You know the part in the silent movies where the damsel in distress is tied to the tracks and the train is bearing down. Well, given current stay-at-home orders and loss of business in Mammoth Lakes, that scenario appears to be playing out in real time.

Except there’s not just one person tied to the tracks. There are scores. And they are anything but silent.

At the Mammoth Lakes Town Council meeting Wednesday evening, several local business owners implored Council to find a way to help them get back open — even if it means defying state health orders. Because those health orders have proven a spectacular failure: no one is staying home. And the spectacular failure has bred further failure in that rogue operators benefit by renting their places out while local hotels and motels abiding by the rules die on the vine.

Meanwhile, elected Mammoth Councillmembers beg unelected staff for direction. But that is not the unelecteds purview. They can provide counsel and information; they can’t provide leadership.

Because leadership requires risk. And whatever path is chosen, there is risk of death, both to individuals and to livelihoods.

With that as a backdrop...

The unelecteds, Mammoth Lakes Town Manager Dan Holler, Mammoth Lakes Fire Chief Frank Frievalt, Director of Mono County’s Unified Command Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Covid response team, and Mono County Public Health Officer Tom Boo led the meeting with the latest, grim health news.

As Boo said, the test positivity rate for Mono County remains persistently high, downplaying the reduced rate over the past week to reduced testing over the holidays. The County’s case rate is still 60-90/100,000. He mentioned that this rate would have to drop to approximately 28/100,000 for schools to reopen.

Holler said that overall cases have soared 85% over the past month and that the stay-at-home order initiated on December 7 remains in effect with no hard end date. ICU capacity in the Southern California region remains at zero. 554 people died from Covid-19 in the state of California on Wednesday, approaching the record total of 574 which occurred on New Year’s Eve. Inyo County has recorded 27 deaths, seven within the past week.

According to Frievalt, Inyo County also requested four oxygen concentrators be shipped down this week.

Then the meeting moved into the discussion/public comment phase. While Holler stated that the town is trying to walk the fine line between public health and local business health, he said “we’re not able to move on the restaurant association’s opening request.”

(For related story see p. 6) This, perhaps, represented one too many ‘no’s’ for Stacy Schaubmayer, General Manager of the Alpenhof, to bear.

“I can’t make a left turn out of my parking lot [because it’s so busy] and yet, my doors are closed,” she began, adding that her employees and family are suffering. “We need some level of occupancy, even if it’s 10 or 20%.”

John Morris, Chairman of the Lodging Association, added, “I’m not an alarmist, but I’m starting to ring the bell. A lot.” see JONES, page 7

Lakanuki. Lakanuki has a new outdoor tent which is an indoor/outdoor area. You’re sitting outside, but it’s enclosed. I followed up on Monday with Lakanuki’s Stu Need, because I thought it was ironic that it took a Kiwi to perpetrate an act of civil disobedience.

How did he come to make the decision to open up table seating?

“I went up to the mountain. Took some pictures. And I thought to myself, ‘How is this inequity allowed?’ I figured it was time to take a stand. And that I would operate just like the mountain.”

Meaning, Need would adhere to all the same safety protocols, masks, distancing, etc.

“I’ve lost hundreds of thousands of dollars in business over the past few weeks,” he said. “And I spent a lot of money to get this outdoor tent installed [in order to comply with pre-lockdown orders]. Over $10,000. That’s money I don’t have.

…I’m a proud man. I’ve been on unemployment. This is an ego thing for me. I don’t want to take money from the government. I did apply for business assistance from the Town since my landlord is not giving any breaks. I met the criteria for the grant. I don’t know if they’ll [the Town] hold this against me.

…I’m not out there to defy the government. But this is past the political. This is about survival.”

I asked Mr. Need what sort of reaction he’s received.

Need: I got an email from [Town Manager] Dan Holler that was vague. I haven’t replied. He says he’s working on... see LUNCH, page 2
some sort of common seating plan that they may roll out in a few weeks. [Public Health Officer Tom] Roo dropped by Saturday. I get it. He’s got a job. I’ve got a business. He told me I had to take a wall down for my outside patio. And that my seating needs to be open to all. But he didn’t come in heavy-handed. He says Mammoth Mountain is in violation as well. And you can’t really punishable if you have this other issue hanging out there.

I’m not against the Mountain. Not at all. Whatever he can do [Mammoth Resorts President and Chief Operating Officer Mark Brownlie] can help me. I signed a [Mammoth Chamber of Commerce initiated] letter to take a stand and thought we would follow through. I was highly disappointed after the December 23 public meeting. The [political] leadership did not back our community. Not one person on that day, ‘Hey, these guys have a point.’

The Governor saying [stay-at-home orders are] ‘indefinite’ gives us no hope. And I don’t sleep well at night because I stress about the ultimate outcome.

But I’m down 82% (year-over-year for the holiday). I have two key staff leaving. They’re done waiting. They’re leaving for Canada. I worry that when we come back around, there’ll be no one here to work ...

Stu was one of several local business owners whom we either spoke to directly or offered their thoughts via written statements. Let’s run through a few more. Snowcreek Athletic Club General Manager Sharon Harvey said the Club had 2,000 members when the first shutdown occurred in March. “When we reopened in June, he had 700 members,” she said. The Club then had to close back down again in early December. Zero members. Even with a closed building, the utilities cost $10,000 last month. “We only have one club and we’re bordering on not having one. How much more money can you pour into something?” Between the flooding due to a burst pipe several years back and now the pandemic, she says owner Ralph Lockhart just can’t catch a break.

David Ramos, who runs Mammoth King cleaning company said: Cleaning companies and lodging operators are being negatively targeted. We’ve implemented so many precautions, yet we are not getting compensated for any of the extra work. We want to do our part and protect our visitors but now we don’t have any visitors. Our staff typically works 80 hours in a 2 week pay period. They are now down to 20 hours in a 2 week pay period. They are thinking about moving away to other areas in Southern California that are open to guests. Please figure out a plan for us to open safely and we are happy to implement more cleaning measures to do so. This is all really unfair. We are taking it week by week so it’s really tough to plan and staff accordingly.”

