

An Interview with Dr. Ryann Juden

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Dr. Ryann Juden, City Manager for the City of North Las Vegas, and was conducted on 7/14/22 by Kelliann Beavers. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with Ryann Juden

Date: 7-14-2022

SPEAKERS: Kelliann Beavers, Ryann Juden

Kelliann Beavers [00:12]

Okay. So, to confirm, you've reviewed the consent form, and you're comfortable with us recording the interview?

Ryann Juden [00:16]

Wait just one second.

Kelliann Beavers [00:19]

Sure, of course.

Ryann Juden [00:27]

Okay, sorry. We just have a ballot petition that is blowing up right now.

Kelliann Beavers [00:31]

No worries. Do you need to take care of something? It's okay if you do. I can wait.

Ryann Juden [00:34]

Nope. You're fine.

Kelliann Beavers [00:37]

Okay. To confirm that you've reviewed the consent form. You're okay with me recording the interview.

Ryann Juden [00:41]

I am. Perfectly fine with it.

Kelliann Beavers [00:42]

And then the first question – and feel free to attend to something throughout if you need to – is, as a leader in your community, how did you see your role and the role of North Las Vegas as a whole during the pandemic?

Ryann Juden [00:57]

Well, I think I saw our role as twofold. First of all, we needed to protect the health and safety of the residents. Second, we also had to be very cognizant of recognizing that the crisis was both a health crisis and a future financial crisis, and we needed to guard against both of those. One was immediate things that we needed to do. Most of the health stuff was immediate. The financial crisis was both immediate and long-term.

Kelliann Beavers [01:25]

Thank you. The next question is, how did you work with, or observe, groups that were hardest hit by the pandemic, and who were those groups in your opinion?

Ryann Juden [01:37]

Yeah. I think there's three big lessons that I think I've taken away from the pandemic. The first is there was nowhere for leadership to hide.

Kelliann Beavers [01:43]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [01:45]

I mean I saw it whenever we got together as a policy group with the MAC, which is a designation from FEMA. It's a group that gets together and makes all the determinations within that. And the way FEMA works is, you have a policy group that everything comes filtered through, so you have all these other subgroups. So the policy group was basically the-

Kelliann Beavers [02:07]

It's part of the MAC. Is that right?

Ryann Juden [02:10]

It's part of the MAC, yeah.

Kelliann Beavers [02:11]

Okay.

Ryann Juden [02:12]

It's probably the more critical part of the MAC because it makes all the decisions, and everything filters out through it.

Kelliann Beavers [02:17]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [02:18]

So the policy group is made up of your mayors and your chief executive officers of the jurisdictions. In the case of the county, it's the county chair. So, Commissioner Kirkpatrick was Chair at the time, so she was in there. But then it also had – like the Airport Authority, so Rosemary Vassiliadis. It had other stakeholders like the NRA [Nevada Resort Association], so Virginia Valentine, and a sheriff. It had basically, all of the decision-makers in the valley, including people from the private sector. So the chambers – executives from the major casinos; the major resorts.

Kelliann Beavers [02:42]

Mm-hmm. Remind me what "MAC" stands for. Lisa Corrado also mentioned it, but I forget what it stands for.

Ryann Juden [03:03]

MAC is the Multi-Agency Coordination – something like that.

Kelliann Beavers [03:09]

Okay. And it exists because it is part of what's mandated or created by FEMA's emergency response. Is that right?

Ryann Juden [03:17]

Yeah. And they did it either after an earthquake or a hurricane. They created this system. And it's really kind of an interesting system in how there's a finance group, right, that determines the costs of running the MAC.

Kelliann Beavers [03:31]

Right.

Ryann Juden [03:32]

There's all these different groups within emergency groups – so, all of our public safety, all of our police chiefs and fire chiefs in the valley would be together, and they would make recommendations to the policy group. The health officials would make recommendations to the policy group.

Kelliann Beavers [03:52]

Right.

Ryann Juden [03:55]

Then the policy group would implement it. So the organization is structured for regional issues like hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. I'm not so sure how well the design is for something that impacts everybody and large groups of everybody. So, while we had a MAC down here, dealing with the exact same problem, there was a MAC up in Washoe dealing with the exact same problem.

Kelliann Beavers [04:23]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [04:24]

So it was different because we're supposed to deal with that regionally. But then we also had a state where we had a governor, with a significantly smaller staff, and significantly smaller resources that was trying to be relevant and trying to lead whenever it's really-

Kelliann Beavers [04:38]

And presumably, he didn't participate in or engage with the MAC directly?

Ryann Juden [04:44]

No. We tried to engage, but there was not really an appetite on the part of the state to engage.

Kelliann Beavers [04:50]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [04:51]

They read state law in the constitution differently, and they decided to lead out differently.

Kelliann Beavers [04:55]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [04:57]

So, I learned that there's nowhere for leadership to hide. I saw it in that MAC. We had a table that we would meet around, a very large table, over at county. And then you'd start to see people going towards the wall, not wanting to be in there.

Kelliann Beavers [05:13]
(laughs)

Ryann Juden [05:15]
People crying.

Kelliann Beavers [05:16]
I'm sure.

Ryann Juden [05:17]
People that were upset and were – "Oh, what about my family?" and all the other things. You saw leaders that cast all of that aside and said they were going to put the community first, and it was very easy to spot them.

Kelliann Beavers [05:29]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [05:29]
It was super-easy to spot them.

The second thing I think, which goes more to the answer to your question is, it clearly exposed the haves and the have-nots. This pandemic should leave no doubt in anyone's mind of how much we need to do to bring certain communities up to par with everybody else.

