CITY OF CONWAY
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
VIA CONFERENCE CALL
SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020 – 4:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Mayor Barbara Blain-Bellamy, Shane Hubbard, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Members: William Goldfinch, Alex Hyman, Justin Jordan, Jean Timbes, and Larry White

STAFF: Adam Emrick, City Administrator; Mary Catherine Hyman, Deputy Administrator/Planning & Development Director; John Rogers, Deputy Administrator/ Grants & Special Projects Director; Taylor Newell, Public Information Officer, and Le Hendrick, Fire Chief were present at the City of Conway Public Safety Building; calling in were Dale Long, Police Chief, Jeff Leveille, IT Manager, and Barbara Tessier, City Clerk

OTHERS: Media: Charles Perry, Tyler Fleming, Andrew James and others

CALL TO ORDER:

Roll call was taken.

The requirements for posting notice of this meeting under South Carolina’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) were met.

DISCUSSION OF DECLARATION OF STATE OF EMERGENCY RELATED TO THE COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS:

Emrick noted that everyone had been monitoring the progress of the COVID-19 coronavirus issue. As it progresses, the City has been experiencing more pressure to do what is right. As well as concern for the public, staff is also concerned with being able to control the potential for City employees being put in contact with the virus.

Emrick provided the actions of the State of South Carolina, who declared a State of Emergency on Friday, March 13, 2020, and at noon today, Horry County as declared a State of Emergency. Other municipalities will be following suit and the City needs to take some protective actions, and declare a State of Emergency at a local level.

Emrick informed Council of the steps that would be taken such as limiting access to the public to certain City buildings, closing the lobby at City Hall, Finance, and the Building/Planning Departments, and closing the Recreation Center. The City needs to conduct business, but from as much distance as possible. All outdoor sports would need to be cancelled at some point.
This would be good time to do a deep clean of the Recreation Center. There are some staff that can work from home, and there are some that will not be needed during the duration.

Emrick also mentioned that there was nothing on the March 16, 2020 City Council agenda that could not be taken care of at a later date, and suggested the meeting be cancelled.

Emrick was asked what could be done about businesses and Emrick responded that the City could not tell any business whether to stay open or close for business. Some are taking what precautions they can.

Emrick noted that the fire and police departments would be business as usual, and that a plan would have to be put in place if those employees came into contact with a person who potentially has the virus. The State of Emergency Declaration allows for the way business is conducted by tweaking things on a daily basis. There are concerns for the Solid Waste Department employees handling potentially infected waste and staff is looking at ways to tweak collection procedures.

Rogers then went over the City’s Pandemic Plan of Action for after the declaration had been made, but that are not part of the declaration. 1) departments heads will have the authority to change scheduling as they see fit; 2) the Human Resources Department consists of only 2 people and they will be telecommuting immediately; 3) some employees may be asked to assume work that is outside their normal duties; 4) staff will have the ability to furlough if needed; 5) a hiring freeze will be instituted except for crucial positions, which will be filled and does not affect persons who have already been extended an offer of employment; 6) boards and commissions will not meet until suitable arrangements can be made for meeting; 6) employees considered to be in the high risk category to work alternate schedules or will be offered to stay home.

Emrick informed Council that staff had already begun a 6’ halo rule keeping distance from each other. For Council meetings, which cannot be postponed indefinitely, staff has hard wired into the City Hall conference room an HDMI cable that will allow direct broadcast to the access channel. Council members would be able to call into the meeting. Staff is working to find a way to allow public input without having the meeting open to the public.

Emrick commented that his hope is that we are overreacting, but it would be remiss not to overreact at this time.

Emrick was asked what the longevity of the declaration would be, and he replied that the declaration would be in effect for 60 days, prescribed by state law, unless rescinded by Council at an earlier date. He noted that things in China did not start to abate until they declared a lockdown.
COUNCIL INPUT:

Mayor Blain-Bellamy commented that this was a novel challenge and wanted to offer department heads sufficient flexibility to run their departments, and for Emrick to keep Council closely advised. Emrick stated none of this could happen without the Declaration of a State of Emergency, which he read out loud. **Motion:** Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by Timbes, to approve the Declaration of State of Emergency as outlined. **Vote:** The vote was taken verbally with the vote being unanimous. Motion carried.

There was some discussion on the cancelling of outdoor sports, and it was decided that the City would cease outdoor sports when Horry County closed its schools and its outdoor sports. Emrick noted that the parks could not be closed, but that there would be posted signs notifying the public that they used them at their own risk. The Grounds & Maintenance Department will pressure wash all playground equipment first thing on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays.

Emrick noted that instead of ramping up, the City was ramping down operations. He thanked Council for their time, and advised Council that he would keep them informed as things progressed.

**ADJOURNMENT:** **Motion:** Goldfinch made a motion, seconded by Hubbard, to adjourn the meeting. **Vote:** The vote was taken verbally with the vote being unanimous. Motion carried.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Minutes approved by City Council this **April 6th** day of 2020.

Barbara A. Tessier, City Clerk