Jason Herbst, owner of Five Star Lodging: Unfortunately, the status quo ties Mammoth's ability to reopen to a community of millions of people, 350 miles from here, who don’t know us or care about us, and who are not observing anything like the same level of shutdown that we are. [I recently had no trouble traveling to Newport Beach and securing an RV space on the beach, in a paid resort for Xmas]! Meanwhile, my company is borrowing tens of thousands of dollars every month with zero incoming revenue, because we still have to pay our staff to answer the phone and spend labor canceling thousands of affected reservations and being abused by angry travelers. Our town continues to attract visitors from somewhere, who are staying somewhere ... All this policy has achieved is to create a black market for rentals in which my organization can’t make any money to cover our overhead or costs, the town can’t make any tax revenue to cover their costs of operating (much less the crisis) and the community continues to be exposed to travelers who wish to visit the huge tourist attraction we inexplicably continue to allow to operate or offered their thoughts via written statements. Let’s run through a few more. Snowcreek Athletic Club General Manager Sharon Harvey said the Club had 2,000 members when the first shutdown occurred in March. “When we reopened in June, he had 700 members,” she said. The Club then had to close back down again in early December. Zero members. Even with a closed building, the utilities cost $10,000 last month. “We only have one club and we’re bordering on not having one. How much more money can you pour into something?” Between the flooding due to a burst pipe several years back and now the pandemic, she says owner Ralph Lockhart just can’t catch a break.

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Cynthia Fleming, co-owner of Ready4Rentals: Owners have now gone rogue, renting off social media, email campaigns to colleagues, neighborhood groups, etc. We have no control over the number of guests. We also have no control over limiting visitation. For example, owners are not adhering to a 24-hour block in between guests, a three-day minimum, etc; all strategies to slow visitors to town and allow us to function safely. As a lodging operator with 76 properties, I have been told by the town my head will be on the chopping block if I don’t comply with the ban. The
I’m not sure the above has adequately captured the scope of the problem. Our employees and the limited guests who do choose to visit Mammoth represent a very small leak while the dam is collapsing. Most are simply asking to operate at a reduced capacity (with a host of variables on top of this), since everything should return to normal. I have not spoken to a single business owner in town who is advocating that we do not re-open. I have heard of a municipality try so hard to stop revenue, going as far as hiring a temporary task force to go after us.

Colin Fernie, Black Tie Ski Rentals: I have not spoken to a single business owner in town who is advocating that everything should return to normal. Most are simply asking to operate at some reduced capacity (with a host of protections in place), so we can stay afloat and live to fight another day; all while providing a safe experience for our employees and the limited guests who do choose to visit Mammoth regardless.

However (there’s always a however) I’m not sure the above has adequately factored in the public health side of the equation. My two cents based on many conversations I’ve had this week:

- Don’t bash the politicians too hard. They’re in a rough spot. If you open the spigot (even more than it’s already open) and invite more people to the area and increase the risk of introducing this new and more contagious virus variant, you test the law of unintended consequences. If the new variant is as scary as advertised, it’s estimated to be 70% more infectious.

EOC Director Frank Frievalt said extreme lockdown measures being taken in the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere are evidence in itself that this is a serious threat. And no one wants blood on their hands. No one wishes to make a poor political decision that leads to multiple deaths.

The way through, it would appear, is to outpace the virus and its various mutant offspring via vaccination.

I half-jokingly told one friend this week that we should make an outrageously generous offer and buy out a Covid-denier community of its vaccine. Another, more realistic option may be to convince the state that it needs a small test county/county to prove the efficacy of vaccine and herd immunity.

Given our exposure to visitors from contagious places, we’d certainly know in a hurry if the vaccine was working! The way through, it would appear, is to engage the last-minute comments I half-jokingly told one friend this week that we should make an outrageously generous offer and buy out a Covid-denier community of its vaccine. Another, more realistic option may be to convince the state that it needs a small test county/county to prove the efficacy of vaccine and herd immunity.

As Morrison said, when the project was first in discussions, “cottages” were proposed that would back up to her property. In the current plan, she now faces with bulky two-story buildings on two sides. Another resident suggested the Town should compensate neighbors for anticipated loss in property values based upon the proposed project densities.

Project planning has been going on for so long that Council had no stomach to engage the last-minute comments and voted unanimously. Fiebiger was stunned by the swift approval and said afterward, “This is not the land of the people anymore … I’m disappointed Council does not listen to the people.”

And from Owen Page’s desk, a mediation on Wednesday’s events in D.C.

Capitol punishment

Wednesday was a strange day to say the least. While the spectacle of the day, the congressional confirmation of Joe Biden’s presidential victory, was expected to be long and drawn out, what the nation got instead was much more surreal.

As Arizona Representative Paul Gosar stood at the podium, railing against the election results in his home state, shouting started in the House chambers. 

Master Plan approved

By a unanimous 3-0 vote, Mammoth Town Council approved various code changes and amendments in order to adopt the Parcel master Plan at its meeting Wednesday evening.

The approval was made despite a fair amount of last-minute public comment critical of the project’s density, height and parking plan.

The vote was 3-0 because both Mayor Sauser and new Councilmember Sarah Rea are disqualified from participating in the item. The Rea disqualification is more recent, and somewhat embarrassing as her political campaign trumpeted housing as her #1 issue.

“I’m very disappointed in the FPPC (Fair Political Practices Commission) decision,” she said. The verdict: Because Rea lives 700 feet from the edge of the Parcel, it was determined her rent could potentially be affected.

She said she will do what she can to participate in housing, attend Mammoth Lakes Housing board meetings, and seek a spot on the MLH board next year.

As for the hearing itself, Dieter Fiebiger made an impassioned plea for Council to scale back project density, noting original zoning called for 172 units and now we’re contemplating more than three times that amount.

As a neighboring resident of the property for nearly half a century, he worried about excessive tree removal, flooding risk and fire hazard (density and lack of egress points would place residents at risk in a fire event).

Fiebiger and neighboring resident Michelle Morrison were also not fans of the proposed buildings, both for their height and bulk.

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TOUTING A FRACTION: 3/7

This week marked a month since Mono County was placed in a regional stay-at-home order with the rest of Southern California, resulting in the loss of one of the best business months in the year highlighted by the holiday season.

After ICJ capacity remained at 0% in the region and the order was subsequently extended, Mammoth Lakes Lodging Association Chairman John Morris circulated an email on Saturday, January 2, that indicated that there was potential for local officials to take actions sooner rather than later.

As a result, Monday morning’s Association meeting became on opportunity for the group to figure out what they may want a reopening to look like in the event that there is movement on the issue.

Mayor Bill Sauser, representing Mammoth Lakes Town Council, spoke first, talking about preliminary discussions he’d had with Morris to perhaps allow lodging in the range of 40-50% occupancy with 43% occupancy suggested as a strong candidate. That would amount to 3 stays/week.

But Mammoth Lakes Town Manager Dan Holler rained on that parade before it even hit Old Mammoth Road.

“The levels (of occupancy) you’re talking about won’t get public health support,” Holler said. In addition to a projected post-holiday surge in Covid-19 cases, current local levels of disease spread remain high and the town hopes to get schools open at some point around March, which requires lower case numbers to happen.

“How do we actually put something out there that we can manage without it being a formal public health order?” Holler asked, adding that such an order from Public Health Officer Tom Boo isn’t likely.

Jason Herbst, co-owner/operator of Five Star Lodging, reported that he had been in Southern California with an IV and had no trouble finding a place to park it. The only requirement for his spot: a signature on a notice saying only essential travel is permitted.

“My concern is we were lumped in with Southern California because those people travel here,” Herbst said, “Our metrics are based on the compliance of 20 million people who are not complying.

“Go ahead and rent. Go ahead and rent. See how much we fail.”

-Jason Herbst

“It’s a suicide pact because we’re never getting out of this until there’s a complete distribution of vaccines in Southern California,” he said. Herbst said that he has had to continually take out loans to keep paying his staff, adding “If you are not going to allow us to do business, then you need to shut us down through February and March.”

One suggested plan was to allow for a baseline opening, around 30%, that would be agreeable for public health, and then gradually ramp that number up if Covid-19 projections improve locally.

“In all honesty, 30% for most of us is probably, maybe enough to be able to meet payroll, Morris said, “It’s not going to be enough to pay all of our bills.”

“The problem is that 30% is absolute rock bottom baseline,” he continued, “If they say that 30% is too much ... we’re going to be in a situation when we see a lot of people saying I’m willing to take my chances. I gotta operate.”

Brian Murphy, who owns and operates Mammoth Reservations, said “If we’re talking about survival here, let’s do whatever we have to do right now to move this discussion forward ... let’s start with a number that is going to open the dialogue and potentially get us to some type of opening sooner rather than later.”

“I’m beyond frustrated,” Alon Ravid told the lodging operators, “It seems like we’ve got two people playing this game; the people that either believe in this pandemic and then the people that don’t.”

Ravid, “Honesty doesn’t really pay if you put aside the ethics, because here I am abiding by all the rules and regulations for renters, yet there is no recourse for the people that are renting illegally.” He took aim at the town’s enforcement team, asking them to step up their efforts.

Go ahead and rent. Go ahead and rent. See how much we fail

-Rob Patterson

Town Councilman John Wentworth joined the meeting to underscore the council’s power in the situation: very little. Anything Council votes on, he said, would be an empty political gesture. Given that the state gives local health officers authority to make decisions during a pandemic, Boo would have the final and most meaningful say on the issue.

“I’m not prepared to say I’m going to do something against what Dr. Boo thinks is in best interest of the community,” he said, “We have to get the damn numbers down.”

And, as Holler reminded those in attendance, “We’re very fortunate that our hospital hasn’t overall been impacted ... we have had the highest per 100,000 state numbers for weeks which doesn’t bode well for us in dealing with public health.

Local officials are exploring the potential to move the county of the Southern California region, most likely to Greater Sacramento. That region has better numbers than Southern California and includes Lake Tahoe ski resorts.

Town Council won’t formally hear the issue [of opening a certain percentage of lodging occupancy] until January 20, two weeks away. While lodging operators urged Councilmembers to expedite the process, Sauser said that agendizing the item two weeks ahead was about the fastest that things could go.

Town Finance Director Rob Patterson responded to Ravid’s comments, saying “I have a team of folks reviewing the hotlines. We are calling people. We are issuing citations.”

Ravid: “Do you know how many times I’ve contacted you guys last week? Not a single response. You guys are failing, you are failing miserably and it’s at our cost.”

Patterson: “Go ahead and rent. Go ahead and rent. See how much we fail.

Ravid: Excuse me?

Patterson: Go ahead and do that, Alon.

Murphy played the part of peacemaker before the dialogue went completely off the rails. “Let’s not figure out how to penalize other people, let’s figure out to get open,” he said.

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The Mammoth Lakes Tourism Board is down a board member to begin 2021, as retail representative Matt Hammer announced his resignation, effective immediately, at the board meeting on Wednesday, January 6.

Hammer, who owns Shelter Distilling, explained that he and his family had moved to Whitefish, Montana, thus he did not feel he could continue in his role on the board.

“It’s been really amazing being a part of the Mammoth community,” Hammer said, “Being part of MLT has been a great honor, working with you guys has been totally amazing.”

Hammer’s term is set to expire in June 2022; the board will appoint a representative to serve out the remainder of the term.

MLT Director John Urdi gave a presentation on the potential impacts Covid-19 will have on TOT (room tax) and TBID revenue generated during the first months of 2021. He outlined three scenarios that estimated the outcomes for the town; best case, middle case, worst case.

A reminder: MLT receives all the TOT money (minus 2.35 points dedicated to MLT).

In the best case scenario, TBID comes in at 20% of the budget for December, 45% for January, 60% for February, and 100% for March and April. TBID losses in the best case scenario clocked in at $371,683, reduced from $880,174 due to a current budget overage.

Overall TOT during that time was estimated to be down 40% from budget estimates, leaving a net shortfall of $1.1 million from July 2020-April 2021.

This scenario assumes a relatively quick exit from stay-at-home orders and a ramping back of local business.

In the middle case scenario, things progress at slower pace. TBID peaks at 100% in April, with March clocking in at 75%, February at 50%, January at 40% and December at 20%.

