

**Meridian City Council Work Session**

**March 9, 2021.**

A Meeting of the Meridian City Council was called to order at 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 9, 2021, by Mayor Robert Simison.

Members Present: Robert Simison, Joe Borton, Treg Bernt, Jessica Perreault, Brad Hoaglun and Liz Strader.

Members Absent: Luke Cavener.

Also present: Chris Johnson, Ted Baird, Bill Nary (5:05 p.m.), Dave Miles, Vince Koontz, Shandy Lam, Tom Otte, Miranda Carson, Jeff Brown, Joe Bongiorno and Dean Willis.

**ROLL-CALL ATTENDANCE**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Liz Strader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joe Borton
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brad Hoaglun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treg Bernt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jessica Perreault	<input type="checkbox"/> Luke Cavener
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mayor Robert E. Simison	

Simison: Council, we will call this meeting to order. For the record it is March 9th, 2021, at 4:30 p.m. We will begin this afternoon's work session with roll call attendance.

**ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Simison: Next item is adoption of the agenda.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: No changes to the agenda, so I move that we adopt the agenda as published.

Hoaglun: Second the motion, Mr. Mayor.

Simison: I have a motion and a second. Is there any discussion on the motion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it. The motion is agreed to and the agenda is adopted.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

**CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item]**

- 1. Approve Minutes of the February 23, 2021 City Council Work Session**
- 2. Approve Minutes of the February 23, 2021 City Council Regular**

## **Meeting**

- 3. Approve Minutes of the March 2, 2021 City Council Work Session**
- 4. Paramount Point Sanitary Sewer Easement No. 1**
- 5. Paramount Point Water Main Easement No. 1**
- 6. Stapleton No. 1 Sanitary Sewer Easement No. 2 Full Release of Easement**
- 7. Final Plat for Lupine Cove Subdivision (FP-2020-0017) by Matt Schultz of Schultz Development, Located at 4000 N. McDermott Rd.**
- 8. Final Plat for Sagewood West Subdivision (FP-2021-0005) by Civil Innovations, PLLC, Located at 1335 W. Overland Rd.**
- 9. Final Plat for Sky Mesa Commons No. 5 (FP-2020-0021) by J-U-B Engineers, Inc., Generally Located West of S. Eagle Rd., Midway Between E. Taconic Dr. and E. Lake Hazel Rd.**
- 10. Final Order for Warrick Subdivision No. 4 (FP-2021-0003) by Schultz Development, Located at 5190 S. Carneros Way**
- 11. Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law for Scentsy Campus (H-2021-0002) by Sam Johnson of Scentsy, Inc., Located at the Southwest Corner of E. Pine Ave. and N. Hickory Ave.**
- 12. Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law for Schnebly Annexation (H-2020-0115) by Richard Schnebly, Located at 2690 E. Franklin Rd.**
- 13. Development Agreement Between the City of Meridian and Mary Taysom (Owner) and Melanie Pearson (Developer) for Pearson Subdivision (H-2020-0098)**
- 14. Professional Services Agreement Between Treasure Valley Children's Theater and the Meridian Arts Commission**
- 15. Resolution No. 21-2261: A Resolution Authorizing the Twelfth Continuance of a Local Disaster Emergency Declaration and its Terms for an Additional Thirty (30) Days; Authorizing the Continued Immediate Expenditure of Public Money to Safeguard Life, Health and Property; and Providing an Effective Date**

Simison: Next up is our Consent Agenda.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: No changes to the Consent Agenda, so I move that we approve the Consent Agenda, for the Mayor to sign and for the Clerk to attest.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor, I second the motion.

Simison: I have a motion and a second to approve the Consent Agenda. Is there any discussion on the motion? If not, all in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed nay. The ayes have it and the Consent Agenda is agreed to.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

### **ITEMS MOVED FROM THE CONSENT AGENDA [Action Item]**

Simison: There were no items removed from the Consent Agenda.

### **DEPARTMENT / COMMISSION REPORTS [Action Item]**

**16. Solid Waste Advisory Commission: Budget Amendment in the Amount of \$2,255.00 to use Community Recycle Funds to Pay for a Soft Plastic Water Bottle Recycling Container at Republic Services Transfer Station**

Simison: So, we will move on to -- under Item 16, under Department/Commission Reports and we will start off with the Solid Waste Advisory Commission budget amendment in the amount of 2,255 dollars and I will turn this over to Tom.

Otte: Good afternoon, Mr. Mayor, Members of the Council. I am here today asking you to approve a budget amendment for SWAC on behalf of SWAC in the amount of \$2,254.93. SWAC has started a pilot program for the squishy water bottles, the ones that don't pass the hold test. It started in January, it will be terminating in June, just to test the viability of actually collecting those water bottles with Republic at their transfer station. So, this budget amendment will just be paying for the rent on the container and the processing of the material through the end of the pilot program using the community recycle fund budget that SWAC already has.

Simison: Thank you, Tom. Council, any questions?

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Just for clarification, this doesn't include the actual recycling processing at the

recycling center, this is just transport and -- and a container; is that right?

Otte: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Council Woman Perreault. This actually covers the whole thing. This is the all-in amount. So, this covers the rent of the container and the processing at the facility. It's everything to do with the pilot program.

Perreault: Okay. Thank you.

Simison: Council, any further questions?

