



EMERGENCY CITY COUNCIL MEETING

10:00am, Friday, March 20, 2020

City Hall Council Chambers

1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, SC

MINUTES

1. Call to order

Present: Council members Popson, Streetman, Moye, Ward, Buckhannon, Bell, Pounds, and Smith, and Mayor Carroll

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Asst. Administrator Hanna, Attorney Copeland, Chief Cornett, Treasurer Suggs

2. Update on City's COVID-19 Response

Administrator Fragoso gave City Council members an update on the changes to government operations. The Recreation Center and the surrounding grounds have been closed, classes have been cancelled, and signs indicating the same have been placed around the property. Police officers have stepped up patrols in the area to disperse any crowds. City Hall offices closed to the public beginning Wednesday, March 18 and staff is working staggered schedules and remotely to ensure proper social distancing. The Building Department continues to issue building permits and licenses. Online payment is now available for those services. A lockbox to receive payments has also been affixed to the front of City Hall. She said her goal is to maintain some level of normal operations for City services.

She reported that Public Safety and Public Works are continuing with their normal operations, which now includes increased cleaning and disinfecting. Garbage and recycling collections is operating as normal, but it will depend on any schedule changes regarding availability of the landfill. She said there may be some delays in yard debris collection.

Regarding the Public Safety Building Rehabilitation project, she said the Fire Department staff has moved to the third floor of the building to allow for proper social distancing. They have worked with Coast Architects and the Design Build team to redefine their work so as to prevent construction workers coming in contact with Public Safety staff.

She said, "We have been developing contingency plans for this pandemic. Identifying resources in every department that could be redeployed to other duties, particularly around the beach, potential sanitation. So we are working on different plans and different strategies depending on potential shortage of employees."

She expressed concern about the exposure of Public Safety personnel to the virus. She said there is one fire department employee who is not feeling well but has not yet been tested. MUSC has

been contacted to see if there is another screening method for first responders, but that employee has been staying home out of an abundance of caution.

3. Discussion of economic impact of the COVID-19

Treasurer Suggs presented some assumptions of what impacts might be expected on tourism revenues and fund balances for the remaining quarter of FY20 and FY21. Her assumptions were based on accommodations revenues being reduced 75% March-June 2020, 50% reduced July-September 2020, 25% reduced October-December 2020, and then back to normal in January 2021. More extreme assumptions were made for the hospitality tax revenue with an 85% reduction March-June 2020, a 65% reduction July-September 2020, a 50% reduction October-December 2020, and then back to normal in January 2021. She noted, "Even with this level of reduction, there are no negative fund balances here. We are definitely not where we would like to be, but we in a sustainable position at the end of June." The forecasts will be updated as new information is received.

She noted that if tourism is down that other economic engines within the city will suffer as well, i.e. local option sales tax, licenses, parking fees. There will most likely be overtime in Public Safety and Public Works, but some of that may be reimbursed by FEMA in the future. Proper documentation is being kept in anticipation of that.

Administrator Fragoso reported that she has reached out to the short-term rental owners and asked them to provide any immediate impact they have seen on their market. She said some owners have seen an uptick in reservations. The Boardwalk Inn and Sweetgrass Pavilion are shutting down today or tomorrow. Their restaurant and spa are also being shuttered.

Administrator Fragoso said the budget continues to be worked on as department heads are discussing what is critical.

4. Discussion about the beach

Mayor Carroll reported on a phone call he had with the mayors of Sullivan's Island and Folly Beach. He said each mayor had different ideas of how to protect their islands. Administrator Fragoso noted that increased numbers of people on the beach led to increased calls for service, thereby exposing the Public Safety personnel to the virus. She said, "That is my number one priority; making sure that we have healthy staff that can continue to provide services to this community." Staff offered a measured approach to beach restriction: close the public parking lot at front beach, maintain the parking spaces between 10th and 14th, and limit parking to the landward side of Palm Boulevard. This allows for limited amounts of people on the beach and still allows for residents to use the beach. Signs encouraging social distancing on the beach have been ordered. Council members expressed concern that if Folly Beach implements restricted beach access it may cause an increase in beach traffic on the Isle of Palms.

Council members discussed the feasibility, necessity, and legality of limited versus restricted access to the beach. Administrator Fragoso and Chief Cornett shared what both of those options would require of the Public Safety staff. Attorney Copeland said that the only state restrictions

during this time would be to levy additional taxes. Setting up a checkpoint in the interest of the public health and safety is permissible.

Administrator Fragoso reported that Folly Beach will be restricting access at certain times of the day, but Sullivan's Island plans to keep the beach open and focus on social media messaging, which means Isle of Palms would be managing two checkpoints. She stressed the importance of giving the police officers clear delineations of who will be allowed on the island should the City decide to restrict access to the island. The Sheriff's Office said they will send staff to assist as needed.