Total losses for TBID would be $551,198. TOT was estimated to be down 59% from budget for a net Town loss of $2.7 million.

Urdi’s worst case scenario projected TBID at 15% of budget in December, 25% in January, 35% in February, 50% in March, and 75% in April. This would create a total loss of $899,667. TOT was projected down 65% from estimates, resulting in a total TOT loss of $3,183,689 for the Town.

This scenario anticipates not having lodging open for another couple months.

“When we open, the biggest challenge is managing visitors, it’s not actually getting them here,” Urdi said. “It really comes down to when we are able to get lodging back if we could ever wish for a year to ski into July, this would be the year.”

“Mammoth Mountain may clock even lower than what Urdi had projected. He said that they were currently running around 11% for the month.”

“Estimates that the stay-at-home order remains in effect.”

“Mammoth Town Council representative Lynda Salcido essentially confirmed Urdi’s estimates, stating ‘At this point, LSs way out is vaccination because they have lost complete control of the disease.’

In some slightly better news, MLT received a check for $322,600.60 as the second and final payment from The Woods LLC (aka Dirk Winters) as a result of their settlement of that dispute.

That money has been placed in a CDAR account for future needs, joining $300,000 that has already been set aside for special event funding.

Commercial air service had been scheduled to start up again at Mammoth-Yosemite Airport on January 14; the extended stay-at-home order has pushed that date back to February 11 for Advanced Air and February 4 for United Airlines.

While Advanced has the advantage of being able to start business back up quickly if need be, United may prove to need more time - if that opportunity ever arises.

“There’s a good chance that the next time we fly commerical will be to Bishop in December, 2021,” Urdi said. In regards to skiing in July: the area is experiencing ongoing drought. We’ll see if the script flips.
By Page

Brocia repeatedly stressed the importance of accountability for restaurants. "The premise behind these guidelines is trying to put a public health stance first and a business stance second," Brocia said, "In doing so, we’re putting the right foot forward and we’re making decisions with the right frame of mind."

In the proposed framework, only one household may be seated at a table, with a maximum of six seats, with at least one guest providing contact information in the event that someone nearby tests positive for Covid-19 after their meal.

"I think that we know that we truly [have] safe environments," she said, "there has not been proven spread within our restaurants and none of us are doing this saying we need money more than we need people’s lives." She also stressed the importance of a united front, arguing that sniping Mammoth Mountain for having a form of outdoor dining just hurts the common cause.

Worker retention was a focal point of the arguments presented by owners; if they can’t pay staff, the staff will leave and when it comes time to reopen, bringing on replacements could be much more difficult.

Some restaurateurs had doubts that guests would be completely honest with giving out their contact information. Cathleen Caldonor of Doorstep Deliveries said that people using her service sometimes lie about who they are or why they are in town, presumably to avoid being caught for violating the stay-at-home order. "The onus is on us to be kind of the enforcement on this," Brocia said, "We have to hold people accountable."

"I think that it’s not a big ask. Many states across the nation are doing this right now, and I think that if we don’t take these extra measures, we might not have to do that because we’re not having any business. If we don’t take a stronger stance on public health, this effort is gonna fall short and I think it’s not gonna be received well by Public Health."

Mayor Bill Sauser reminded the restaurateurs that Town Council doesn’t have much power in the way of enacting change at its disposal. "The town cannot pass any ordinance by law that is less restrictive than what the state already has in place," Sauser said, although there is a caveat. "What we can do with consensus of council, and a nod and a wink, is to set our parameters for enforcement at certain levels," he continued. This is possible because the state has left enforcement of orders up to local jurisdictions, although doing so “does not preclude the state from coming in and getting rough and getting mean,” Sauser said.

“If we’re allowed to move forward with new parameters, it doesn’t mean anything without the population to come up,” Alpenhof’s Kirk Schaubmayer said. "We can all get open but if we don’t have any people to sit in our chairs, what’s the point of that?”

Lodging Association chairman John Morris joined the meeting to talk about how lodging operators are presenting their case for reopening. Morris also emphasized staff retention as a key piece of the puzzle, and added that reopening legal lodging would make the industry safer and easier to regulate.

“I’m looking at 4-5 weeks now where I’ve laid off team members,” Brocia said at the conclusion of the meeting. “[Staff] is getting itchy, they’re deciding if it’s last month’s rent and then ‘I’m out the door.’ Changes are unlikely to occur before January 20, when Mammoth’s Town Council will take up the issue.

**RECOVERY EFFORTS CONTINUE IN WALKER**

By Page

Justin Nalder, Mono County Solid Waste Superintendent and Incident Commander for the Mountain View Fire and Recovery Effort, gave an update to the Mono County Supervisors on Tuesday on progress being made in Walker.

Nalder said that the state had approved assistance for debris removal projects and any property set to do phase 1 of the clean-up process, which is the removal of hazardous waste.

That will take 2-3 weeks to complete, at which point more widespread debris removal can begin, which will require right-of-entry permits from property owners.

Nalder reported that a number of boxes were already checked in terms of the recovery efforts: The U.S Small Business Administration will allow individuals to apply for low interest loans to rebuild, animal control has returned/ found homes for lost and escaped animals, and power has been fully restored to structures within Walker.

Supervisor John Peters, whose district includes Walker, reported that a community committee is in the process of allocating donated funds is being assembled, which an emphasis on ensuring food and other necessary resources.

He said that $149,000 in donations has been received via the Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce, with an additional $80,000 coming to the Northern Mono Chamber of Commerce.

The supervisors approved two resolutions related to the fire, both of which waived permitting fees for fire victims beginning the rebuilding process.

They also approved an emergency guardrail repair project in Walker to replace over 1,000 feet of guardrail destroyed by the fire on Eastside and North River Lanes. The majority of the damage was on Eastside and will cost $140,000 to repair fully, with an additional $20,000 needed for repairs on North River.

Part of the 900 feet of rail lost on Eastside includes a 30 foot embankment around a curve, making the repairs critically important.

The California Disaster Assistance Act allows for 75% of the costs to be covered by state and federal funds, with the county expected to match the remaining 25%.
Covid-19 projections for California showing different scenarios for disease spread. From the Center for the Ecology of Infectious Disease at the University of Georgia

JONES
continued from page 1

“This community is getting torn apart,” he observed. “We’re pitting neighbor against neighbor ... this order is not working.”