Hoaglund: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: I would move that we approve the budget amendment in the amount of 2,255 dollars to use the community recycle funds to pay for a soft plastic water bottle recycling container program at the Republic Services transfer station.

Strader: Second.

Simison: I have a motion and second. Is there any discussion on the motion? If not, Clerk will call the roll.

Roll call: Bernt, yea; Borton, yea; Cavener, absent; Hoaglund, yea; Strader, yea; Perreault, yea.

Simison: All ayes. Motion carries and the amendment is agreed to. Thanks, Tom.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

## **17. Mayor's Office: Annual Report**

Simison: Okay, next up is Item 17, the Mayor's Office annual report update. Mr. Miles, the time is yours.

Miles: Thank you, Mr. Mayor and Council. Figured it would be nice to come down and say hi in person to those of you that are here and for those of you that are watching remote. I was getting kind of tired a remote meeting, so we just thought we would come down and have at it now that the orders have changed a little bit. So, today we will talk about the Mayor's office annual report from 2020, go over a few things and highlights. We will cover primarily the Mayor's Office programs. We will talk a bit about strategic planning and process improvements from Vincent's perspective and, then, Shandy will close out with a review of communications that have occurred in the past year. So, I thought I would just touch real quickly -- there we go. What do we do in the Mayor's Office? I know some of you have experienced the Mayor's Office in the past, have worked for a while, some of you haven't. I know a lot of us in the office are new or newer, so we

thought we would just give a quick overview of what we do working around three main program areas. You will hear from Shandy on communications. When it comes to constituent management, we talk about calendaring and scheduling needs, meeting requests, correspondences, commission appointments, proclamations -- you name it we do it if it's requested of us. Programs and events. As you know with COVID those have looked very different this year, either cancelled or looking virtual. But, nonetheless, we have moved forward with -- we had a coffee with the Mayor that was virtually. We have done a couple of town halls that we will touch on. Our Senior Youth Advisory Commissions have also proceeded throughout the year with our team working with them. We monitor and manage legislative affairs that impact the city, as you are all aware of, and, then, through our community outreach we also work with the HOAs, faith groups, downtown associations, businesses and the chamber as well and, then, you will also hear about strategic planning from Vincent, as I mentioned earlier. So, cheesy phrase of mine as a dad. Teamwork does make the dream work. But I mean that sincerely and the people that are on this screen truly, truly do make and help the Mayor's Office succeed and work. Jodi, our communications -- community relations guru. Josha upfront, who deals with all of us, puts up with all of us, that deals with the community. Stephanie --

Bernt: Me as well. Me as well. She puts up with me.

Miles: She puts up with you as well. Thank you. Stephanie, who -- well, she works mainly with fire and police. We claim her as one of our own and she does a great job. Vincent, the post-it note guru and the planning expert. I love the photo of Vincent there. Shandy, who seems to be there for the community at any given moment at any points of the day for any questions she has. All helping the Mayor and the city. And, then, you have got Tim Hendrickson, who I think is -- probably has the hardest job. He's our newest addition. He came on right as COVID was starting, went to NLC, came back and pretty much everything shut down. So, he's had to figure out how to do programs and events virtually and he's -- he's hung with it and made the best of it and just worked in stride. So, just want to share that, you know, a big thank you to all these folks. I'm amazed at the work they do. I'm amazed at how they carry their grace and professionalism throughout the community and with everybody that they interact with. It's a great team. Again, partners, too. We have tons of partners in the city. We have great relationships with our businesses, our community stakeholders. Without them much of what we do in the Mayor's Office would not be possible, whether that's State of the City, walking club, youth scholarships, senior priority based budgeting projects, other PVD projects, these partnerships are vital to what we do and we are thankful for -- for them throughout. This also includes our agency partners that we work with daily to effect projects. You can see some of them down there at the bottom. The school district. The county. ACHD. COMPASS. The downtown associations and corporations and the chamber. A great group of people. We appreciate their support and thank them every day that we have the opportunity to do some things that they help us do. So, the elephant in the room is COVID and I love this picture, but I think the CDC got it wrong when they were looking at the dissection of what COVID actually made up. What we saw was that it was emergency management, employee policies, media requests and community engagement. I don't know what -- the other science stuff they were talking about. This is what we saw. We

