fly fishing. The second is River Discovery which will focus on our waterways and the eco life surrounding these waterways. Both offerings are twice a week for 5 weeks.

Jr. golf at the Roaring Fork Club is also on the calendar for two separate session in September. A youth soccer and T-ball will be offered starting late August. Details are being worked out with location and the instructor's availability. These offerings are geared towards our youngest elementary aged participants.

Staff is still tracking leads for art and entertainment type offerings such as dance and creative arts offerings.

Aspen Lacrosse, Roaring Fork Soccer Club, and TAC Fitness are already offering youth programming in the mid valley this fall. Basalt Recreation is helping to promote their offering on the Recreation web page with links to their sites.

Finance

The budget process is underway! Department Heads have a good start on the five-year Capital Improvement Plan for the 2021 budget. The Town is considering a facility needs study to assess space and deferred maintenance issues for Town essential services buildings. This will quantify needs and create ideas for the development of long-range planning for our essential services infrastructure. More to come on that, but the conversations around these topics are exciting and will culminate in creating a better future for the Town.

Additionally, the Finance Advisory Board met this week, and we continued discussions on the Town's Fund Balance Policy. Finance Advisory Board approved a policy to bring to Council for the August 25 meeting. This policy has been reviewed by the Town attorney, the Town auditor, and Bruce Kimmel from Ehler's.

We have also been garnering additional information regarding the Certificates of Participation option for the purchase of a public works facility. Given the potentially favorable financial results for this year, coupled with the low interest rate for COPs, it appears to be a good time to revisit the purchase of this facility.