The order, he observed, is pushing visitors into illegal rentals which are likely not held to the same standard as managed properties.

“Enforce the rules at a reasonable rate,” he said.

Morris suggested that the Town will be losing workforce in short order if some occupancy is not permitted. And the boomerang effect (of a looming labor shortage) would create a “mess” when the Town is inundated with visitation in the spring.

Heather Schaubmayer chimed in, saying, “I back John 1,000 percent. I have 80 employees looking at me saying when am I going to have a job again.”

“I’ve reduced staff 70%,” said Mammoth Brewing’s Sean Turner, who said he just wants to work and be open. “I don’t want to ask for assistance,” he said.

George Tschiporikov elaborated upon Morris’s observation regarding illegal rentals. The irony, said Tschiporikov, is that you’re forcing families together into tiny units (cramming mixed parties of ten into places meant for four) because you’re constricting supply.

“We voted you in, not the state. Please listen to your voters,” he told Council.

Robert Schaubmayer flatly said he was tired of the letters, the meetings and the delays. “Get off Zoom and take a look around at what’s going on,” he said. “It’s not going well. There has to be a change.”

In its deliberations, Council agreed with the above assessment. There needs to be a change. Alas, empathy is not policy. And no Council directive was forthcoming.

Mayor Bill Sauser acknowledged it was
"pretty obvious" the 43% occupancy ask on the part of the Lodging Association would not fly. "But we've got to do something," he said. "The black market is rampant ... we need to find a way to open in some small way to hopefully coax that black market into the light."

He offered no insight as to what that small way might be.

He did observe, "What's the point in protecting the community if there will be no community left when it's all over?"

Mayor Pro-Tem Lynda Salcido said the ideal would be to find a way to serve two masters (health & business) at once. Again, no insight as to what serving two masters might look like.

"There's a lot of work and conversation going on behind-the-scenes," said Councillman John Wentworth. "We hear you."

As a gesture of solidarity, Wentworth said he would forego his Council salary over the next six months and donate it to community causes. Apparently, however, a lot of the work going on behind-the-scenes amounts to extensive wordsmithing, because a prominent letter (in part asking for reassessment from the Southern California section) meant to go out to the state by the end of business Thursday.

Town Attorney Andrew Morris said the state has been very heavy-handed in its enforcement of orders in recalcitrant communities. "Publicly, if you say you'll accept some lodging, you're saying you're going rogue," he continued, adding, "Those cities taking a more lax approach to enforcement are certainly not going out of their way to tell the state about it."

As for Frievalt and Boo, when pressed, they did not succumb to public sentiment.

“My role, my skill set, is in the management of emergencies," said Frievalt. "I’m gravely concerned about the position we’re heading into ... I’m concerned that we’re going to keep running into situations we can’t imagine. It would be disingenuous and going against my character to minimize public health impacts, no matter how inconvenient they may be."

As for Boo, he saw no good options. "Legally and ethically I can’t support disobeying state public health orders," he said.

“I don’t have a magic bullet tonight," offered Holler, who promised to get the aforementioned letter out to the state by end of business Thursday.

Wentworth insisted that Council hold another special meeting next week to continue dialogue.

"I’m confident there’s a medium ground [to be found] without defying the state - directly," he said.

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By Staff

Inyo and Mono Counties are well underway in vaccinating key personnel. Both counties should complete vaccination of all their classified 1A personnel by the end of this week.

1A personnel include frontline medical staff, home health and community health workers.

Mono County Public Health Director Bryan Wheeler reported to the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday that Mammoth Hospital has received 360 doses of the Pfizer vaccine while Mono County Public Health has received 600 doses of the Moderna vaccine. As of January 4, 120 of the county’s vaccines had been administered via public clinic, with the remainder of the Phase 1A workers receiving it at clinics held throughout the week of January 5.

Wheeler said that the county is very close to completing phase 1A tier 1 and will soon begin vaccinating those in the 1A tier 2 category.

This includes public health field staff, intermediate care facilities, home health care workers and community health workers.

Speciality clinics, lab workers, dental/ oral health workers and pharmacy staff will round out 1A.

Wheeler explained that the rate at which the county can vaccinate people is related to how much is allocated by the state. The "heavy lifting" would begin in about two weeks (in the 1B phase) as members of the public who are over 75 years old, along with food, agricultural, education, and emergency services workers will be eligible.

Supervisor Bob Gardner asked if, given the county’s small population, there will be quicker progression through the tier.

“Yes, I would say we would,” Wheeler answered.

Wheeler also stressed the importance of scheduling in the matter, stating that the vaccines have a very limited usage timeframe once vials have been unsealed.

Inyo County Public Health Officer James Richardson said the county is fortunate and rare in that it can begin to move into the 1B classification for vaccinations right away.

And because of Inyo County’s size, Riuchardson was able to make an on-the-spot executive decision to vaccinate all Bishop Care Center residents and staff between January 2 and 5 when a potential risk event could have led to another outbreak.

Inyo County Health and Human Services Director Marilyn Mann did dispel one rumor of a rift between HHS and Northern Inyo Hospital over NIH providing vaccine in the 1A phase to non-clinical staff (like Information Technology and Billing and Records personnel).

“You can’t assume a job title doesn’t have patient-facing exposure,” said Mann. "I've also had non-clinical staff vaccinated. NIH and SHI are great partners and we’ve had an incredible [vaccine] rollout far ahead of other counties.”

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INYO, MONO BEGIN VACCINATION PROCESS

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ONLINE MENU
oldnewyork.com | In. The Village
Susanne Rizo was sworn in as the new Inyo County Superior Court Judge on Monday.

“It’s a great honor to serve for the betterment of the community,” she said. “Thank you to my family and community for their support.”

She was sworn in by fellow Judge Stephen Place (at right).