MOTION: Council Member Moye made a motion that "access to the island will be restricted for the next 14 days beginning at a time determined by Public Safety to the following:

1. residents of the island with a current parking decal or other proof of residency readily visible on the vehicle without the need for physical interaction with officers;
2. service workers with current decals readily visible on the vehicle without the need for physical interaction with officers;
3. holders of a current short-term rental contract readily visible on or near the vehicle;
4. relatives and or friends of residents will be allowed on the island only in the presence of a current resident in a vehicle with a decal readily visible;
5. residents and guests of Wild Dunes with a proper and current QR code;
6. delivery personnel, including but not limited to pharmacy, FedEx, UPS, Amazon and USPS;
7. any delivery of essential medical and food services including caregivers;
8. employees of local businesses including but not limited to contractors, short-term rental operators, grocery stores, restaurants, and property managers.

Council Member Buckhannon seconded the motion.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion to amend to stipulate a time for the restricted access to be monitored from 7:00am to 7:00pm seven days a week. Council Member Moye seconded the motion. The motion to amend passed unanimously.

Chief Cornett said that he would accept 2019 resident decals from residents who have not yet had time to secure one for 2020.

Council members decided that the ordinance could be updated and or extended as needed, if needed. Administrator Fragoso and Attorney Copeland pointed out to Council members that the emergency ordinance being adopted also includes a suspension of normal City operations, adjustments to public meetings, and suspension of all deadlines imposed by City ordinance with

no penalty. The motion made by Council Member Moye would be incorporated into the emergency ordinance.

VOTE: The vote taken on the motion to restrict access to the island passed unanimously.

5. Consideration of emergency ordinances addressing the following:

- a. consideration of deferral and delay of local accommodation hospitality taxes for businesses due to the COVID-19
- b. consideration of temporary exemption of the plastics ban ordinance for restaurants and food providers
- c. consideration of electronic meetings
- d. prohibition of public gatherings of greater than 10 people

Administrator Fragoso said all of those items are included in the emergency ordinance presented to Council.

MOTION: Council Member Bell made a motion amend the Emergency Ordinance to remain in place for 90 days. Council Member Streetman seconded the motion.

Council Member Bell then withdrew his motion.

MOTION: Council Member Ward made a motion to amend the Emergency Ordinance to remain in effect until July 15, 2020. Council Member Bell seconded the motion.

Council Member Ward noted the State has enacted their emergency ordinance to be in effect until July 1, 2020.

VOTE: The vote taken on the motion to amend passed unanimously.

Administrator Fragoso read from the ordinance, “The City Administrator is authorized to develop and enact a plan in order to ensure continued delivery of government services in light of COVID-19 outbreak. The City Administrator is authorized to cancel and revoke any special events permits issued prior to the date of this ordinance for events taking place until April 30, 2020.” She added, “All public gatherings of any type, whether organized or otherwise, of greater than 10 persons are prohibited, which is consistent with the governor’s order. Any violation of any rule or regulation issued and set forth herein shall be punishable as provided in Title IX, Chapter 3, §2, Disorderly Conduct of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Isle of Palms.”

She added that §6 means “access to the island will be restricted to the island for the next 14 days beginning March 21 at 7:00am to the following:

1. residents of the island with a current parking decal or other proof of residency readily visible and available on the vehicle without the need for physical interaction with officers;
2. service workers with current decals readily visible and available on the vehicle without the need for physical interaction with officers;

3. holders of a current short-term rental contract readily visible on or near the vehicle;
4. relatives and or friends of residents will be allowed on the island only in the presence of a current resident in a vehicle with a decal readily visible or proof of residency;
5. residents and guests of Wild Dunes with a proper and current QR code or proof of residency;
6. delivery personnel, including but not limited to pharmacy, FedEx, UPS, Amazon and USPS;
7. any delivery of essential medical and food services including caregivers;
8. employees of local businesses including but not limited to contractors, short-term rental operators, grocery stores, restaurants, and property managers.

“Access will be restricted subject to the above from 7:00am to 7:00pm during this period.”

MOTION: Mayor Carroll made a motion to amend the ordinance to allow the City Administrator to add anything reasonable that should have been included in the emergency ordinance. Council Member Buckhannon seconded the motion.

Administrator Fragoso noted this ordinance includes a provision allowing City Council to meet electronically during the pandemic.

VOTE: The motion to amend passed unanimously.

MOTION: Mayor Carroll made a motion to approve the Emergency Ordinance as amended. Council Member Bell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Adjournment

Council Member Buckhannon made a motion to adjourn, and Council Member Moye seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:36am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk