

Hi everyone,

Here's the latest from Lowell, and welcome to the update to seven new signups! As always, please feel free to forward to this anyone who might want to get these. The signup link is at <http://lowell.edu/local-updates>.

Section 17

No action since the last update of Feb 1. We have not fully developed either new bill language or the Senate Committee report language, and as noted in the last update, everything will be made publicly available before any bill is introduced. With the Senate occupied over the past few weeks with a trial and with forming Committees, the timing for action seemed poor in any case.

Astronomy Discovery Center

No change since the last update. We continue to fundraise as best we can from the confines of Zoom screens. At present, have have received payments or commitments for \$28M of of the \$37M cost of the new facility. We are still looking at sometime in 2023 for opening and are hoping to break ground this Spring - our trigger for that is 80% of the funds raised or pledged.

Lowell operational status

- I was emailing last weekend with pathogen and medical professionals including Dave Engelthaler at TGen and Paul Keim at NAU. Based on their input, as well as my own observations of the plummeting (yay!) AZ Covid numbers and the probable immunity level statewide, I've advised Lowell staff that we should begin planning for CDC Phase 2 operations starting sometime in April, hopefully early in the month rather than later. Besides getting more staff back to the Hill, this would entail a significant ramp-up in daytime, mostly outdoor, still socially distanced public tours for groups of ten or less. We think there might be about 13 of those tours per day, plus our evening Premium Access programs. That translates to total day+night attendance of about 150 if we sell everything out. For comparison, our typical summer attendance pre-Covid was about 200 in the day plus 200-400 in the evening. I therefore wouldn't expect major traffic impacts in the westside neighborhood as a result of our Phase 2 ops. It would be really nice to get to Phase 3 this summer, but I'm not counting on that. I'll keep you posted on the timing as we continue to watch the Covid numbers, vaccine progress, and of course the viral mutations. Fingers crossed - wouldn't it be glorious to have a slightly more normal life during the upcoming lovely long and warm days here in our mountain town?!

- Our all-day security company presence Friday through Sunday at the Mars Hill overlook seems to have helped significantly with rowdy, trespassing, and occasionally hostile snowplayers. We will continue to employ their services until enough snow has melted to eliminate the temptation.

Jeff Hall
Director
Lowell Observatory