WORT Reopening Document, as Adopted by WORT Board of Directors, 5/17/2021

PREAMBLE:

In March 2020, WORT had to close its doors due to the pandemic. But that never stopped our programming, thanks to the paid staff and the hundreds of volunteers who kept the station going. The pandemic has caused us to think about what it means to “respect all peoples and their environments” as stated in our mission. WORT is dedicated to keeping the station a safe and healthy environment in which to work which has meant retooling in many ways.

Now WORT is preparing a limited, phased reopening of the studio beginning June 14, 2021, in a manner consistent with maintaining safety protocols established by Public Health Madison Dane County. This plan has been prepared by staff, reviewed by a Task Force, and adopted by the Board.

We are prioritizing volunteers who, due to technical limitations or other conditions, require studio access in order to prepare new programs. During these first phases, it is important to note that of those invited back to the station, no one will be required to return to the studios. We expect to modify this plan as public health conditions continue to improve. Our highest value will continue to be the health of our staff, volunteers, and community.

PLAN:

We will reopen in a phased approach, bringing volunteers back in waves, starting with engineers and those volunteers who are least able to host their shows from home. As required by Public Health Madison Dane County (PHMDC), we have adopted policies which everyone will need to follow.

In these first phases, only those who are fully immunized will be invited back to the station. “Fully immunized” is defined as two weeks after the last vaccination in the series. Requiring vaccinations is subject to change in future phases.

Volunteers who are brought back, in whatever phase, must expect to be trained by their staff supervisor on our COVID-19 precautions. While the most recent order from PHMDC does not require masks in situations where all persons have been vaccinated, in the interests of our staff’s safety, at this point we are still requiring that volunteers wear masks while in common areas.

We also acknowledge that some volunteers may not wish to come into the station at this time, even if they are eligible. We pledge to respect that choice and will work around it.

This plan is not set in stone. The phases below may need to be rolled back if there is another “wave” of COVID-19. We pledge to be cautious and in keeping with the most current public health guidance in bringing volunteers back, and respectful of their choices.

For each phase, volunteers will be trained and supervised by a staff member as part of their first show. They will be told that if they are observed not adhering to our COVID-19 guidelines they will be sent home. Volunteers who commit serious violations may also be issued a warning.

PHASED APPROACH

This approach is only with respect to volunteers. The public, guests on shows, live bands, etc. will not be permitted to come into the building until the pandemic is as safely controlled as possible. The Board of Directors
and other committees will continue to meet virtually at this time, and may continue to do so thereafter as a means of increasing our outreach to volunteers and members of the public who are otherwise unable to attend.

This planning document will outline a way to slowly, in phases, return to a more open station. Although it will never be “back to the old normal,” WORT will maintain its commitment to being an important part of our community. Some of the underlying values as we begin the reopening process are:

- Respect for individual choice whether or not to come back to the station in person
- Consideration for those who aren’t able to work remotely, for a variety of reasons including access and ability
- Commitment to ensuring that underrepresented communities are not impacted in a disparate way
- Good quality air sound
- Workload for paid staff as well as volunteers
- Flexibility to reevaluate and redo this process as needed as circumstances change
- Concern that everyone who returns to the station understands and agrees to maintain a healthy work environment

Timing of the phased approach

- Staff will begin the training of those identified in the first phase and move thru as quickly as possible to ensure that volunteers have a good understanding of the procedures and policies; it is anticipated training will take several weeks
- Phases will be regularly monitored and evaluated with reports to the Board

First wave (June 14, 2021): engineers for shows, including the 8 O’Clock Buzz and A Public Affair, and music hosts who have been unable to prerecord their own shows during the pandemic. Other hosts and other music DJs will continue to do their shows from home.

Second wave (date: TBD): more music hosts who can't record from home or have difficulty doing so, and a few talk hosts with issues hosting from home.

Subsequent phases are still to be announced and will probably be later this summer. Much will depend on the mutable nature of the virus over the coming months.

If you feel like you should be included in either of the above returning phases, contact your staff supervisor.

FAQ:

Are the staff vaccinated?
By the end of May all full and part-time staff, and any volunteers permitted in the building, will have been fully vaccinated.

What if there is a “surge”?
If there’s one thing the virus has done, it’s keep us on our toes. WORT retains the right to alter this timeline at any time. If the Dane County metrics and PHMDC guidance indicate that the virus is gaining ground, we will shift back to an all-remote model.

Is being vaccinated required?
At least in Phase 1 and 2, WORT requires volunteers to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. We recognize that volunteers may have bona fide medical or religious reasons for not getting vaccinated, so will continue to host their shows from home.

WORT will communicate the risks of coming into the station, and stress the importance of protecting one’s health and others’ health by observing COVID-19 guidelines.

It is important to note that there will always be a risk; the vaccine is not a cure nor does it offer total protection from COVID-19. Everyone needs to rely on their personal risk assessment. Shows can still be produced remotely without having to come into the station.