Other public officials sworn in Monday included new District Four Supervisor Jennifer Roosier and reelected District Five Supervisor Matt Kingsley.
**PRUEBAS COVID-19 GRATUITAS**

**PRUEBAS DE SALUD PÚBLICA – Mammoth Lakes**

- **Lunes y jueves**  
  *si el tiempo lo permite*  
  **11:00am – 3:00pm**
- **Fundación Mammoth Lakes**  
  **100 College Parkway**

Las pruebas están disponibles SOLAMENTE para los residentes del condado de Mono. La preinscripción está disponible sosteniendo su cámara hacia el código QR y completando el formulario en línea. Se indicará a los participantes que permanezcan en sus vehículos para realizar las pruebas, sin embargo, se proporcionarán pruebas sin cita previa. Las pruebas también están disponibles para referencias de rastreo de contactos y clientes sintomáticos derivados de la Línea de Enfermería 211. Ver mapa para acceso de vehículos.

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**VERILY PRUEBAS**

**Mammoth Lakes**

- **Martes y viernes**  
  *si el tiempo lo permite*  
  **8:00am – 12:30pm**
- **Campo de golf Sierra Star**  
  **2001 Sierra Star Parkway**

**Condado Norte**

- **Viernes**  
  *si el tiempo lo permite*  
  **9:00am – 12:45pm**
- **Centro Comunitario de Antelope Valley**  
  **442 Mule Deer Road, Coleville**

Requiere cita previa. Las pruebas no tienen costo para las personas independientemente del estado del seguro. Debe tener 13 años o más, vivir en el condado de Mono y estar dispuesto a firmar electrónicamente el formulario de autorización de salud pública COVID-19 y el consentimiento de laboratorio.
**PUBLIC HEALTH TESTING** – Mammoth Lakes

- **Mondays and Thursdays**  (*weather permitting*
- **11:00am – 3:00pm**
- Mammoth Lakes Foundation
  100 College Parkway

Testing is available for Mono County residents ONLY. Pre-registration is available by holding your camera to the QR code and completing the online form. Participants will be directed to remain in their vehicles for testing, however, walk-up testing will be provided. Testing is also available for contact tracing referrals and symptomatic clients referred from the 211 Nurse Line. See map for vehicle access.

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**VERILY TESTING**

**Mammoth Lakes**

- **Tuesdays and Fridays**  (*weather permitting*
- **8:00am – 12:30pm**
- Sierra Star Golf Course
  2001 Sierra Star Parkway

**North County**

- **Fridays**  (*weather permitting*
- **9:00am – 12:45pm**
- Antelope Valley Community Center
  442 Mule Deer Road, Coleville

Appointment required. Testing is at no cost for individuals regardless of insurance status. Must be 13 years or older, live in Mono County and be willing to electronically sign the COVID-19 Public Health Authorization Form and Lab Consent.
CAPITOL
continued from page 3
As Gosar asked for order, the cameras switched to a wide angle and then the sound cut out, followed shortly thereafter by the feed from the room.

My group chats with friends were pinging that protesters, who had marched to the Capitol from a “Save America” rally hosted by President Trump, were breaking into the Capitol building and lawmakers were sheltering in place.

KUNR was broadcasting a live conversation between a journalist and her her co-host, who she was sheltering in the Cannon House Office Building at the Capitol.

And then photos and videos came out of people, draped in American flags and Trump apparel, walking the halls of the Capitol, lounging in politicians’ offices and engaging the Capitol police in fights.

There was no way around the fact that this was Trump’s doing/fault. He told his supporters to go to the Capitol after riling them up and refusing to concede the election. And in the end 4 people died (one by gunshot wound), over fifty were injured, and the arrests are beginning to pile up. Most are being banned from DC and sent home to await to trial.

Note: when committing a crime, especially on federal property, your criminal records will follow you, unwise to livestream, film, or post photos of yourself engaging in said crime.

People were wringing their hands and asking, “How could this have happened? This is not the America I know.” Truth is, it seemed inevitable. Looking back at Charlottesville in August 2017, where there were “good people on both sides” as the President asserted, the anger was validated as it has been throughout the past four years. And when he lost the election, refused to concede, and did everything possible to throw out legal votes and undermine the American people, it was more clear.

I’ve always believed that Trump has never attempted to capture a new supporter; rather he drove towards and consolidated his base into only the most loyal and faithful. The results of that effort were on full display Wednesday when, for example, the Confederate flag was flown in the Capitol for the first time in 75 years. The BLM flags that were found at the national headquarters of both major parties. And “protestors” brought zip-tie handcuffs into the building, presumably prepared for a hostage situation.

Perhaps most shocking was how unabashed those who participated were. They did not shy away from cameras, recordings, or wear a mask to hide their faces. Of course, it didn’t help that Capitol police put up none of the resistance that law enforcement typically rolls out for large scale protests AND they were undermatched and outnumbered by sheer numbers. And when the word came, the “protestors” were shocked. From Andrew McCormick’s article “Madness in the Capitol”, published by The Nation: “This is not America,” a woman said to a small group, her voice shaking. She was crying, hysterical.

“They’re shooting at us. They’re supposed to shoot BLM, but they’re shooting the patriots.”

Patriots is the word that stands out and has stood out for me. Because I don’t see anything patriotic in attempting to overturn the will of your fellow citizens. In fact, to use the language of the Confederate flag. In this context, it makes everyone who disagrees an enemy or traitor to the country. I firmly believe that those who love this country were the ones who broke into the Capitol building.

And of course, after spending the day expressing shock and horror at the chaos that took place, Republican Senators decided that this election and this president are the hill that they will die on. And in doing so validated the abhorrence towards everyone who broke into the Capitol building.