had a bunch of customer interactions as you can imagine. We recorded -- inside of our customer contact tracking system we recorded around 550 engagements singularly. Eighty -- over 80 percent of those were COVID and that doesn't include all, just the various touch points that we have made, either in the Mayor's Office or throughout the city. So, as you can imagine with COVID rightfully so it was a big lion's share. I think one day in early March I counted like 50 phone calls in five days between us and legal just as follow-up phone calls. So, a lot of work has gone into just the customer side of COVID and what does it mean in getting information out to the public. We had significant coordination in emergency management. We -- I think we had countless hours with the Fire Department, Legal team and the directors team implementing emergency declarations, dissecting what various orders coming from the state actually meant and how we could communicate that to people out in the community, navigating the CARES Act expenditures, even developing the health screening protocols that we put in place for people to come back into this building. Never thought we would be involved and engaged in something like that. Worked through a bunch of employee policy issues, coordinating with Human Resources, Legal, and Fire, including emergency paid sick leave, family medical leave policies. We updated our emergency remote work policy just so that people could get out of the building, get people home working safely during those times early on in the spring and summer and even still through into this year as we have started to see some good progress made. Implemented a staff database to keep tabs on how people were doing, just so that we knew whether or not our policies were working. That was an interesting tool. And, then, our hotline and COVID webpage, I think a lot of people would just reached out to us often just seeking information, seeking questions. Specifically to the CARES Act funding, I know that's something we have talked about before and you can see some information up on the slide. We were approved of about 1.6, 1.7 million dollars of fund expenditures. The lion's share of that went to the small business grant program, as you are aware. Outside of that program you can see the majority of the remaining approved expenses went to things like PPE and technology upgrades. Specifically I think one of the major technology upgrades was this -- this room here and the audio and the Zoom functionality that we put in place. And, then, with PPE, obviously, you had the things like masks, wipes, disinfectants and efforts like that. I mentioned the business support and it was strong. We helped initiate fee waivers for alcohol catering and promotional sales, temporary use, limited duration sign permits through the coordination with Legal and the Clerk's office. That was a great way to sort of engage and initiate folks getting back to business and, then, we helped develop and implement the small business grant program, which I mentioned earlier and I do want to give a huge thank you to a bunch of people. Tori and Krystal in Community Development. Karen and Todd in Finance. Emily in Legal. And Jodi in our office. Who all helped to work to make that program a success for the businesses outside in the community. You can see there we approved 125 applications for a total of a million dollars allocated to 87 different businesses and most of that funding, as you see on the screen, went to things like rent, utilities, and PPE or those businesses that needed it most down there on the bottom right. You can see primarily in the food services industry. We have the arts and entertainment, which are things like gyms and things of that nature, and, then, education as well, we had daycares and private schools that were applicants who just shut down for a time. So, I think it was a very effective program and we -- we do hope to get you a final report on that once all of the numbers

come back from the state and all the accounting is done we can get you a clearer picture on the dollars and cents. On top of that, we also had just what we would call our normal business and I'm not going to go through the entire laundry list. It's on this list of things. But I do want to highlight just a few that our staff has been integral on. MYAC, as I mentioned, was continuing on and through Tim's efforts with MYAC they revised the program and focused more on a three prong approach of leadership development, community service, public government and education, which was a great change that I think we have helped those kids implement. Some of the highlights of that include volunteer speakers covering leadership development topics, lifetime management, project management, leadership development, effective communication and some of the feedback that we have had from the students have been very refreshing that that's actually information that will help them become better professionals, not only future life, but better students and better college students and better just -- as they move forward looking into professional life and what that means. They also took up from a volunteer perspective a senior center letter writing campaign, worked on the United Way holiday helper program, which helps feed over 4,000 homeless youth. They held a voter registration event as you look at public government education and helped register over 50 people out at The Village, which was a great new unique thing for them to get involved with and, then, a few other things. As I mentioned, Town Hall. We held two successful virtual town halls and MSAB also progressing, they got their priority based budgeting project built through cooperation with you all, the Council, and city partners out in the Parks Department, as well as the community and VSI and that was really the nutshell -- in a nutshell what 2020 was in the Mayor's Office and we do look ahead. We are continuing to work on our priorities. Again, you know, you have heard it before, you will hear again, continuing roads and transportation, education and schools, growth development and jobs and economic development. Those continue to be the four things that we hear from the community that we are focusing our efforts on moving into next year and this year as well and we will continue to make the efforts to help improve these -- these concerns of the community. So, with that I can turn it over to Vincent or happy to take any questions that you might have on that information now or later.

Simison: Council, any questions for David at this point? Okay. Vincent.

Koontz: I'm going to join Dave and take my mask off, too. So, Mr. Mayor, Members of Council, I'm here to share contributions related to the strategic plan and continuous improvement and, you know, just wanted to start off by saying thank you to everybody who contributed to 2021, the 2025 strategic plan. It was a monumental effort, both through COVID and otherwise, and, you know, I really appreciate all the work that was done from city leadership, from the Mayor, City Council, from everybody that was involved with the process. So, really huge effort. During 2020 we also completed our 2016 to 2020 strategic plan. Covered that previously, but we got over 80 percent of that plan done. It was our first strategic plan, so we did a great job, you know, getting that done. A lot of the -- we had over 40 objective leads, completed a lot of the work in the plan and -- and so for our first effort I really feel like that was a good accomplishment and it really was a team effort and, you know, Dave talked about, you know, the whole team effort and I really appreciated all the feedback and all the communication that was given from our

