

**Subject:**Update from Lowell - October 28, 2020

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**From:**Jeffrey Hall <[jch@lowell.edu](mailto:jch@lowell.edu)>

Hello everyone,

This is the first of our new bi-weekly updates from Lowell Observatory about our operational status and expansion plans. We want to keep you informed on (1) the status of our phased reopening to the public, (2) the campus capital expansion plan of which our new Astronomy Discovery Center is the centerpiece, and (3) legislation, partnerships, and development involving Section 17 to the west of our campus.

### **Logistical matters regarding this update**

- I will send these via an outgoing-only email distribution list maintained by our IT staff.
- The initial email list consists of individuals from the Flagstaff Townsite, the Flagstaff Mesa HOA, the Friends of Flagstaff's Future, the Flagstaff Open Space Commission, the Sierra Club, City staff, City council, the Flagstaff Shakespeare Festival, TGen North, The Arboretum, Lowell staff involved with our expansion plans, and residents.
- These updates are open messages. Feel free to forward them to anyone you like. Anyone is welcome to join the distribution list either by emailing me or by signing up on our web site at the link given in the next section below.
- If you wish to opt out of these updates, just let me know by email and I will have our IT remove you from the list.

### **Section 17**

- We have created a page on our website where you can view and download various information regarding Section 17. The URL is <http://www.lowell.edu/local-updates>.
- Among other things, the webpage contains the original 1910 Act of Congress, the current proposed amended language under consideration by the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee (Murkowski, Chair; Manchin, Ranking Member; to whose staff comments on the bill can be directed), and the Committee report language discussing the meaning of "observatory purposes." You will also find a history of Lowell's ownership of Section 17 by our current Trustee, W. Lowell Putnam, IV.
- Nexxus Consulting, which works with City and County on multiple matters, is assisting us with the bill. They reported to me in an email of October 26 that "*Rumor (but not confirmed) is that there will be a mark-up during the week of November 16th.*" If there is a change to that, I will report it in the next of these updates.

## Astronomy Discovery Center

- You will find current information about the ADC at the Web address above.
- At present, we are working on permitting from the City of Flagstaff that will allow us to have a groundbreaking leading to civil preparation of the site by our general contractor, BEC Southwest. At present, we do not think this can happen before early 2021.
- Other work right now is mostly "behind the scenes;" principally fundraising and planning content for the ADC exhibit halls.
- We are working with the Flagstaff Mesa HOA on an MOU to build an unpaved, emergency-only egress road from the future ADC parking lot to just below the cul-de-sac on their road. It will mostly, but not entirely, follow existing fire roads.

## Lowell operational status

- We remain in Phase 1B of our reopening, which is synced to CDC Covid-19 Phase 1 criteria and recommendations. This means a maximum group size of 10 co-habiting or co-traveling individuals or fewer per night for our Premium Access programs, with up to 6 groups per night. Until we reach Phase 2, evening Lowell traffic volume on/near Santa Fe Avenue should remain light. Given that the full duration of the summer case surge in AZ was almost exactly three months (~May 20 - August 20), I expect the present surge, if similar, to continue until at least February, perhaps a month or two later depending on the extent of holiday travel exposures. We'll be in Phase 1 at least until then. Let us all hope that at that point, we'll see a subsidence of the virus toward semi-normality.
- We have extended our contract with Southwest Protective Services for a 7 nights/week presence at the Mars Hill Overlook from 5-11 PM through November 16. Their nightly reports indicate a continued fairly full parking area, but considerably reduced speeding traffic and roaring engines. After mid-November, we are going to reduce our contract to 2-3 nights/week, probably on the weekends, to see if the cold months naturally damp down the rowdiness. I welcome continued feedback from Townsite residents regarding loud traffic, and I appreciate their help with this over the summer.

I hope you all are staying well and healthy and finding ways to remain on an even keel during the stresses of our unusual new routine, which appears to be with us for a while yet.

Best regards,

Jeff Hall  
Director  
Lowell Observatory