Fictitious Business Name Statement The Following Person Is Doing Business As: High Sierra Architecture

Bruce P. Woodward/Nathan Taylor 696 E. Mono Lake Dr. P.O. Box 7772 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by a General Partnership. The registrant has not yet begun to transact business under the fictitious business name listed herein. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on Dec. 3, 2020. File Number 2020-0028 (12/26, 1/2, 1/9, 1/16)

Fictitious Business Name Statement The Following Person Is Doing Business As: Mammoth Luxury Home Rentals Mammoth Hospitality Management, LLC. 1505 Sierra0ne Ave. Suite 100 Mammoth Lakes, Ca. 93546

This business is conducted by a Limited Liability Co. The registrant commenced to transact business under the fictitious business name listed above on January 10, 2020. This statement was filed with the County Clerk of Mono County on Dec. 8, 2020. File Number 2020-0209 (12/26, 1/2, 1/9, 1/16)
Monday, January 11/ Mammoth Lakes Lodging Round Table meets 9:30-11 a.m. https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89870909067
Mono County Democratic Central Committee Zoom meeting. Time: 5 p.m. Register in advance for this meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIod-CpqT4sGdNClaM1-qdyjXc2XWzr1YV0
Tuesday, January 12/ Inyo County Supervisors meet. Public session begins 9 a.m. Log on via the County website or see ad p. 15. Time: 3 p.m. Grant workshop. Find link in Mono County Behavioral Health, Time: 1 p.m. Robin Roberts, Director of Mental Health and Development, will be discussing ways to take care of mental health and develop healthy stress management. Register at www.mammothlakeschamber.org.
Wednesday, January 13/ Inyo County Community Resiliency Grant workshop. Time: 3 p.m. Find link via County website or see ad p. 15. Eastern Sierra Land Trust virtual book club. 6-7 p.m. Join ESLT’s Education Coordinator and AmeriCorps Member, Gabrielle for a thought-provoking discussion about Peter Wohlleben’s, “The Hidden Life of Trees.” Info/register: gabrielle@eslt.org.
Town of Mammoth Lakes Business Assistance Grant Round 5. Qualified small businesses can apply for grants of up to $20,000 to utilize for business costs. Application deadline 5 p.m. The Town anticipates funding to be distributed by the end of January. For additional information: https://www.townofmammothlakes.ca.gov/977/Business-Assistance-Program.
Mammoth Lakes Recreation hosts a Measure U Grant webinar. Time: 1 p.m. info@mammothlakesrecreation.org
TOWN STUFF
Thursday, January 14/ Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce PPE Distribution. Starts 10 a.m. 2520 Main St.
Ongoing
Mono County Libraries - Winter Reading Challenge. From Jan 1-31. Mono County Libraries will participate in Beanstack’s Fourth Annual Winter Reading Challenge. The theme is Book Like Us, encouraging participants to find a book in which they see a reflection of themselves. Participants can log their reading on our Beanstack site at monocolibrarians.beanstack.org. #WinterRead2021 #BooksLikeUs #MonoReads
Laws Museum, located just outside Bishop off Highway 6, is open Friday-Monday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Info: www.lawsmuseum.org/760.873.5850.
Mono County Libraries Storytime Live! Join Ms. Chelsea for a story and fun activities on the Mammoth Lakes Library Facebook page. Time: 10:30 a.m. on Wednesdays. Or start your week off with a community storytelling, Mondays at 10:30 a.m. on the Mono County Libraries Facebook page.
All Visitor Centers (Mono Basin, Mammoth, White Mountain, Lone Pine) are closed, but visitor questions are being answered via phone daily, 8-4:30.
Mono Basin: 760.647.3044
Mammoth: 760.924.5502
White Mountain: 760.873.2500
Lone Pine: 760.876.6200
Mono County Libraries currently operating under Call Ahead for Pickup Service. Patrons not permitted inside library facilities.
Covid testing/ Bishop: Tri-County Fairgrounds, Tallman Pavilion on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday - participants must be in a vehicle to get tested. Mammoth Lakes testing Tuesdays and Fridays at Sierra Star Golf Course 9 a.m-12:45 pm and Monday, Wednesday and Thursday at the Mammoth Lakes Foundation. 10 am-1 pm. See ads p. 10-11 for addl info.
Walker/Coleville testing Fridays at Walker Community Center 9 am-12:45
WHO ARE YOU PEOPLE?

By Hartley

S ix playoff games this weekend. Pure heaven.

Bills laying 6.5 to the Colts. This game comes down to one thing to me ... which QB will suck the least. The Colts and Bills are supposed to be known for great defense but both are mythical creatures that exist in people’s minds - like Bigfoot. Rivers has never been good when the lights are shining brightest. And he’ll be playing outside in Buffalo with that noodle arm. Lay ’em with the Bills.

’Hawks laying 5 to the Rams. This one is intriguing. I don’t trust Ram QB Jared Goff but the Rams have a tremendous defense and this is a divisional game. The teams know each other well. In recent weeks, however, the ’Hawks somehow turned their Swiss cheese defense into a stout gouda. And with Goff being a combination of awful and a little hurt, lay the points with Seattle.

Ravens laying 4 to the Titans. This is black for one thing. Another thing is that the Titans should waste the Bears. And the Bear defense has not been good in recent weeks. NO. Lay the points. The Bears have lost 5 in a row and you can see why after watching them play. They are terrible. The Titans are actually good. The Bears have no chance for some dumbass team. He doesn’t deserve to be around people he is so antisocial and toxic. But he has made a career out of Peyton Manning saying he likes him. I have never seen one of the other’s Offensive Coordinator? Yeah, I know. After watching him coach you cannot imagine he is an offensive guy, but that is his background. He should be coaching at San Diego Prep H.S. But the Chargers aren’t going to get any better if interviewing Jason Garrett for the vacancy is any indication. They asked the Giants for permission to interview Garrett and the Giants probably bought a first-class ticket for Garrett to go immediately they are so anxious to get rid of his ass. You want to take a great QB prospect like Justin Herbert and give him Jason Garrett as head coach? Why, to make him less efficient? Insane.

Adam Gase is out in New York. Is any explanation needed? The sad part is, Gase, now a two-time loser in Miami and New York, will probably get another chance for some dumbass team. He doesn’t deserve to be around people he is so antisocial and toxic. But he has made a career out of Peyton Manning saying he likes him. I have never seen a guy ruin a QB, RB or offense in total more than Gase ... except for Jeff Fisher.

The hirings

Anthony Lynn is out in L.A. About time. He had no right being an NFL head coach. He can’t manage a game, has awful press conferences ... is he even qualified to get hired as someone else’s Offensive Coordinator? Yeah, I know. After watching him coach you cannot imagine he is an offensive guy, but that is his background. He should be coaching at San Diego Prep H.S. But the Chargers aren’t going to get any better if interviewing Jason Garrett for the vacancy is any indication. They asked the Giants for permission to interview Garrett and the Giants probably bought a first-class ticket for Garrett to go immediately they are so anxious to get rid of his ass. You want to take a great QB prospect like Justin Herbert and give him Jason Garrett as head coach? Why, to make him less efficient? Insane.