Kelliann Beavers [05:49]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [05:50]
It's not a level playing field. And the historic challenges are there, and healthcare outcomes – all across the board, they showed that you couldn't hide in this. And the third is, and I saw this more acutely as City Manager, I believe the impact on females was more than anyone else. And why I say that is, when the schools shut down – we have lots of employees that are married to each other. And the burden of caring for the children when CCSD closed fell disproportionately on the females. And I saw career individuals that had worked really hard, that a lot fell on them, and they had to go – and I think that it put back some of the strides that had been made with women in the workforce by a lot. I don't know how much – you can probably quantify it.

Kelliann Beavers [06:43]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [06:45]
But it's had a real impact there. And those are three major takeaways. So I think the communities in particular in North Las Vegas, we saw with our communities of color that they were being impacted by this dramatically because of already existing healthcare challenges that made them very susceptible to this. That not having as healthy of an environment as they live in. Not having as healthy of bodies because of their – I don't know. Just the fact that they've been left behind.

Kelliann Beavers [07:21]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [07:22]

It really impacted them hard. So we were very particular in making sure that we stood up clinics and vaccination places within those communities. We didn't have the luxury of some of the other jurisdictions. If you take a look at how much the different jurisdictions – how many vaccinations did they administer? You'll find jurisdictions larger than North Las Vegas that administered less than 10% of what we administered.

Kelliann Beavers [07:50]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [07:53]

We administered over 100,000 vaccinations. We had to get right into our community because we had communities that were being impacted more than others. I don't believe Henderson themselves administered any. They had a third party that administered some, but it's primarily to employees and things. Now, County went out and administered like crazy to everybody. But you won't find another – I don't believe you'll find another city jurisdiction in the State of Nevada definitely. They took it upon themselves to say, "Hey, I get it, that this is something that we need to do, or something – not that we need to do – that this is not something that's required of us, and we have health districts."

Kelliann Beavers [08:27]

Right.

Ryann Juden [08:30]

We have funding that goes to a county level to do that. But I think, through the MAC and through the leadership of Commissioner Kirkpatrick, it was easy for us to jump in and say, "Put us in, Coach. Tell us where to go. How can we help?" And we did that. Our fire department did that, and they were administering vaccinations. In fact, the National Guard, which moved from different vaccination sites, preferred to be at ours because, right away, we noticed some very important things. And that is if you're going to get this – and the original people that came in had to be over 80 or something like that.

Kelliann Beavers [09:01]

Right.

Ryann Juden [09:03]

When those people came in early on, it was difficult. Because they had to come in, and they had to get in through a computer system, right? Online registrations. And then, once they came in, what we saw in other jurisdictions is, they would give them their shot and say, "Okay. Well, go back online in three weeks and get signed up again."

Kelliann Beavers [09:20]

Oh, right.

Ryann Juden [09:21]

We didn't let a single person leave without signing up for their next vaccination.

Kelliann Beavers [09:24]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [09:26]

So, people that got vaccinated in North Las Vegas, from day one, they got their vaccination. They also got

their appointment before they left – they walked out. And we had two banks of computers. They were signed up for an appointment for their next one, so they didn't have to go online.

Kelliann Beavers [09:39]

I'm sure that made it a lot more likely that they ended up getting it.

Ryann Juden [09:43]

It did. It gave them the peace of mind that we wanted them to have, so they're not sitting there like "Oh, my gosh. I've got to do this whole thing again in three weeks." Do you know how it is?

Kelliann Beavers [09:51]

And it was so hard to find the opportunity to get them at that point.

Ryann Juden [09:54]

That's right.

Kelliann Beavers [09:56]

So then there was the fear of "Will I be able to find the opportunity to get the second one?"

Ryann Juden [09:57]

That's exactly right.

Kelliann Beavers [10:00]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [10:01]

So, as long as we had the vaccines, we were able to provide them. We also had a process where people were in and out. There were no lines in North Las Vegas because of the way we did the pre-screen. We had people that were mixing – because each vaccination...this is two years of memory – but each little thing we had had five doses in it.

Kelliann Beavers [10:20]

Right.

Ryann Juden [10:21]

So we had that all done. Then from that table, they would take them over to where they were doing the shots. So the person who was doing the shot was doing the shot. They weren't drawing it, they weren't doing that, so people got in and out.

Kelliann Beavers [10:31]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [10:32]

And we had an extremely efficient system of doing that. And that's because we followed the MAC – because even though there was the county MAC, we also had our own EOC, Emergency Operations Center– our own team that was working on these things. And I think one of the primary-

Kelliann Beavers [10:46]

Do you mean North Las Vegas internally?

Ryann Juden [10:47]

Yes, correct. And I think one of the main reasons why we were able to do that is because – so, really, kind of, everything hit the fan on March 13th. On the 14th and 15th, we were in around-the-clock meetings at County. That Sunday evening, I had the mayor and mayor pro tem in my office, and I signed the emergency declaration for the city of Las Vegas around 9:30. I didn't even go home that night. I just slept here and showered in the locker rooms on the third floor.. The next morning, we met with our team, and there was this discussion that was going on among all the local governments of essential and non-essential employees.

Kelliann Beavers [11:27]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [11:28]

And we made the determination from day one that every single employee is essential in the pandemic. Now, what that employee did before the pandemic might not be essential, but we can find essential stuff for them to do. And since I had just frozen all the union contracts that Sunday evening, we told our librarians "I get it that the libraries are closed. We need you guys for other essential things – and on this second day, on Tuesday, I went down to Three Square with them for a little while we packed lunches for kids that had food insecurity. Because now- [over talking 11:55]

Kelliann Beavers [11:55]

What does it mean with your [stopped using??11:58] you froze the union contracts?

Ryann Juden [11:58]

So, union contracts basically – when you have union contracts in place, one of the main things that I needed to freeze in that was the job specs of a person.

Kelliann Beavers [12:08]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [12:09]

So, a person couldn't say, "No, here's my job spec, this is what I do. I'm a librarian. I only do library stuff."

Kelliann Beavers [12:17]

Right.

Ryann Juden [12:18]

I'm like "Yeah, maybe in a non-pandemic you are. But contracts are frozen." So I needed my – I'm not going to give parking tickets during the pandemic, so I need those folks doing something.

Kelliann Beavers [12:29]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [12:30]

I need the librarians doing something. We closed all the senior centers. I need them doing something.

Kelliann Beavers [12:33]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [12:34]

That's a determination at the state level, if they had made that early on and said, "You know what? Museums are closed. State parks are closed. All these things are closed. I've got all these employees. Do I send them home, or do I send them over to DETR to try and quick-fix the problem that they're having?" They should have done that. If they had done that, they wouldn't have had the problems they had. We did that. We took and we said, "Okay. During the pandemic, these are the areas where we're going to be overrun. Let's reinforce them with people that are not going to be doing anything."

Kelliann Beavers [13:04]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [13:05]

And that's what we did, and I think that's what made the difference from day one in North Las Vegas, that allowed us to operate so much more efficiently.

Kelliann Beavers [13:12]

Yeah, that's huge. I haven't heard anyone else describe that process.

Ryann Juden [13:17]

Yeah. And that's why every single business in the city of North Las Vegas was contacted multiple times. We had a call center set up here, where our grant department, for example, they're not doing grants. So we had them in charge of the call center.

Kelliann Beavers [13:28]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [13:32]

And they're contacting all the businesses to make sure they know the latest executive order. And then that helped – since we identified, right away, that there were going to be all these federal dollars coming. We wanted the grants [13:40] because later on we could easily flip the switch and have these people help connect the businesses with the federal dollars coming in.

Kelliann Beavers [13:48]

Right.

Ryann Juden [13:49]

So that they could get what they needed.

Kelliann Beavers [13:50]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [13:52]

And I think those things made all the difference. I think they will make a difference in our recovery. Because once again, we weren't just looking at the health crisis, we were looking at the economic crisis that would come. So we knew that every business that closed was something that was going to impact us in the future. I'm concerned about healthcare outcomes; I'm concerned about services that have failed populations, that made them more susceptible to COVID. I will not be able to fix those things later on if my revenues dry up because I've lost business. So we have to protect that – what I call "The Golden Goose." We have to protect the Golden Goose – and if we do that, then it's going to be able to allow us to

come back later and start addressing some of these problems that we know are out there that the pandemic laid open.

Kelliann Beavers [14:38]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [14:39]

So I think that approach really allowed us – and we constantly kind of said this to the state when they were going to close X or close Y. Listen: closing is easy. Reopening is hard. So you've got to start the reopening. Okay, what does it take to reopen this thing? And then you might find out, "Oh, my gosh. I can't reopen this thing, which means I probably shouldn't close it." That's the reason we have such a supply chain crisis across the country, is that there were chemical plants that were shut down in Texas. And what it took for them to restart is they had to get through all of their federal and state processes again, and that backlogged them, and they were unable to get plastics and weren't able to get things that were necessary, and you couldn't get garage doors for a year.

Kelliann Beavers [15:24]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [15:25]

You couldn't get a lot of the simple supplies because there was no thought on if I close this, then to re-open it, every one of their chemical basins needs to be inspected.

Kelliann Beavers [15:34]

A lot of logistics. My sister – I'm actually from Texas. My sister's a chemical engineer.

Ryann Juden [15:38]

There you go.

Kelliann Beavers [15:39]

And she's a plant manager. And they didn't lose much at all because it was literally impossible. I mean they had certain folks who didn't come in.

Ryann Juden [15:47]

And sometimes it's impossible to start back up. And I think that's an exercise we tried to instill in everybody is - it's pretty easy to close. Pretty easy. It's easy to break things, and it's really hard to put them back together.

Kelliann Beavers [16:01]

Yeah. Do you want to talk at all about your experience with having folks pivot that way, saying, "You're all essential. We do need everyone on board."

Ryann Juden [16:11]

Sure.

Kelliann Beavers [16:14]

And not only the experience with folks as you related to them in that way, but also, your thought process in thinking about how to have people pivot and what to have people do? There's a lot of creativity involved there that's probably a huge part of why it didn't happen elsewhere. Because you really have to think about the fine details to make something like that happen.

Ryann Juden [16:37]

Yeah, I think there's probably a couple of elements since you asked that question, that made us maybe more – better suited to do that pivot.

Kelliann Beavers [16:47]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [16:48]

Because the city had gone through such an economic crisis, where we were on the verge of state receivership just a few years ago, and we had employees that were very accustomed to change.

Kelliann Beavers [16:59]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [17:00]

They were very accustomed to crisis. So they were very well-versed in doing more with less; in doing maybe two people's jobs, and not being stuck within the bureaucratic factory of "This is what I do, this is what I don't do, and clocking in and clocking out." So I think that probably created a very good base for us to go off of. I think the fact that for years prior to the pandemic, we had instituted within the city this concept that we're laboratories of democracy within every single department. Let's figure out ways that we can push and move the needle in people's lives and do things in a different way. So the creativity was already there. The government's really good at planning. They're really bad at executing. And that's something that we've tried to change in the city is people know that hey, go out and try stuff.

Kelliann Beavers [17:58]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [18:00]

Nobody's going to die on the operating table because we tried something.

Kelliann Beavers [18:05]

Right.

Ryann Juden [18:08]

And so, by really liberating a lot of the people in this building, especially directors, management, and supervisor level, to try things. And if they don't work, it's okay. Just don't do it again. But you learn from it.