-- from our directors, from our individual staff on that. So, we developed a -- it's for the 2021 to 2025 plan, we developed a plan that was flexible, action oriented and focused on the future and outcomes for our city and we really look to continue that work and find ways to make Meridian a premier place to live, work, and raise a family. So, the next plan -- and I do want to thank -- a part of the efforts with strategic Jeopardy -- would be remiss if I didn't thank Brad and Liz and Joe for their part in that, so -- and that really was kind of the first part of the -- of the plan, introducing it to our city employees and just letting them know what it was about, what our direction was going to be, and how we were going to start being that premier place to live, work, and raise a family. How we are going to bring that vision to life, that mission to life with our strategic plan and, you know, having fun with it was -- was a great part of that effort, but over the past year in 2020 and, then, to 2021 we really wanted to make sure that our employees knew about it and I think mission accomplished in that respect. So, kind of what's coming up. During the month of March I'm going to be working with directors and their leadership to develop the strategies to help the -- help achieve the strategic goals and focus areas that Council adopted in December. After that we will also work through some of the tactics and more nitty-gritty details of the plan, but that -- that's some of the major things that are going to be coming up in the next month or two, so -- and I will report back to you kind of the results of what's -- what's going on there, so -- we are also going to be expanding the use of our external website. We have a -- for accountability purposes we have an external site, [meridiancity.org/strategicplan](http://meridiancity.org/strategicplan), and that's where we are going to be able to show our community, our staff, and our leadership -- kind of the day-to-day ongoings of how the plan is working. In developing the website we will also work with the departments to develop their key performance indicators. You know, how are we going to show progress? We obviously have the citizen survey metrics as measures, but how are we going to show progress towards meeting our goals and meeting our strategies in the strategic plan. So, it will help show that -- that connection back to the -- the work that we are doing and the processes that we are completing. And, finally, as we execute the plan I will work to provide high level updates to City Council and we will review key details and -- as we direct and assist departments going forward with that effort. Departments will provide you more detail during their annual updates on their strategic initiatives as they move forward with the plan from 2021 to 2025. So, as far as strategic planning goes, that's kind of what's up -- what's up in 2021 and we will have, you know, a lot more to come there. And some of the other pieces of what I do is process improvement and the teams that I work with, I help run and manage the Meridian Innovation Change Academy that started back in 2016. I'm sorry. 2019. Some of the really awesome things that we did during 2020 was we found and identified over 80,000 dollars worth of process improvements during 2020. We kind of focused on the metrics of MEAT. We like MEAT. So, MEAT is Money Amount -- or Errors, Amounts and Time. So, those are some of the process improvement, you know, key metrics we focus on and during that year we found value on one -- one example in the process improvement team in Finance -- and their innovation team it's called Fight Club. They found a process through weekly reconciliation of paperwork. It's really exciting. The old process involved clipping a bunch of information from PDFs and saving data in another location, duplicating a bunch of information that was already found in a summary report and, then, we just basically stopped doing that, because it was taking a bunch of time that nobody needed and the only reason we were doing it is because we



had just been doing it that way for years and it saved a total of 78 hours of staff time just by making that one improvement. It's an example of a small improvement that can -- if you take that mentality across the city that's -- that's the kind of stuff we teach in an innovation program. You know, we realized also that we -- we needed to be creative in some of the ways that we approach process improvement during COVID. So, during the year I worked with our facilitator team on a -- what's called Idea Starter and it's a way that staff can submit ideas using Microsoft Teams and a departmental facilitator to kind of flush out what -- their ideas for process improvement and move that idea forward and so some of the -- some of the key highlights this past year. We have done ten process improvements that we have recorded and gone through and, then, we have also -- those are completed from stem to stern. We have also -- we also have nine process improvements that were in progress that carried over into 2020 that we are still working on. So, even in a challenging year we managed to move quite a few processes forward in that respect. And kind of what's coming up. So, we are going to finish the pilot. We are doing a pilot in Finance on Idea Starter. Some of the -- some of the three main goals that I have for 2021 when it comes to process improvement is expand the base. That's getting more people aware through Idea Starter. I would like to roll that program out to the entire city, giving them a platform -- all of our employees a platform to submit ideas to review them and see if they can move them forward with their department. It's also training leaders and departments, giving them resources and tools on how to manage -- how to manage those expectations when it comes to process improvement and innovation and it's also pursuing some large scale innovations and cross-functional and cross-departmental innovations. We have already -- we have already started on a few of those now. We have a title change process in Finance that touches multiple departments, including Water and Finance and several others and, then, there is a rental final billing process. So, more to come on some of those. But that's kind of -- that's kind of my path forward in process improvement in that respect. So, we are exposing the waste and reducing the waste across the city and -- and we are also going to re-roll out our quarterly four hour basics class. That's where we teach people how to do process improvement themselves. We teach them how to identify waste. We teach them how to process map. Use a bunch of post-it notes and throw them all over the place and, then, when we are done we come up with a solution to -- to process improvement and move -- move that ball forward, so -- and with that I think I have come to the conclusion of kind of what other government and some of the things that I have been working on over the last year. So, if you have any questions I'm happy to answer.

Simison: Council, any questions for Vincent at this time?

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Thank you, Vincent. That was great. I didn't know that you had an efficient -- efficiency type of process going and I'm glad to hear that. It's -- for the most part, especially in the larger departments, does the staff really know what other staff members -- like what their jobs are, what they do and -- so that they can help -- are they familiar

with other staff members' job descriptions so that they can help eliminate duplication?