In Houston, they will NOT be hiring Chiefs Offensive Coordinator Eric Bienemy. Why? Probably ‘cause he is black for one thing. Another thing - they really don’t wanna win. They hired a company to aid them in their search for a GM and were provided like 5 names - they hired NONE of them. Instead, they just hired the guy they tried to steal from the Patriots last year (Nick Caserio) to be the puppet of a former Team Chaplain (Jack Easterby) they turned into their Executive Vice President of Football Operations. Both have New England on their resume. I guess Easterby wanted to hire someone he can control. The Texans, by the way, have no first or second round pick this year despite finishing with four wins. They mortgaged those picks to “win now.”

Eagles have landed - thud

The Philadelphia Eagles played the WFT (Washington) last week. If the Eagles beat WFT then the winner of the Giants/Cowboys game would go to the playoffs. The Eagles were down three points to the WFT late in the game and Coach Doug Pederson replaced starting QB Jalen Hurts with backup Nate Sudfeld to finish the game. Yeah, that’s rich. After the game, which the Eagles of course lost with Sudfeld going...
HARTLEY continued from page 14

5-12 for 32 yards and an interception, giving Washington the playoff spot. Pederson defended his decision by saying Sudderfield has been there 4 years and earned the right to get some snaps. Lol. You’re there 4 years and yet we immediately skipped over when starter Carson Wentz imploded by a rookie who can run but not throw - that is evidence that he DID NOT earn any snaps.

Some say they have to evaluate Sudderfield to see if they should bring him back as a backup. THAT IS INSANELY STUPID. If he’s been there four years and you don’t know what to do with him, then you should be fired. He sucks. That’s all you need to know. The Eagles by losing moved from the number 9 overall pick to 6. If that was the strategy that’s pathetic.

Now onto the Giants and their Coach Joe Judge. He complained that the integrity of the game was violated and that the Eagles screwed the Giants out of a playoff spot. STOP IT. The Giants won 6 games. Don’t bitch about missing the playoffs when you win 6 games. The Dolphins missed the playoffs and won ten games.

John Elway resigned as General Manager of the Broncos. That is rich. He is now the President of Football Operations or something like that. Meaning, he resigned/fired himself as GM, resulting in a move up in status to a higher executive level. This guy ... the team is in turmoil from an ownership standpoint after the death of Pat Bowlen and while they argue about that, Elway is taking advantage by making himself more money and giving himself more power while simultaneously SUCKING at his job. Exhibit A: He is bringing back Vic Fangio as head coach.

Tampa WR Antonio Brown needed a certain number of receptions last week to get a salary bonus. Tom Brady gave him 3 shovel passes late in the game to make sure he got it. If I am assuming this is because Antonio is living in Tom’s garage and Brady wanted to make sure that little cockroach had some rent money. I heard all year that the Bucs only won ten games. It is because Antonio is living in Tom’s garage and Brady wanted to make sure that little cockroach had some rent money.

Year’s Resolutions about going to the gym four times a week, since the gym is closed But at least they are saving money on the gym memberships they won’t use past January 24th.

Speaking of not enough time in the gym, let’s talk about football players flexing, or specifically, football players who have no place flexing. I’m sick of it. Little toothpick receivers who don’t know how to flex and don’t have the body to flex think they need to do so after they score a touch-down.

I mean, they haven’t done more than lift a blurt all week and there they are on my screen, flexing. And it looks all awkward. They ball their little fists up in front of their nuts and sink their chest in to push their arms forward like they have some mass. And they look they they are more ready to have a bowel movement than anything - that or they have some kind of chest pain - and they’re grabbing their nuts like they paid someone to grab ‘em. It’s awful.

New Segment

The Booger of the Week. TV announcer Booger McFarland statement: “Mike Evans got shaken up this week and HE MAY OR MAY NOT PLAY NEXT WEEK.” That is a great clinical diagnosis. What is he still doing on television?

Who are you people?

Trump supporters. How racist, sexist, classist or just plain ignorant do you have to be to support Donald Trump? Who are you people?

I fully realize Trump isn’t the problem - it’s the people who continue to enable his petulant ass. You ever look at a kid and say, “I don’t blame the kid. His parents are the problem.” Same with Trump. He is merely being who he is and has always been ... a spoiled, enabled brat. The people supporting him are the problem and always will be. His problem is he needs a spanking. He is never told NO. All his life he just bullies and cries and whines his way to what he wants; morons support and enable him and he gets his way. It has worked his entire life. It worked to the point that he was elected to the most powerful political position in the world. He got there without the maturity, knowledge or intellectual capacity to possibly perform the duties of the position. No one said NO. Until he was denied a second term. He was not given a second term and the child cannot accept NO. He is just throwing a temper tantrum. Because he cannot believe that the NO will stick. Spank him. He has committed crimes and gotten away with it. He has behaved like a complete jackass and gotten away with it. Because morons, like bad parents, keep supporting him.

But it’s too late. He needed that spanking YEARS ago. Now he wouldn’t understand. The fact that the POTUS would incite riots and encourage the idiots who support him despite the massive irony that he hates them, too - to storm federal buildings and wreak havoc should be enough for anyone that supports him to be embarrassed. Yet they aren’t. They are wearing their little red hats and Newsmax is lining up the self-justifying talking points.

He has embarrassed the country because he is incapable of embarrassing himself.

- Hartley

He has embarrassed the country because he is incapable of embarrassing himself.

I actually love it. Because I hope a few of the Trumpite morons that support him look in the mirror tomorrow and say “What the hell was I thinking?” But they won’t. People get too invested. They can’t step back.

New Grant for Non-Profit Organizations!

INYO COUNTY COMMUNITY RESILIENCY GRANT

JOIN THE WORKSHOP!
JANUARY 13TH
3PM
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For more information email businessinfo@inyocounty.us or call 760-878-8457
Apply by 5pm January 29th
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OVER 17 NEW CREEKHOUSE RESIDENCES SOLD THIS PAST SUMMER AND FALL.

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