Kelliann Beavers [18:22]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [18:24]

And then try something else. I think that was something that helped. I think another thing that helped is, we have this thing that I call a surgeon mentality. Which is, if you're a surgeon, and you're in the middle of operating on somebody and you have an idea, you need to do it. Because in two hours, it's sewn back up.

Kelliann Beavers [18:39]

Right.

Ryann Juden [18:42]

You can't do it anymore.

Kelliann Beavers [18:43]

You can't ask someone if it's okay or-

Ryann Juden [18:44]

Yeah. If you've got the thought, do it. Because you've got a limited timeframe to do it in and try it.

Kelliann Beavers [18:51]

Right.

Ryann Juden [18:52]

That sense of urgency of trying things, and not waiting and resting on your laurels, was another quality that we had been preaching and had a lot of success in prior to the pandemic.

Kelliann Beavers [19:05]

And that's really different – I think a lot of folks who work for government agencies, even the most well-meaning and pure of intent are surrounded by rules because of the nature of government. And so, anything they might even want to do creatively, they are immediately – but the rules say this, that, and that.

Ryann Juden [19:25]

That's right. Absolutely. And the other problem too is, sometimes with execution comes accountability.

Kelliann Beavers [19:29]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [19:30]

If they start and try and do something.

Kelliann Beavers [19:32]

That's a really good point.

Ryann Juden [19:34]

They could be accountable if it doesn't work.

Kelliann Beavers [19:35]

And that had occurred to me less, and probably is right behind a lot of those "Well, the rules say I can't do that." Is that actually, the attempt to do anything different does come with not only accountability but an evaluation of it? "Oh, how did that go?" "Oh, you're fair?" "Well, I probably shouldn't have tried that." And if you're afraid to have that kind of feedback, instead of feeling like it's safe to do something and say, "Yeah, that didn't work."

Ryann Juden [19:58]

Right. And we took – from my background and your background similarly is, we took a very academic approach to it and said, "Listen. Based on what we think, this is what we're going to gather. If the data comes back and says something otherwise, big whoop. Let's at least try."

Kelliann Beavers [20:12]

Exactly. And that's what is rare.

Ryann Juden [20:14]

Yeah, it is rare, especially in government.

Kelliann Beavers [20:17]

Yes.

Ryann Juden [20:18]

And so that's something that we really worked on. And a great example of that is when we find out that – or actually, we didn't find out. I was called by some folks at CCSD [aside comment] and said something that you and I won't say means. And they take an issue with some comments I had made at the council meeting the night before, that over 30% of our population does not have internet in their homes. There's this large digital divide in North Las Vegas.

Kelliann Beavers [20:50]

Wow.

Ryann Juden [20:53]

Now, we knew that because every major telecommunications company and their brother was coming in here in the preceding three years, wanting to put 5G stuff on our poles, on our light poles, and on our flagpoles. And all of them would produce relatively the same thing, and it's like hey, you've got a large percentage of your population that does not have access to the internet.

Kelliann Beavers [21:14]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [21:16]

If we're able to do this and use your easements and publicly paid-for assets to attach stuff to, we'll create programs to help. So we had all this information, and that's what I was basing my numbers on. I get a call from CCSD saying, "We take issue with that," and I'm like "Guys, it's not. I'm telling you right now, that's what it is."

Kelliann Beavers [21:36]

Right. That's about as current of information as you could have based on really, the most – their motive was to be correct in what their numbers were. Not just to exaggerate it.

Ryann Juden [21:47]

And they're all independent of each other and competitors of each other. And they have the same numbers. And they were telling me that their survey showed differently, and I'm like "What are you talking about?" and they kept saying, "Survey." I'm like "Tell me about your survey." They had done an online survey to find out who had the internet.

Kelliann Beavers [21:59]

(laughs)

Ryann Juden [22:02]

They sent e-mails.

Kelliann Beavers [22:03]

That almost makes me cry. I know I laughed, but it really almost makes me cry because of the lack of clarity there about what you're doing.

Ryann Juden [22:12]

Yeah, it is. And I'm like "Are you kidding me right now? You don't understand the problem with your sample? You don't understand the problem with the methods you're using right now? So let me tell you something." This is what I told him, I said, "If there was no pandemic happening, if we had never even heard the word 'COVID,' and we were starting school in a month, just like normal, I would promise you one thing: you would be screwing the residents of North Las Vegas like you have for decades. So don't expect me to believe that you've worked out some plan that somehow is going to not be bad for the residents of North Las Vegas because you've always screwed us. So, I appreciate you calling me with this information. I don't think you're right. I need to go now."

I got off that phone, and something else came up, and I found myself down – actually, no – I think I went almost right down to the mayor's office and was with another council member and said, "We've got a problem. I don't think they're going to open the schools for a year." And we were one of the first organizations that came out and talked about that. That they will not open, and everyone's like "No, that's not accurate. We had all kinds of people that were telling us, "No, we're going to do this. It's just a pause." It's this, that, and the other thing.

Based on our belief that they weren't going to open for a year, we got a group of employees together, and we met in a room over here. And they met for the better part of a day, and the concept was, we need to open up school. Because I have a number of employees – oh, and the other thing – I told him like "Hey, when you guys close, that creates a problem for me, because I have employees that need to be here." And they're like "Well, you know, employees can work from home. They're all doing it, everyone," and I'm like "Listen, my firefighters and police officers don't serve well working from home, so that's not an option for us."

And we had to be very concerned with our frontline workers that were unable to provide childcare. We stood up childcare within the first couple of days of the pandemic happening. But we knew that going into a school year, where they weren't opening yet, we needed to not only continue with our childcare, but we needed to find a way to make it "smart childcare," is what we were first calling it.

