

June 9, 2020

The Honorable Timothy V. Corrigan
The Honorable Douglas B. Monger
The Honorable M. Elizabeth Melton

Dear Commissioners Corrigan, Monger, and Melton:

Following discussion with the Policy Committee on Monday, June 8, enclosed is an updated Group Gathering Variance request and proposal.

As other counties begin to request and receive variances on gathering size, we are asking Routt County to request a local variance for part of the D2020 091 EXECUTIVE ORDER "Safer at Home" and in the Vast, Great Outdoors. Per the State of Colorado's guidance for Counties seeking guidance on the current Safer at Home" public health order, Routt County has successfully demonstrated a low COVID case count and 14+ day downward trajectory of cases.

In partnership with the Routt County Commissioners and the Steamboat Springs City Council, the Steamboat Springs Chamber has been leading efforts to convene industry groups to discuss items needed for short term recovery and long term resiliency.

Through this work a common theme emerged among the following groups: Nonprofit, Groups and Weddings, Events and Festivals and Lodging. The current limit on gathering size is making it impossible for conferences, weddings and events to operate and costing our community a significant loss in the associated tax revenue. It is also impacting nonprofit organization's ability to fundraise with events desperately needed to sustain their organization's health. Additionally, many of our nonprofits rely on income they earn from renting their space to various groups. The Lodging industry who was already impacted by the closure of the industry, has been further devastated by the loss of group, wedding and event business.

Currently, the limit on gatherings to ten people is unsustainable for the event business. As it is, most event venues in Routt County have lost nearly all of their business well into August. The events and groups remaining during this time as well as those in the fall need to start making decisions on whether or not to cancel or postpone. We would like to have a roadmap forward, even with the expectation that things are likely to change.

The average economic impact of a 125-person wedding results in three or more night stay per person, multiple restaurant and retail visits, as well as the wedding costs themselves. Since Routt County is considered a destination wedding location, the spend per-wedding averages from \$100,000-\$150,000 per event – and during the summer season there are conservatively eight or more weddings per weekend, which in turn results in a million dollar impact on the community every weekend from June through September. While much of this business has already been lost or moved to 2021, we would like to attempt to retain what is remaining on the books as well as pivot to allow smaller version of planned events to take place.

Conference business is also a tremendous loss to our community. Conference business is highly desirable as it occurs mainly mid-week and has minimal impacts on the everyday operations of the community.

Additionally, the event industry supports the gig economy of Routt County from tents and caterers to florists and photographers, small business owners who have often been left out of economic recovery discussions.

Our committee proposes the following events for consideration:

- Life Cycle events (to include wedding ceremonies, dinners, receptions, and other rites of passage)
- Conferences
- Nonprofit fundraisers
- Community events

Enclosed is the updated proposed Routt County Events and Venues reopening plan with a comprehensive suppression plan to help keep our community healthy. While many groups up to 250 have already cancelled or rescheduled for Summer and Fall 2020, we request your careful consideration so that we can retain the life cycle events, conferences, fundraisers and community gatherings currently on the books for our Routt County venues as well as possibly attract additional close-in bookings as Colorado begins the next steps towards healthy communities.

Again, following discussion at the Policy Committee meeting and noted support, we ask you to review at your meeting on Wednesday, June 10 and provide direction to Public Health Director Kari Ladrow to submit a variance request to CDPHE by Friday, June 12.

Thank you for your leadership, consideration, and for your continued support of the event, nonprofit and lodging industries.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Shea
Groups and Weddings Chair

Kara Stoller
Chief Executive officer, Steamboat Springs Chamber