

City council extends virtual meetings for 30 days

February 5, 2022



The city council is Crescent City will continue to meet virtually as the COVID-19 pandemic rages in Del Norte County.

At their last meeting in January, the city council voted 4-1 to continue the virtual meetings for another 30 days while promising to look at the issue again during its first meeting in February.

The council voted in December to move to virtual meetings for a month due to the COVID surge, and with that time ending, council members had to decide whether to extend the virtual sessions or return to in-person meetings.

"Cases continue to rise in our community," City Manager Eric Wier told the council. "Over the last weekend, there was 127 cases. Thankfully, hospitalizations have not risen significantly."

Wier said the county did change its quarantine policies, allowing many COVID-positive residents to return to normal life after five days. He said being able to meet virtually has a lot of positives.

"For us, going to virtual meetings has allowed us to meet fully as a council when we would not have been able to," Wier said. "There are a plethora of cases out there. It is not uncommon to be in close contact with some of the cases and needing to quarantine or isolate."

After hearing from Wier, the council discussed how to move forward.

"I would like to have seen Dr. (Aaron) Stutz here and seen a presentation from him to see where we are going with the surge before we made this decision," Mayor Jason Greenough said.

Wier explained Stutz was working at the hospital that night, but he said the public health authority expects the surge to continue into February. Wier said the county was expecting the hospital to handle the surge OK.

"In a perfect world, we should be in the Flynn Center," Councilor Blake Inscore said. "With 127 cases this weekend and hospitalizations up to five, I'm OK with this."

Inscore suggested having an item on the agenda at the council's first meeting this month to change back to in-person if the numbers allow.

"There's that or we hold off for a week and hold a special meeting," Greenough said.

"I'd rather have a special meeting," Councilor Beau Smith said. "I just don't feel like we're ever going to get back to meeting in person. I want this to be done like the next person, but I want everyone to be safe. I don't want us to be the only ones meeting virtually."

Earlier the same day the council met, the Del Norte County Board of Supervisors decided to continue to meet in person.

"I think it's a tough one for all of us," Greenough said. "We all want to get back to normal. I understand the reason for this being on here. It's to allow as many council members to attend as possible. I'm really leaning toward a special meeting, and I'd really like to have Dr. Stutz at the meeting."

But that idea was firmly rejected by one councilor.

"No," Councilor Ray Altman said. "I don't want anymore special meetings, especially for that. Can't we just wait for this to blow over? Now you want to have a meeting about a meeting. Stop having meetings about meetings."

Mayor Pro Tem Isaiah Wright told the council because of his job, there's a good chance he would not be able to attend in-person meetings while Omicron is around.

"There are classrooms all over the school district closing down," Wright said. "My son is currently in isolation. For me, it could be hard to get to a couple of meetings. I have more than my family that could keep me from getting to a meeting. I have 28 other families."

Inscore then made a motion to extend the virtual meetings for 30 more days with Altman seconding it. The vote passed 4-1 with Smith voting no.