Kelliann Beavers [24:33]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [24:35]

And then we just said, "You know what? We're just going to do a school." We had two council members, one that was a former principal, and one that was a current teacher, and we sat with them, and we put together a school. And that school was designed initially for our employees that needed to have childcare and more than just childcare. We didn't want just kids sitting around playing games. We expanded to make sure that our healthcare providers, that that was open for them, and we opened it for other jurisdictions.

So we had kids in that school that had parents that were essential employees. They worked directly on the frontlines of the pandemic. We then went to the principals, and we said, "Listen. We would like to know who your weakest links are." As the mayor said, "Who do you have that can just be given a jar of peanut butter in the morning, tapped on the head by the parents, and say, 'Hey, just keep quiet. We'll be back later.'"

Kelliann Beavers [25:26]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [25:27]

Because they had parents that were struggling to survive, on frontlines, working in the grocery stores, or whatever they were doing. Because we knew that if we could take those individuals – we ended up bringing in-

Kelliann Beavers [25:38]

Is what you're saying – that you've asked the principals within your school community or your community that you know, who is there that – whose children are essentially struggling, or possibly being left alone to attempt to be babysat by an older sibling? Because we need to know who those folks are-

Ryann Juden [25:58]

Who is not going to get any schooling because of their situation, and you know who they are. We're going to reach out to them.

Kelliann Beavers [26:05]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [26:06]

And we had librarians who weren't in libraries because they weren't opening.

Kelliann Beavers [26:07]

Right.

Ryann Juden [26:08]

We had other afterschool professionals that weren't doing that because the rec departments were shut down. They did outreach programs with the parents, and we got into a class of students that were going to be well-served by not losing that year.

Kelliann Beavers [26:22]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [26:24]

And we opened a school, and that school, if you look at – ASU did a study on it and looked at the numbers. And we bought these – every kid was like – I think they increased their grade level of reading by two – the lowest was by two grade levels. It was dramatic what happened in that school. And what did the state do? They came like "You can't call it a school." "Okay, fine." They gave us a list of things; words we couldn't use teacher; school; classroom. Because they were so uptight about who has purview of schools and who doesn't?

Kelliann Beavers [26:55]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [26:56]

And the mayor said, "Send the National Guard. Close us down if you want to. This is what we're doing. You guys need to go worry about doing what you're doing. We're going to worry about what we're doing. Because if it's a problem within the corporate boundaries of North Las Vegas, we're going to try and solve it, even if it's in someone else's lane. If they're not doing it, or they said, 'We're going to close down.'" And

then they're telling the parents, "We'll be back in a couple of months. We're just re-evaluating." And it was crystal-clear to me after that conversation that they had no idea of what they were doing.

Kelliann Beavers [27:24]

Yeah, how long were the schools closed? It was a long time.

Ryann Juden [27:27]

They were closed for a year and a half. And so this was in the summer after they closed, right? They closed in March until the end of that year. They kept promising people they were going to re-open with something.

Kelliann Beavers [27:35]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [27:36]

And that there was going to be a component for kids in-person, and then not. They were completely virtual, I think, for that entire next year.

Kelliann Beavers [27:47]

And their pushback to you, at that time that they sent out this helpful (laughs) survey was those folks that you're saying don't have access to getting online; we're saying, "You can't come into school. We'll get it figured out. They have internet, they do. They'll be able to-

Ryann Juden [28:04]

Yeah. I mean I'm a product of public school.

Kelliann Beavers [28:07]

Right.

Ryann Juden [28:10]

But the public school has a monopoly on if they can control all the variables, then they could be measured against nothing. And so, this was a tremendous threat to them, having someone else come out in a space they were not operating in.

Kelliann Beavers [28:22]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [28:23]

They felt it was unsafe, but we didn't have any issues. We kept it completely safe, we didn't have massive outbreaks, and we had kids that didn't experience learning loss.. They increased their proficiency. We were doing remedial work with all of them.

Kelliann Beavers [28:39]

Yeah, and their parents were able to go to work.

Ryann Juden [28:43]

Yeah, their parents were able to go to work. And I think the difficult thing for CCSD, or for any other public school is, we did it better, cheaper, and outcomes were better. And like I said, if you're someone

that's real big on school choice, they're going to zero in on that, and use it for data points to show what's broken.

Kelliann Beavers [29:08]

Mm-hmm. This question, you've somewhat spoken to. But if anything comes to mind specifically, what can we learn from this crisis that can be a lesson for a future crisis? Some of the creativity you've articulated that you guys chose to implement, obviously, is a kind of responsive lesson. But beyond that, is there anything in particular that comes to mind?

Ryann Juden [29:37]

(pauses)

Kelliann Beavers [29:43]

It's really neat to learn all the things that happened here. And again, there's just no way to know all of this without sitting down to chat with someone.

Ryann Juden [29:50]

Yeah. I think the important part is for folks like you to put out there what was done and what was done right.

Kelliann Beavers [29:57]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [29:58]

And to not be bashful about putting out what was done wrong.

Kelliann Beavers [30:00]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [30:01]

Because there were jurisdictions that did it their own way.

Kelliann Beavers [30:03]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [30:04] And we had a jurisdiction here that didn't even show up at the MAC for the very first part. The City of Las Vegas was nowhere to be seen at the MAC. When they did, they had lower-level people there. I think the entire time, they had an elected official maybe in a couple of the meetings. **Yeah, I'd prefer you'd not have that on there.**

Kelliann Beavers [30:21]

I certainly wouldn't-

Ryann Juden [30:23]

You can go find out from the-

Kelliann Beavers [30:25]

Yeah. I certainly wouldn't put it as attributed to you. But that's really weird. Especially the MAC being the thing that didn't get made up on the spot. That was a thing that existed, and I recognize that it didn't need to be activated all the time.

