

A message to our whole community,

The Board of County Commissioners and Mayors of CB, Mt. CB, and Gunnison want to reach out to you as we find ourselves in uncharted waters amid the COVID-19 outbreak. We all support the extraordinary efforts of our public health officer and the difficult choices she has made in order to protect the citizens of Gunnison County. We want to find the best path forward and come out on the other side as best we can, in terms of both health and economy. This will take the continued investment of the whole community.

First, we want to thank you! The community response has been amazing. Our healthcare professionals and emergency personnel bravely show up week after week to care for us. Our essential workers keep us stocked up on food and household items, and we applaud their dedication. Our teachers, business owners, and volunteers continue to go the extra mile for us. To all the special districts, public land managers, utility providers, CBMR, fire districts, law enforcement agencies, non-profits and others tending to the daily needs of the community in Gunnison County, we thank you as well.

We write this to our whole community that includes full time residents, second homeowners, university students and our guests & visitors. The COVID-19 pandemic has called on each of these groups to take immediate, challenging and unprecedented actions to support our collective long-term wellbeing. Like any battle, we need folks in different roles to be as effective as possible. It is worth reminding ourselves that the battle we are fighting is not with each other, but rather maintaining the flattened curve of COVID-19. Our responsibilities, opportunities, and situations might be different on how we fight this pandemic, but the overall outcome should be the same, to preserve the life and health of our residents and visitors. Because we have different responsibilities and opportunities in how we fight this does not mean we should be fighting each other.

To our second homeowners, we know this experience is tough on you too. Wherever you call home in addition to Gunnison County, your home community is, or will be, struggling to address this virus. Our public health orders started with a recommendation and then moved to a directive that you shelter at your primary residence outside of Gunnison County. This is not meant to be a rejection of you, your family or your positive contributions to Gunnison County. We have to acknowledge the limitations of our small critical care hospital with no ICU. Put simply, if we have a spike of COVID-19 patients in addition to “normal” emergency calls, there is a real possibility our hospital will not meet the critical needs of an increased population. We are asking for the time needed to ensure we have the equipment, testing and capacity to address this public health crisis. Additionally, Gunnison County is one on the

hotspots nationwide, and traveling to your second home has the potential to increase your odds of exposure to the virus due to our high per capita rate of transmission. We care about your well being too!

To our guests and visitors, you are an essential part of our community as well. We know how much you love this place, and your support of our community and businesses is critical. However, for now, we need you to give us the space and time to continue the strict best practices that we are currently under locally. The longer we can keep the curve flattened and meet the goals of the public health order, the sooner our community will be able to re-open in a safe and orderly manner. At that point, we look forward to seeing you here.

To the Western Colorado University students; your nimble and quick reaction to the closing of campus after spring break set a great example of seeing the seriousness of the situation and doing what was necessary to help your community. We cannot wait to see the campus buzzing with activity again. Well done!

For those of us who are full time residents, we have a high bar of expectations too. First and foremost, the task we have is to be kind and loving to all community members. Our job is to encourage folks to take the public health orders seriously, but you are not the enforcers of the order. We have had some incidents of yelling down, confronting and aggressive behavior towards others based on assumptions about residency, license plates or other supposed qualifying information. This needs to stop. This does not reflect the true values of the communities of Gunnison County. Let us re-channel that energy into personal responsibility and setting a good example. Following the ban on in person gatherings is a place we can all do better. A walk, ride or ski with those who live in your household is acceptable, but meeting up and doing these activities with others is not. Check in by calling neighbors who might need help, volunteer with the efforts, make and wear a mask out in public, and try to hit the trails in off peak times to share the resource. Thoughtfully evaluate what is an essential item and limit trips out to the store. Purchase only what you need at the store for a week or two and leave some for others. Keep supporting local businesses as much as you can. The better we follow the order now the sooner we can get to the place where public health can begin to soften the order.

We are in this together. We being the whole community, regardless of how we categorize ourselves. The bottom line is we all love this place, and we each have a role that we need to fulfill to get us through this as best as possible. We need you to help, even when it is not convenient or perhaps feels unfair. We have already lost members of our community, and we do not want to lose more. Everyday our

businesses are closed or reduced in their offerings takes a toll on the whole community. There is going to be hardship in getting through this pandemic, and we cannot control that. What we can control is how we show up, how we react and how we treat each other. This is the time to put community above self and get to the other side. We are proud of you! We are seeing positive results! Let us double down on our resolve and keep our chin up! We can continue to do this!

Jonathan Houck-County Commissioner

John Messner-County Commissioner

Roland Mason-County Commissioner

Jim Schmidt –Mayor Crested Butte

Jim Gelwicks-Mayor Gunnison

Janet Farmer-Mayor Mt. Crested Butte