**How will staff monitor vaccination?**
Volunteers will need to show their staff supervisor proof of vaccination (hang on to your vaccination card). Staff will not retain other data other than that a volunteer has provided proof of vaccination and that they are considered fully immunized. This is being done to ensure the safety of your fellow volunteers and the staff.

If COVID-19 booster shots are required in the future, staff may also require proof of booster vaccination.

Data related to volunteer vaccination status will not be released to the public or third-party groups.

It is assumed vaccinated volunteers still follow safety procedures listed in this document.

**What are the protocols volunteers must follow during Phase 1?**

- **DO NOT COME IN** if you have COVID symptoms.
- Perform temperature checks prior to coming to the station. If you do not own a thermometer, you are to perform the temperature check at the station.
- Make sure to sign in.
- Mask-wearing is mandatory everywhere. Exceptions are in studios, listed below.
  The one exception is the Combo studios. Unfortunately, talking on mic while wearing a mask does not sound great.

  You may remove your mask to talk on air if the following conditions are met:
  - You need to talk on air,
  - You are alone, or with vaccinated volunteers who consent to you being unmasked
  - All doors are closed

**When can volunteers take off their masks?**

Volunteers are only permitted to take off their mask in the studio under the following conditions:

- You are alone, or only with other vaccinated volunteers who consent to you being unmasked
- And, all doors to the room are kept closed

**Which studio will I be in?**

Studio switch-offs. Staff will strive to have volunteers spaced by time by switching between the combo studios from show to show. This may mean volunteers will end up in a studio they are less familiar with.
Staff will chart out studio availability depending on the volunteers who are interested in coming back to the station.

**Can volunteers bring guests?**
No. Guests into the station will not be allowed into the station at this time. We don’t know when that will be. Until then, guests on shows will appear via phone or virtually.

Volunteers who are permitted entry to the station may not bring any other person, including friends, guests on shows, etc. Volunteers will be notified of this policy during training. Volunteers who do so anyway will be directed to return to recording their show from home. Depending on the violation, volunteers may also receive a written warning.

**Is anyone else permitted into the station?**
No. We will continue to keep our doors closed to the public until further notice. On-air volunteers allowed into the station will be given an individual passcode. They may not share it with anyone else, and will be instructed not to let anyone else in.

Everyone not codified in the reopening plan above is not allowed into the station, period. Friends, partners, neighbors, guests, live bands, etc. will not be allowed into the station until WORT staff and Board agree to lift these restrictions.

**Can volunteers be at the station before/after their show?**
We understand that computer and music library access may be needed for your show. Because we are trying to limit the number of people in the station at any given time, please limit your time before and after your show to what is reasonable to accomplish your needs.

**Can volunteers come in to browse the CD and vinyl libraries outside of their show times?**
Fully vaccinated hosts may make an appointment with Sybil or Aaron to come in and browse the music libraries for a short time as needed to check out or borrow music for your shows (weekdays preferred.) You must follow the same procedures as everyone else, e.g. have no current symptoms or known exposure, sign in at the front entrance, wear a mask at all times, no guests or eating/drinking in the studios, etc.

**Can people use the mini-kitchen?**
Volunteers are discouraged from eating at the station. If you need to use kitchen supplies, please clean them. Volunteers are NOT to leave dirty dishes in the sink, as this is both unsanitary and disrespectful to the WORT community. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own cup or bottle for water. Volunteers who violate this protocol may be issued a warning.

**What has WORT done to enhance air quality and safety?**
When the station closed down, we added an HRV system which brings more outside air into the building. HRV is Heat Recovery Ventilation which heats cold air coming in and cools hot air coming in. This will help the air changes which, right now, are calculated to change over 7 times per hour in the lobby, 5 times per hour in the combos and 4 times per hour in the basement. Guidelines for safer air call for 4 to 6 air exchanges per hour so we are right on target for that.

We also installed ionization devices in the HVAC system which, while not being proven to be effective against the coronavirus, has improved general air quality.

**What if I have an issue with or questions about these policies?**
Contact your direct staff supervisor or email staff@wortfm.org
Policies we would like to keep post-pandemic:

Pre-recorded shows: We have been awed by the fortitude shown by our volunteers, particularly their willingness to learn new technologies when required to do so. It is our hope that coming out of the pandemic, we are better able to utilize either pre-recording or remote hosting for volunteers who are sick or otherwise unable to make it to the station.

Committees that meet at the station: In the interest of being more inclusive of our broader community, committees will continue to have a virtual component to their meetings.

Phone system: We will keep the automated phone tree that we have had under the pandemic. We believe this is vastly more efficient, and greatly increases the chances that people calling our reporters, or during one of our call-in shows, are able to connect with whomever they are trying to reach. We will have an option for people to reach a live human if that is what they wish.

This plan is subject to revision at any time.