Ryann Juden [30:34]

Right. But yeah, the jurisdiction was denying this in thinking that it didn't exist, right? Pull up an old CNN interview and you can find out what they felt about it.

Kelliann Beavers [30:42]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [30:44]

But they had a – I don't believe they ever had a city manager in the meeting. The only jurisdiction not to have a city manager there, and the mayor didn't ever go to one single meeting, and they didn't have an active elected official. We made the decision early on not to engage Mayor Lee in it because we happen to have the chair of the health district on our council.

Kelliann Beavers [31:08]

Uh-huh.

Ryann Juden [31:09]

And so, he was Mayor Pro Tem for part of it.

Kelliann Beavers [31:11]

Right.

Ryann Juden [31:12]

Because that just made more sense, right?

Kelliann Beavers [31:13]

Right. And because there's a lot for everyone to focus on. So it's a matter of what's the best use of everyone's focus [over talking 31:20]

Ryann Juden [31:22]

Yeah, it was the most efficient thing to have him in there. I think that the biggest lesson that can be done is that local governments working together are going to be a better way to get good outcomes in a state or distant state capital than the federal government ever could be because we're right there. I think, if you look in your research and if you look at the timing of the executive orders from the governor, I don't believe there were any executive orders in the very first – I don't know how many there were – 20-something. But every one of those executive orders was changed within a couple of days.

Kelliann Beavers [32:08]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [32:09]

Because they failed to talk to people with boots on the ground. They did it the exact wrong way. And they would soon send down these directives, and it's actually like you can't do this. It cannot be done this way.

Kelliann Beavers [32:21]

You mean the – applying what you've been instructed to do.

Ryann Juden [32:25]

Yeah.

Kelliann Beavers [32:26]

Yeah, this is something I've also heard from other interviewees. Not only was there too short of a turnaround to what you were supposed to do but in some cases, they should have been asked like "Is this a thing that can't be done?"

Ryann Juden [32:37]

Right. And that's because what became extremely clear – and you can see if you look back. Look at these directives. Look at the plan for reopening. They were more focused on the name of the phase – "Silver State Returns."

Kelliann Beavers [32:53]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [32:54]

The little campaign slogans were their focus. That, to me, underscores the fact that we had people who were campaigning instead of governing – because that switch had never been flipped. And that's what happened – I don't fully blame this on the Governor – I do, in a way, because he chose his people. But he did not have experienced bureaucrats. He had his campaign manager as the chief of staff.

Kelliann Beavers [33:16]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [33:20]

And other places would have been crucified for doing something like that. But that's what happens when you have a campaign manager trying to run a large institution.

Kelliann Beavers [33:27]

Well, and that creates the situation, most likely, that is related to what you were talking about a minute ago. Which is, that person may not know who to pick up the phone and how to coordinate the conversations, to go down the ladder and understand what is happening and what can be done.

Ryann Juden [33:41]

That's right. And you could clearly see that person's strike zone, which is in messaging and media. Because that's what happened: you had these "cutesy" little things; all the time was spent on that. Nothing was spent on the other stuff. They were more worried about that. And I have specific proof of that, where some of these plans – because there was no movement. There was no movement from the governor's office on how to close and how to reopen

Ryann Juden [35:42]

There was a summit put together with the Health District from Clark and Washoe, and they had to get together and have some kumbaya coming out because the governor felt that he was slighted. No, he wasn't slighted on it. He was never communicating with anybody. He wasn't communicating with experts. And here's the reality in the state of Nevada, which is different than a lot of other places. The Clark County Commission is the most powerful governing body in the State of Nevada.

Kelliann Beavers [36:01]

Right.

Ryann Juden [36:02]

The amount of resources that we have in the City of North Las Vegas is dramatically more than what the governor has. The governor has a staff of five people or six people. That's it. Yes, there's a lot of departments- [over talking 36:12]

Kelliann Beavers [36:14]

That, in and of itself, is grievous, complicated, and hard to believe.

Ryann Juden [36:19]

It is. Remember, the State of Nevada was essentially created to protect mining interests.

Kelliann Beavers [36:26]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [36:28]

And in order to do that there was— they didn't want government, right? They don't know what the legislature was so much that they limited the years they could meet and the days they could meet. And they're only paid for the first 60 and not the next 60.

Kelliann Beavers [36:34]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [36:40]

But they didn't want the state government interfering. All they wanted was something to protect their mines. Well, guess who's going to protect their mines? It's local government. It's sheriffs at the county level.

Kelliann Beavers [36:49]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [36:50]

[??36:51] is going to protect their mines. It's judges at the local level that are going to deal with the disputes that happen. They wanted a very small state government. That's why the first constitution failed, right, because they didn't have funding mechanisms for the state government. And they didn't want to put the burden on mining. The mines are like "Why do we want to fund the state government? We [don't even want ??37:07] a state government."

So then when the second constitution comes about – there's all these exclusions for mining in the constitution different from anywhere else. It probably wouldn't have passed congressional muster. But Congress didn't really look at it very closely because Abe Lincoln needed the electoral votes he believed in order to get reelected. .

Kelliann Beavers [37:24]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [37:25]

So we were made a state; Abe Lincoln – I mean, you could imagine today, if, like an elected official, you know. If Biden was trying to annex parts of Mexico in order to get more electoral votes to win. He would be freaking out. But that's what Abe Lincoln did.

Kelliann Beavers [37:39]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [37:41]

So that's the history of Nevada. It's not designed to have a strong legislature. It's not designed to have a strong governor. And what they didn't anticipate was the strength of that mile and a half over there in the amount of money that the Strip would generate and create powerful local governments. Which then – that, combined with the fact that they wanted a weak state government makes it go like *this*.