Koontz: Mr. Mayor, Council Woman Perreault, from what I have -- what I have learned from doing process improvement has been when we form groups and we collaborate together that's when some of the innovation really occurs. A lot of times these -- these groups that we form, like the Finance innovation team or -- we had one in Community Development, what I have heard testimonial wise from -- from those group has been just the mere fact that we are collaborating together on projects helps us better understand the processes that we are -- that we are doing every day and helps us understand what -- you know, somebody that works in water, you know, oh, I didn't know they were doing that or, you know, somebody that's a permit tech might not know what one of the planners is doing -- doing in a certain process. So, even just doing a process map, which basically involves just outlining step by step exactly what's happening by every single person in the process, that -- that really actually engages people in a way that they get to see the entire process and that's actually kind of our MO as we see, say, and solve it. So, helping see whatever the employees are doing is absolutely key in any process. So, I think having those collaborative groups where we are trying to focus on process improvement, bringing those people together is really important. It's been tough with COVID, but I think, you know, now that we are coming out of it more there is going to be a lot more examples where we can do even more of that and a lot more cross-functional integration. So, I appreciate that question and it's -- it's -- it's definitely something that our teams have found that just by having that collaborative activity they are able to find out what's really happening in other departments and other areas in the city.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Thanks a lot, Vincent. I'm actually wondering if we could unleash your powers on City Council sessions and work sessions. Maybe there is an opportunity to streamline. You know, one thing I have thought about is we receive these presentations pretty often, but if we got them ahead of time maybe we could have like a more focused, sort of burst of Q&A, instead of going through, you know, in detail. So, I was curious if you are, you know, available to help with City Council efficiencies as well.

Koontz: Mr. Mayor, Council Woman Strader, I'm always available to help with any efficiencies where ever they may lie. So, yeah, I'm happy to -- I'm happy to take on those discussions. I will talk with Council President Bernt about that.

Strader: Awesome. Thanks.

Simison: Yeah. We meant to take all City Council offline, but Legal had a problem with that, so --

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: I appreciate the information, Vincent. It was very helpful. It's very good. Glad to see that you are doing it and understand the synergies when you bring people together and whatnot. The only thing that really surprised me, though, was our Finance Department, you know, made up of accountants, actually called bean counters and whatnot, they identify with Fight Club. That was really surprising to see that, so --

Koontz: Mr. Mayor, Council, Councilman Hoaglund, yeah, they -- they have a lot of fun down there. You know, Todd and Kurt sat with their team and they -- they came up with a good name for Fight Club and I have encouraged any other innovation teams to come up with a cool moniker, but, you know, Fight Club was -- they don't want to talk about what they are doing. If anybody's seen the Fight Club movies that's kind of the mantra that, so -- until it's done, so -- but, yeah, they have a lot of fun in that group. It's been a pleasure working with Brad and everybody down there and they -- they really do focus on, hey, what can we make better. What -- what processes can we eliminate? What -- you know, what can we get, you know, down from 20 steps down to five steps and, you know, try to do it without spending extra money or, you know, using extra resources or extra people, you know, that -- again, that's kind of -- those are kind of the -- the pieces of the pie we were looking at.

Simison: Anything else? Thank you, Vincent.

Koontz: And, then, I'm going to -- Shandy is coming up.

Lam: Good evening, Mr. Mayor, Members of Council. I'm here to talk all things communications in the Mayor's Office. So, I wanted to go -- I wanted to go over new efforts from 2020. Obviously, 2020 was an interesting year in communications for local government. So, we started with some StreamYard productions, have definitely increased our Instagram and Facebook stories, which is a new element. As you know social media changes every day on what is popular and what's effective. We have increased video messaging, especially from the Mayor. We are participating in the Ada County Joint Information System. I'm on the COMPASS public participation workgroup and really COVID-19 communications in general, but especially the COVID-19 information webpage was new and that's what this is that you are seeing. So, overall we had about a hundred thousand hits on our Coronavirus webpage and this was initiated as a one stop shop for our residents. There was a lot of information coming in a lot of different directions for everybody, orders from multiple agencies, and so this really helped us to be able to push that information out to everybody, so that they were less confused and were able to find everything from current health orders to the small business grants, other community resources, et cetera. And, then, we have our ongoing efforts that we have continued to do. So, we push out a bi-weekly e-newsletter, a bi-weekly Mayor's blog in that newsletter. A quarterly utility billing newsletter. We have our outreach events, whether that is something like Do The Right or Coffee with the Mayor, Town Hall. Social media monitoring. The news recaps that you guys receive three times a week. Media relations. So, handling any media inquiries that we get and, then, filtering those through

