



Staff Report

April 27, 2020

To: Mayor and Town Council
From: Dara MacDonald, Town Manager
Subject: Potential use of Elk Ave for business expansion Summer 2020

Summary: At the meeting on April 20th the Town Council directed staff to investigate the possibility of closing Elk Ave to vehicle traffic in the summer of 2020. The goal of the closure would be to allow businesses along Elk to access public right of way adjacent to their businesses to expand their offerings during ongoing social distancing requirements. Encouraging gatherings of people or the atmosphere of a special event is not the goal.

Background: The commercial district of Elk Avenue is the heart of Crested Butte. Many public serving businesses are located along this street and it is a focal point for both locals and visitors. The street typically allows for on-street parking, two-way vehicular traffic and deliveries in addition to pedestrian traffic on sidewalks. Limited use of the sidewalks is permitted during the summer by adjacent restaurants, subject to ADA accessibility and Council approval.

Discussion: Candice, Mel and Dara have met with Ashley UpChurch, as well as representatives from the City of Gunnison and the ICE Lab to discuss this idea. We have identified a number of items for consideration if the Council chooses to pursue this idea.

Ashley UpChurch from the Chamber has been working closely with us on this and the Chamber is taking the lead on circulating a survey to business owners along Elk Ave and the adjacent side streets. The purpose of the survey would be to garner the level of interest in this program and identify potential issues or concerns.

- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) considerations – The Town is obligated to ensure access on public property complies with ADA. The Town needs to maintain a minimum of 4' width of sidewalk at all times. If businesses are to take over additional areas of the public space, the 4' minimum sidewalk width will need to be maintained. In addition, if businesses utilize space on the street, additional accessible paths from the street to above the curb should likely be added.
- Emergency Services access – Crested Butte Fire Protection District and the Marshals are supportive of the closure so long as a minimum corridor of at least 16' is maintained on Elk Ave for safe passage of emergency vehicles. If this project proceeds we will remain in close contact with CBFPD on design and layout of the corridor.

- Mt. Express – Chris Larsen has confirmed that Mt. Express can accommodate a vehicle closure of Elk either by rerouting down Maroon or by continuing to run down Elk as the only vehicle permitted. The preference would be to continue running down Elk Avenue to not push that impact onto Maroon which may be impacted with additional parking pressure due to the closure of Elk. The Town would have to work with Mt Express to ensure that adequate safety measures are in place to remind people that busses are still running and ensure the busses can operate efficiently. An example of this is 16th Street Mall in Denver.
- Accommodation for deliveries on Elk – Several businesses on Elk Ave. routinely receive deliveries from Elk Avenue and do not have a satisfactory alternative. Can this type of activity be limited to prior to 10:00 a.m. each day? Not sure what to do about UPS / FEDEX.
- Physical length of Elk Ave. closure - 5th Street to 2nd Street or 1st Street? Staff recommends not closing the first block of Elk off 6th. This will allow for people to still access 5th Street including the Library and Town Hall. In addition, 5th should punch through to Butte this summer so it will be good to have it completely open and accessible to facilitate circulation.
- Barricades
 - at intersections – close cross streets or keep open for traffic to flow across?
 - along street corridors to ensure access for emergency vehicles/Mt Express. Staff should have a draft plan for this ready for presentation at the Council meeting on April 27th.
 - This would likely necessitate the use of flower barrels and planters and thus the Town would proceed with hiring seasonal gardening crew for the summer.
- Establish common seating areas or allow each restaurant to expand on their own? Restaurants may not be interested in investing in additional seating for this temporary street closure. As an alternative we could place tables and chairs or picnic tables along the street closure area that people could use if they get food to go. Alternatively, these tables could be supplied by the Town and placed in the street near restaurants who could then utilize them for table service.
 - Liquor –
 - license expansion – each restaurant could expand their premise area across the sidewalk to whatever new seating area is established. The process would be the same as for sidewalk seating and would take about a month to get through the State approval after Council approval.
 - common consumption area – Possible, but may have logistical challenges particularly around security requirements
 - Designate Elk Ave as a park and thus alcohol would be allowed under current Town rules. This would allow for restaurants to sell alcohol to go as they can under the current public health orders or bring their own beverages as they can in parks.
 - Outdoor seating areas
 - Investment required by businesses? Are they interested or willing to purchase necessary equipment such as tents or display racks? This is being asked in the survey being circulated by the Chamber right now.

- Does Town invest in tables/chairs for takeout dining? Could utilize rentals that will not be being used for events or pursue CCI grants to put artists to work.
 - Use picnic tables from town parks? If events are not allowed, could we relocate the picnic tables from Rainbow Park to Elk Ave to allow people to pick up take-out and dine on the street.
- Consider waste generation if take-out style, how to reduce waste (engage sustainable CB, restaurants utilize reusable containers, etc.). Restaurants could have bus bins outside their establishments where patrons could deposit plates, flatware, glasses, etc.
- Hand wash stations - The Town should add hand wash stations within the street closure area
- How do special events street closures tie in – The likelihood of large public events in the Summer of 2020 remains very uncertain at this time. The Town could work with each event individually to modify layouts as needed.
- Avoid public gatherings - It will be imperative that the messaging and structure around a closure of Elk Avenue is clear that it is intended to create a safe environment for the businesses to operate and not to create a festival type atmosphere. We would need to work on signage to help remind the public to maintain social distancing and not gather in groups.
- Parking impacts on neighborhoods – The Town would need to focus business owners, employees and the public on utilizing transit and large public parking areas such as the 4-Way or CBCS parking lot in order to minimize impact on neighborhoods. This could be emphasized through public service announcements and signage. Business owners, employees and locals from outside of Crested Butte would be encouraged to leave a townie bike at the 4-Way bus stop or CBCS parking lot so they could take transit to town and have transportation once they arrived.
- Duration – Mid-June thru Labor Day?
- What triggers the end of this set-up? Does this end when health orders end?

Climate Impact: This could potentially have a positive impact on vehicle related emissions as our community shifts more towards transit use in the summer.

Financial Impact: The direct cost to the Town has not yet been quantified. It will depend on decisions around who pays for things like tables and hand wash stations and staffing to maintain flowers and trash receptacles. However, it is not anticipated to be a particularly large investment by the Town. On the plus side, any investment by the Town would hopefully result in increased sales tax revenues through more commerce opportunities for our businesses.

Legal Review: No legal review has been conducted at this time. Legal review may be needed depending on which direction the Town decides around alcohol.

Recommendation: The Town Council should consider each of the topics in the discussion area above during the meeting on April 27th. Meanwhile staff will continue working with the Chamber to gather input from the business community and public in order to provide the Council with a more comprehensive proposal on May 4th.