And so, really, the county should have been running the show, not the governor of Nevada. A lot of people were surprised in the last six months to know the governor goes around without a security detail.

Kelliann Beavers [38:17]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [38:19]

Yeah, that's why he gets accosted in restaurants – because he doesn't have a security detail. Because he's just the governor of Nevada. No one even knows what the lieutenant governor of Nevada does, including the lieutenant governor. It's not Texas. It's not Illinois. It's not California.

So we have a lot of power at the local level to do things, and there are a lot of professionals at the local level. Clark County is – I think they're a model organization in a lot of ways. Yes, they're very bureaucratic. There are things that are difficult to get through there, just like any other government, but they're well-run. They represent the community well. And they're not like them in many ways. They're not like a county you find anywhere else.

Kelliann Beavers [38:57]

Absolutely. They're like *the* anomaly.

Ryann Juden [39:00]

They are.

Kelliann Beavers [39:01]

They're nothing you can - [over talking 39:02]

Ryann Juden [39:03]

They're a county and a city. It's totally unique. Counties in other places do trash pickup and snow removal in rural areas.

Kelliann Beavers [39:07]

Right.

Ryann Juden [39:08]

Waiting for the cities to annex and absorb them into a higher and better use.

Kelliann Beavers [39:11]
(laughs)

Ryann Juden [39:14]
So Clark County, right?

Kelliann Beavers [39:15]
Right.

Ryann Juden [39:16]
So I think that was ignored, and I think that's probably something that needs to be really looked at.

Kelliann Beavers [39:21]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [39:22]
Because yeah, I get it. It's nice to tell your mom you're the Governor of Nevada, but the Governor of Nevada does not make you a governor in other places.

Kelliann Beavers [39:30]
Yeah.

Ryann Juden [39:31]
People come here, and they don't understand what a mayor is. A mayor's a member of the council. They're not the actual executive. The managers are the actual executives. I'm in the executive department. They're the legislative department. In other cities, the mayor could be the executive. That's not in Nevada.

Kelliann Beavers [39:47]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [39:48]
We have a manager-council form of government.

Kelliann Beavers [39:52]
Yeah. This is a really important part of the picture. I'm glad you're bringing this up because it is not something that everyone's going to express as an observation of what unfolded during the pandemic.

Ryann Juden [40:02]
Right.

Kelliann Beavers [40:03]
But it's a huge part of what created the monster, or the mechanism, however you want to put it.

Ryann Juden [40:08]
Yeah.

Kelliann Beavers [40:11]
And even just this misunderstanding, like you just stated, of how people perceive what people in different

roles are responsible for. And so, who they're looking to in general – I'm speaking of the public – for guidance or whatever it may be.

Ryann Juden [40:23]

Yeah.

Kelliann Beavers [40:25]

This has been so valuable. I could talk to you all day, but I know you have plenty of other things to attend to. You spoke to a lot of my questions without me even asking them. This is the last question, and then there's just something I'm curious about. The last question is, are you hopeful? And if yes, what are you hopeful for?

Ryann Juden [40:50]

Hopeful in regards to what?

Kelliann Beavers [40:55]

I think the continued course of the pandemic and the future, I guess, is what is implied there, but [if] you could respond to it. [over talking 41:03]

Ryann Juden [41:06]

-I'm a religious guy, right? I believe faith is something you have for other people, and so, hope is what you have for yourself.

Kelliann Beavers [41:09]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [41:13]

And I believe that I'm hopeful that society will continue to exist and thrive. I am extremely concerned that we are not out of the economic part of this.

Kelliann Beavers [41:27]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [41:28]

I believe that there was some overreaction on many fronts. And with the inflationary numbers that we have – you took the economic impact of shutting the country down, shutting the state down, shutting our cities down, and we pushed it off. We moved it away by providing various government programs in order to try and relieve the economic pain that the shutdown would cause.

Kelliann Beavers [41:55]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [41:56]

But what that's done is it's just built-up problems that are going to have to be addressed later on. We've proverbially "kicked the can down the road." And the challenge with that is the can was kicked at a time when the economy was already running very hot, and they were already trying to figure out ways – because you just can't have it run that hot for that long. It's like a pool pump; it's like getting an engine of a car. It can only run hot for so long, and that's why markets are cyclical. They need to have that breath. They need to have the readjustment/resetting of rates, resetting of prices, and resetting of all that stuff. That's what happens, and then it goes like this right? It's cyclical like this.

I'm extremely concerned that what we're looking at is significant pain that's going to have to be borne in order to pay the piper. You can't stop in your personal life and your personal financial situation. It's impractical to believe that you can put your life on pause – well, look at yourself, or look at students. You put your life on pause, you take student loans so you can get an education. The thought and the belief is, you're going to have higher earning potential, and then you're going to be able to pay off your student loans afterward.

Kelliann Beavers [43:19]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [43:20]
Well, we put everybody's lives on pause; a lot of people's lives on pause. There were a lot of things that, for those who didn't have their lives on pause, that was constructed out – just came out of thin air – Bitcoin and all these things, where people were able to try and capture some of that disposable income that was pumped out there, just to make the wealthy wealthier. And to, once again, kind of screw the little guy that is just trying to get in on something, that didn't quite understand, and looked at it as a money-grab, to make sure that hey, I can only get so much; so I'm going to take your BPI, and I'm going to take all your other things, and I'm going to gobble it back up.

Kelliann Beavers [43:51]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [43:53]
And that's when you see the differences that have happened, where the wealthy have gotten wealthier in a time when everything's been shut down.