to be able to connect them or find the correct information for our local media. All of our press releases that get sent out. We -- I review all of our content that goes out to ensure that it sticks with the branding and the voice of the city, to align with everything that we have put in place so far. Our communication staff training. So, I have created several videos that have gone out this year to those that work on social media, work in Canva and our other programs, to ensure that they know tips and tricks on ways to better their processes and help them to do more with less in a lot of those tips and tricks training courses. We handle all of the marketing for the city for all of our events, our programs, and, then, website updates as well in certain areas. So, just to give you guys some information. The Mayor's blog that's -- that goes out every other week, every other Monday, we have seen a huge increase on readership for the Mayor's blog between 2019 and 2020. So, I'm really excited about that increase. I think it is attributed to a few different factors, but that's great to see that more people are getting engaged with their local government. Our e-newsletters also go out at the same time, every other Monday. Publications went down just a little bit -- by three between the two years and -- but our open rate went up and our open rate is above average for all industries, including government, which has a higher open rate. So, that's great. But, again, people are more interested now more than ever and I think COVID has a lot to do with that, right, being able to see the information that's coming to them from their local government, so they can stay safe and healthy. Press releases. So, the publications have gone up based on what we have tracked. So, what we weren't doing before was tracking our public safety -- well, at least police publications and that's because we didn't have anything in place and we also didn't have a PIO, so I can welcome her again. She's been here a year, but since your last update in communications she is new. Stephanie's done a fantastic job for us in public safety and we actually implemented Nixle, similar to how we send out our publications in MailChimp for the Mayor's office, she sends her information out in Nixle. So, we are able to track all of this now and know exactly how many publications we are sending out and our open rate has gone up a little bit on that as well. Social media. We have seen a big increase in social media across the board and we have for a couple of years now. It's on a steady increase. The only one that we saw a decrease on was Twitter. Again, I have a few -- a few ideas as to why that might be, but it really is our lowest engaging platform, so it's not a huge concern for us. We have NextDoor, Facebook, and Instagram that are by far surpassing the others as far as engagement. You can see here just -- this is just Facebook. Facebook has the best way to allow us to gather analytics and Facebook alone we reached 312.2 thousand people last year and similar to Dave saying -- giving you the number on how many e-mails are coming in on that system and what they track there, we also receive -- I'm sure I see all of you interacting with us on social media, which I really appreciate, and you get to see our interactions on there that are public, but we also get a lot of private messages as well on both Facebook and Instagram and we have several Facebook pages. So, just on the city -- the main Facebook page alone we received 115 messages last year. All of those might not require a response if somebody is just responding to a story, but a lot of them do, whether -- and it can be somebody wanting to report something and the response is sending them to the agency that -- that manages that. It can be somebody asking a question -- how late is the park open. We see a lot of different inquiries. So, that's something you guys don't see on your end, but we are always monitoring that to make

sure people have the correct information. So, video production has gone up a lot in the last few years and we are really seeing that that's how people are wanting to engage and get their information. So, here is just a quick list of the videos that we have produced this last year and as you can see here just Facebook alone 74.8 thousand minutes were viewed of our videos. And, then, live streaming as well. So, live streaming something -- it's not new, it's something we have been doing, but it's certainly something that we have seen a big increase on in the last year with people not being able to gather in person for events, but it's been a great way for us to be able to gather together. So, the town hall meetings that we did, something like the art unveiling at Fire Station 6 where we would normally have a large community group there, people could still at least feel the excitement of that event through Facebook Live, be able to see that unveiling, ribbon cuttings, things along those lines were able to go live and provide that in a time when people can't gather together. Or they might even -- you know, when COVID is not around they are still -- they are at work or they are taking care of kids, where ever they are I think just in general all of these adaptations have really helped people to be engaged with the city from their home, their office. If you can engage with your city from the couch I think that is a fantastic way to be able to do that. So, we have seen trends change along the years and we are seeing a lot more people getting their information digitally, rather than by paper, and how they are wanting to receive their information. So, we have adapted that, we have done a lot of the videos, the Facebook Lives, we have stuck with these trends and follow them and been able to implement new processes to be able to get communication out to the public and with that we have seen a great trend in our quality and effectiveness according to our city survey as well for how people are perceiving communications from their city. I think that's all I have for you today, but I would be happy to stand for any questions if you guys have anything.

Simison: Thank you, Shandy. Council, any questions?

Perreault: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Shandy, I just want to say thank you. You -- you have had a phenomenal amount of adaptation in the last year and you just rolled with it and I have no idea how you do all that you do as one person and you just talked about staff doing more with less and I know that's been true across, you know, many different departments. So, just wanted to say thank you, because I have seen an increase in engagement. I have seen an increase in sort of the -- like the professionalism I guess that's come across in the city in terms of how we are, you know, presenting ourselves as a city in the state and -- and to our residents and so just thank you for all those improvements that you have made -- definitely before this last year, but for sure over the last year. Much appreciated.

Lam: Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: A comment, too, Shandy. Great job on the metrics, everything trending, going the right way, you know, going to be hard to mimic that next year and -- you know. But it's great. I think people are going to continue using the tools that you are putting out there and that's always great to have that engagement and that communication effort. So, that's wonderful. Hope your boss appreciates it.

Lam: Thank you, Councilman Hoaglund.

Perreault: Mr. Mayor, can I ask one more question?

Simison: Council Woman Perreault.

Perreault: Shandy, have you noticed a difference between the more that the city is publishing the less questions that come in through calls to the city or like are you seeing an inverse relationship with that?

Lam: You know, I don't specifically track a lot of the calls that we get. I think that would be great to find out from our -- our admins whether or not they are seeing a decrease. I think one prime example of this is, you know, when we implemented -- I'm looking down -- I'm sorry, I'm looking down, because I'm looking at Council Woman Perreault, because you are on my screen, but one of the things that we saw was that we can -- that I can really reference is with trash and recycling, the Trash Talk group I think was a great testament to those calls going down and I did both of those, so that was the -- that one I can actually speak to, because I was taking phone calls from the community and I was also pushing that information out there. I can't speak to the other ones where I'm not taking those phone calls, but in that it was I think a great example of being able to educate the community and, then, we saw that they were able to educate each other. So, I think that that was a great implementation of social media and outreach and helping to provide the information and really empower the community with that information, so that, then, it was less work on us and we got to the point of being able to really sit back now and if somebody will ask a question in there we, of course, monitor that at all times, but we really sit back -- now I wait for somebody else to answer it and we step in if that's incorrect information, but typically somebody else in the group will be able to answer. So, I think that that is one where you can -- really there is tangible proof that that one is -- is working really well and I can't imagine that the others aren't working in a similar format. I just don't have numbers for you.

Perreault: Who would have thought trash might be interactive on social --

Lam: It is a hot topic.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: Great job, Shandy.

Lam: Thank you, Councilman Bernt.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Just overall comment I mean what a challenging year especially for first year as a Mayor and with COVID and everything that came up you know and you guys did a great job on the communication and getting in front of it especially having communication strategies to handle that and some of the legislative things that have come up. So, just wanted to say great job to everybody.

Lam: Thank you.

Simison: Thank you. And I didn't know if Dave had any final remarks. He does not. So, I, too, want to say thank you to the team and I say that -- and thank you to the Council and I know Shandy seems like the one resource, but over the years Council has made investments in our communications efforts, whether it was the web designer and IT, the PIO and for public safety. There is more to do, we know that, but there -- there has been an investment. I think you see that in the survey results over the last several years where we have made investment and we have seen outcomes, but to your point this team is -- you know, when we had Legal's presentations last month I told Dave -- you were there for all that as well. I mean having our -- being involved in all these elements, whether it's the communication side of it, the policy development side, and keeping things moving forward, the team really did that, and so I really want to applaud them for their work that they have done and I did have -- I did have the question and I still might want to ask for the backend reporting that my blog was open and increase of 894 percent, I'm still not convinced that people want to read that much information from the city or from myself or whatever that is, but if it is, great, you know, but it's been a great team effort this last year. Dave?

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: Don't cut yourself short. You're a rock star. People love you.

Miles: Mr. Mayor and Councilman Bernt, we did actually take some time and look at those statistics and they are that up and I think that's something to take note of and to be aware of moving forward and I think it's also a sign of the times with COVID. I think people were engaging in different and unique formats. So, we did validate it and it is the case. So, thank you.

## **18. Valley Regional Transit Fiscal Year 2021 Cooperative Agreement**

Simison: Thank you. All right. Team, thank you very much. With that we will go ahead and move on to Item No. 18 on the agenda, which is the Valley Regional Transit Fiscal Year 2021 Cooperative Agreement and I believe that Miranda was going to introduce this, but I will let her correct me if that's not correct.

Carson: Good evening, Council Members and Mayor. Yes, that is correct. Just reintroducing the contracts that we had brought to you last month. The contract that's here in the packet is the same as the contract last month and, then, also I did send out a memo with some clarification. For any questions that you might have we also have even Stephen Hunt and Kelli Badesheim -- and, Kelli, I apologize if I'm not pronouncing that right -- on to help answer those. So, if you would like I can go over the changes again that are in the original memo. The main things that we are requesting are just the go ahead to add an additional service -- not a new program, but an additional route -- on-demand route to the VA through our Rides To Wellness program that we already are operating through and, then, also there was a question of a credit that was paid to VRT in FY-20 for the new route that wasn't used and FY-20 and carrying that forward. Our options would be carry it forward as a credit into FY-22 and apply it to the new route or apply it as a credit in FY-21 for services that we have incurred this year. So, I'm happy to answer any questions that Council has on those issues.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: The credit that -- or the monies that we paid last year for the route that didn't happen because of COVID, I -- my personal opinion would be to carry it forward and use it toward the purpose that it was designated to. That would be -- that would be my -- that would be my recommendation. I don't know what others think of that, but that would be what I'm thinking.

Hoaglund: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglund.

Hoaglund: Councilman Bernt, I was just thinking, though, you know, I know the preference for Community Development and Finance to expend those this year and I'm wondering if it's because -- since we don't know what's going to happen in the future, if there is some COVID-related type of thing that just doesn't allow -- if people just don't want to use transit, do we want to expend those funds this year as part of the budget cycle, use those, and, then, make a determination next year if we even want to do that or do we -- because I think, then, we are committing to expend those funds when that -- that might change. I don't know. I just want to kind of discuss that, see what we want to do.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.



Bernt: That's what -- we could definitely be open for discussion in regard to that. I don't see a huge problem with that. The only issue is -- is that if we use those funds from last year and use them for different things this year, what does that look like for next year? Are they going to want more money? So, that's my only question. And Kelli is here to answer all of those questions, along with Stephen, so I appreciate you guys being here this evening.

Simison: Well, Council, my -- my -- you know trying to -- at least from my standpoint put this into bite size chunks. I think the first question is would we like to extend the rides of the Harvest Transit for veterans to the VA. Is --

Carson: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Oh. Yes, Miranda.

Carson: If I can, it's for the Rides To Wellness. So, that is a separate service than Harvest Transit.

Simison: Okay. Rides To Wellness. If we could get a resolution on that item first and, then, I think we can move forward in the other directions.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: The Rides To Wellness for the vets to the -- to the VA downtown, are those specifically for Meridian residents or will that transportation come from further west, whether it be Nampa or Caldwell, coming through Meridian going to downtown? And the reason why I ask that question is many times when we approach transportation in that regard it hits Meridian and there is no seats available and so I just wanted to make sure that if we are spending money to get our vets downtown, I have no problem with that, but I want to make sure that there is seats and availability for them if you do that.

Simison: I will ask Miranda or Stephen or Kelli, whoever would like to respond.

Carson: Mr. Mayor, Council Members, so there is -- the intention is for it to be City of Meridian Veterans riding that to the VA. I don't believe that we currently lump our Rides To Wellness program in with another one, but I -- I'm not sure on that, so I would have to ask Kelli if we are grouped with other services.