Kelliann Beavers [43:59]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [44:01]
That bill's going to come due, and I don't know how harsh the bill's going to come due, and I don't know if everyone's going to be positioned where they're making a higher income, and they're able to – in the example of the school, right? In order for our economy to do that, it means we have to have a transition from more of an export-based economy, and we have to have been able to make the transition to manufacturing more and to be productive as an economy, in order to overcome the fact that we paused it. That's not happening, which means we're going to be graduating from college, working in a service-level job and not making nearly enough to cover the bills.

Kelliann Beavers [44:45]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [44:46]
That's a big concern that I have. I think that the economic crisis is yet to come onshore. It's out there. It's building. And I don't think that government has – they tried – love them to death. They tried. To try and alleviate that.

Kelliann Beavers [44:59]
Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [45:00]

So that when it came to shore it wasn't a huge tsunami.

Kelliann Beavers [45:02]

Do I understand you to be saying that what you foresee and observe is folks prepared to pursue a certain kind of career and that those kinds of careers are not the kind of careers we need to actually fuel the reignition of our economy, or not exactly?

Ryann Juden [45:22]

I'll use college as an example. What I see is, the government created the inflationary numbers that - [over talking 45:27]

Kelliann Beavers [45:28]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [45:30]

Historically, in order to take – and by the way, what we see now is, we see government tinkering, through fiscal policy and monetary policy, to try and impact the inflationary number. It's not happening.

Kelliann Beavers [45:42]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [45:44]

That's when you get the stagflation and all these different things. That's not really sustained – that doesn't mean that it's like sustained, the inflation.

Kelliann Beavers [45:50]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [45:52]

It just means it's inflation that can't be moved – I can't move it.

Kelliann Beavers [45:54]

Right.

Ryann Juden [45:56]

It's not moving. We have inflation that's not moving because there's too much money out there, which means you have to burn off the money. And I think there were a lot of factors that go into that; that one day, people look at and say, "Yeah, and you know, the other thing is that at the same time, something that creates inflation increases the minimum wage."

Kelliann Beavers [46:12]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [46:14]

All those things were happening. So you had all that happening, which is going to create a little inflation itself, but that's okay because you can adjust for that. But then you have this unprecedented money coming in, which creates an unknown amount of inflation. It's different than how we've dealt with crises in the past. And [in] crises in the past, we put people to work. We filled the demand.

Kelliann Beavers [46:31]

This is exactly what I have been thinking about. And I promise to take up only three more minutes of your time. (laughs) But, in that Dave Damore let me borrow a book that's specifically about something that happened during the Works Progress Administration that was putting writers back to work to go write about different parts of the country.

Ryann Juden [46:49]

Yeah, exactly.

Kelliann Beavers [46:50]

And it's a fascinating book, and I'm fascinated with that whole program. But in reading about it, there are a lot of other references, generally to work relief programs. And it made me think, why don't we do that anymore? What do we do instead? I guess we have the grant mechanisms that the federal government provides, that go down to local governments and are intended to – I'm not exactly sure – address the same thing.

Ryann Juden [47:16]

But at the time, in the past, where you could have given – so if the idea was, we're going to give those that are employed – because I had people that were employed throughout this entire thing that was getting money from the government.

Kelliann Beavers [47:26]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [47:27]

The idea that is then they can take that and put that into the economy.

Kelliann Beavers [47:29]

Right.

Ryann Juden [47:30]

But the problem is, they only put into the economy the big box stores that were still open. All the mom and pops were closed.

Kelliann Beavers [47:35]

Right.

Ryann Juden [47:36]

So they put it into publicly-traded companies that are owned by Saudi princes. So where do you think that money goes? It doesn't stay in the economy.

Kelliann Beavers [47:41]

Yeah, it doesn't stay.

Ryann Juden [47:42]

It goes out. That boosts inflation. So if you look at the inflationary numbers today, you have to probably – and there's metrics, right? It's usually like a 2.5 to a 3.2. I think I've seen that it's probably around 2.7.

Kelliann Beavers [47:57]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [47:58]

So what that means is, you take your inflation; you multiply it by 2.7; and that's the number, that's the percentage of sustained unemployment you have to have in order to burn it off. This means you're looking at a 20-plus percent unemployment for a two to three-year period in order to burn the money off. That's pain.

Kelliann Beavers [48:17]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [48:19]

That's going to be pain that has been unexperienced by any of us in our lifetime, and that's what has me concerned. That's what I think is most concerning about this. Yes, I have hope they will overcome it.

Kelliann Beavers [48:30]

Mm-hmm.

Ryann Juden [48:31]

But if people think our hope should be in "Are we going to get through this pandemic? Is this BA.5 that's out there now scarier than the next one?" I'm thinking, we saw the economic crisis, y'all.

Kelliann Beavers [48:42]

Yeah.

Ryann Juden [48:45]

Which is going to have a really big impact.

Kelliann Beavers [48:46]

Yeah. And so, what you were articulating, and I misunderstood, is more the underemployment that is going to happen parallel to that is related.

Ryann Juden [48:55]

Yeah. I just used the college example to try and show that people do that for college because they – but they put their life on pause, but they have to pay the bills later.

Kelliann Beavers [49:07]

Right.

Ryann Juden [49:08]

Everyone's lives were on pause. The bills are going to have to be paid later.

Kelliann Beavers [49:09]

Right.

Ryann Juden [49:11]

By somebody, somehow, and it's always through pain. It's almost always through pain. So that's what concerns me.

Kelliann Beavers [49:20]

Yeah, that's enormous. This has been immensely meaningful and thank you again so much for your time.

Ryann Juden [49:26]

No – no problem.

Kelliann Beavers [49:29]

I've learned a ton from you and it's nice to finally meet you in person.

Ryann Juden [49:30]

Yeah.

End of audio: 49:32