Badesheim: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Yes, Kelli.

Badesheim: Council Member Bernt, yeah, we -- this was designed to be focused on Meridian residents to those services and so in our research we did look at -- at -- I guess

looking at what some options that were already serving Meridian VA and that was one of our concerns was that there was no guarantee when the bus went through from the west that it would have room and this solution will be Meridian residents being able to schedule a ride that will be door to door if you take them directly. The other issue with the VA run trips is if somebody were to get on that bus they would have to stay until like 2:00 in the afternoon, so it was a very rigid schedule. This is a much less rigid schedule.

Bernt: Thank you, Kelli.

Hoaglun: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Hoaglun.

Hoaglun: Question for Kelli. In that Rides To Wellness you talk about it's covered by CARES fund and we want to expand proposing a pilot expansion, which I think is worth -- worth giving a try, but it says with Council approval funds currently budgeted would be used. Are you referring to the 51,250 dollars that was paid to VRT in FY-20 and, then, credited '21 and -- versus delaying that service between The Village and Ten Mile -- are those the funds you are referring to for that expansion pilot?

Badesheim: Mr. Mayor, Council Member Hoaglun, those would be actual funding that we use for our Rides To Wellness in our specialized transportation program. So, that program is also being CARES funded this year with the original budget, so that reserves some dollars -- some local dollars to be able to do this pilot and, then, we will bring a discussion to you with your budget on how we want -- how you would want to fund those -- those going forward. So, it does give us an opportunity to do a short pilot of those services.

Hoaglun: Okay. Thank you, Kelli.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: Just a quick question. What would be annual ongoing cost of the -- I guess the Rides To Wellness program be, you know, if -- if CARES Act funding was not available in subsequent years, what is that amount?

Carson: So, Mr. Mayor, Council Members, I will let -- Kelli will have to expand on that as well, but I can tell you when we looked we were estimating ten trips a day for those veterans. So, it will really come down to what we see -- what kind of usage we see this year before we can really estimate what next year is going to bring.

Strader: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: So, if it's like a ballpark -- let's assume it's the ten rides, looking through the agreement again -- or just trying to understand what kind of -- give me an idea of what that dollar figure might be again. Is it 50,000 dollars a year? Less than that?

Carson: Council Woman Strader, with the -- the one estimate that I have received for the City of Meridian portion of the program would be around 35,000.

Strader: That's right. Thank you. I appreciate that. Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Council Woman Strader.

Strader: You know, I think this program sounds like it meets a need, you know, based on what -- what we have heard, that the VA is providing a similar service, our residents aren't able to take advantage of it because the buses -- or the transportation is full. I guess just speaking for myself I'm open to trying this with the CARES Act funding to see how it goes and if it gets good usage and it's beneficial for people, that's where I would stand on that particular element.

Simison: Council, does anyone disagree with that point of view? Okay. All right. So, we have answered question number one. Question number two is funding element, you know, in terms of dollars used, returned, carry forward -- I can only -- you know, my viewpoint with our Finance Department was when you develop a budget the one thing I did not want to have happen is leave money on the balance books at VRT and, then, have us develop our budget for next year at a lower dollar figure and, then, the following budget year have to make up that difference, because we used a credit. So, I'm in -- my personal viewpoint is not to leave a credit at VRT at this point in time and that way it keeps our budget development on a flat level rate and it will allow us to better consider -- even whether or not this pilot program continues in the next budget year, because we see the overall cost on the ongoing budget compared to having a credit, much as I like credits in places, I'm also not a fan of item budget to credits. So, that's my viewpoint on that item.

Carson: Mr. Mayor, if I can I can share the clarification memo that was sent, just as kind of a refresher and we can refer to it as we go through this conversation. I think it will help to kind of put that memo there in black and white. So, hopefully, you are seeing that now. There should be a Window -- a Word document there. I apologize, my screen goes a little crazy for a second after I share, so give me just a second to get my bearings here again. So, you will see that this was what was originally requested in the budget cycle for FY-21 and that included six months of the new service, which was the cost for six months of the new service and that credit was applied to that cost. So, what we would be saying with the -- with the cooperative agreement that we brought forward where we are asking to be approved, the new total is 272 and some change, rather than the original budgeted 442 and that was because we took out that service contribution -- or, I'm sorry, we took out that -- the service contribution amount for the new local route and, then, they applied the credit just kind of generally across the board.

Simison: Okay. Council, any thoughts or questions? Then I think we are good. Anything

else on this item? All right. Thank you. Appreciate --

Carson: Thank you, Mr. Mayor, Council Members.

Simison: Yes. With that, Council, we are at the end of our work session.

Bernt: Mr. Mayor?

Simison: Councilman Bernt.

Bernt: I move that we adjourn the meeting.

Hoaglund: Second the motion, Mr. Mayor.

Simison: I have a motion and a second to adjourn. All in favor signify by saying aye. All opposed nay. The ayes have it. We are adjourned.

MOTION CARRIED: FIVE AYES. ONE ABSENT.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:26 P.M.

(AUDIO RECORDING ON FILE OF THESE PROCEEDINGS)

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR ROBERT SIMISON

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE APPROVED

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHRIS JOHNSON - CITY CLERK