

HARRISBURG CITY COUNCIL
EMERGENCY TELEPHONIC SPECIAL MEETING
Monday, March 30, 2020
DRAFT MINUTES

Meeting Narrative

Minutes written by City Solicitor, Neil A. Grover

The telephonic meeting was commenced at 5:00 P.M. The participants used of a call-in number.

ATTENDANCE ON THE CALL: Mayor Papenfuse, Council President Wanda R.

1. Williams, Council Vice-President Ben Allatt, Council Members Shamaine Daniels, Dave Madsen, Westburn Majors (partial meeting), Ausha Green and Danielle Bowers. Also participating in the call were the City Solicitor, Neil A. Grover; Business Administrator, Marc Woolley; City Clerk, Kirk Petroski; Assistant City Clerk, Chardan Huston; and Special Assistant to Mayor, Katie V. Hicks, who coordinated the call-in.

The Emergency Meeting was scheduled and held without public advertising in light of the restrictions on attendance and the disruption of normal governmental functions triggered by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. It was conducted without a formal agenda.

Of note, previously advertised and scheduled City Council Legislative Session and Work Sessions were cancelled because of the public health risks now presented by gathering. These DRAFT minutes will be published on the City website promptly to notify the public of the meeting.

Immediately prior to the call, the City Solicitor emailed proposed general parameters to meet and go forward with public meeting to the City Officials, in light of the competing and incompatible obligations and restrictions presented by the COVID- 19 Emergency Declarations, the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Services Act, the Sunshine Act, the Third Class City Code and the Optional Third Class City Charter Law, which is attached to the Minutes.

Mr. Grover reviewed the proposed parameters of proceeding with the call in the absence of a Sunshine Act notification and on arriving at a process moving forward on how the City Council can “publicly” meet to conduct business.

The Mayor provided a brief overview of why the meeting was requested and the obvious need to confer in this time of crisis. He requested that after a process moving forward on the call and in the future is settled upon, that each Official what matters of public concern that they thought other officials should be aware or that may require a City response or action.

The participants discussed how to now advertise meetings and proceed under existing obligations and restrictions. After input and discussion, the participants agreed to utilize Zoom as a virtual meeting platform, which the City’s IT Department, Communications Director and Law Bureau have been testing.

Council members Allatt, Bowers, Daniels, Green, Madsen and Williams confirmed they were agreed to try Zoom for electronic meetings. Councilwoman Green suggested that the meetings also be live streamed.

The Business Administrator advised that the meetings also would broadcast live on Channel 20. The City Solicitor advised and suggested that the same system should be used not only for City Council meetings, but for all City Boards and Commissions subject to the Sunshine Act.

With that agreement on how to proceed, the Mayor inquired when the first live digital City Council Meeting should occur. It was agreed the Council would meet at the regularly scheduled time and date on Tuesday, April 14, 2020 at 6 P.M. for a Legislative Session. The Solicitor advised to briefly hold off on advertising as the General Assembly was considering emergency legislation on local public meetings, which may alter the current requirements.

The questions of how public participation could occur was discussed. The City will explore with IT and Communications personnel how best to do so, but the tentative plan will be to have individuals who wish to participate to sign up in advance of the meeting, as permitted by the Sunshine Act. The Solicitor also recommended requiring participants to provide an address to demonstrate their status as a City resident or taxpayer to the City, which also is provided in the Sunshine Act.

President Williams wants her staff to review and advise on pending legislation. New and emergency legislation also may be forthcoming in light of COVID-19 developments.

The City Clerk inquired further on public comment. Mr. Grover indicated it may be initially limited to the Clerk reading into the record written comments that are received on Agenda items.

The Mayor turned to the informational portion of the meeting and suggested they treat this as a conversation. He reported on the Governor's declarations of disaster emergency and the new stay-at-home order. He noted there was a lot of confusion on how it may work, but noted it was possible people may be asked where they are going when in public to determine if they are violating the order. It's expected they will be encouraged to stay home if stopped.

The Mayor reported there has been a lot of waivers issued by the Commonwealth for businesses to stay open. He reported that under the stay-at-home order, people may still go grocery shopping, visit healthcare professionals or to a pharmacy. The Mayor thinks the message from the City must be clear: people should stay at home.

Councilman Madsen referenced social services and County operations from his conference call earlier in the day. He noted they discussed homelessness issues. A joint plan has been discussed as to what to do. That might develop or lead to an item to be on the Agenda for April 14.

President Williams advised that she received an email from Senator Hughes that provide information on places to contact regarding social services. She will forward that information.

Councilman Allatt noted that a \$2.2 trillion fund was just approved by Congress and all should watch for and share good links to inform people on how the funds will be put to use.

Councilwoman Bowers reported she has been contacted by a woman regarding holding off on commercial evictions. She learned through the Law Bureau that we don't have authority to stop such legal actions, but that the City could address the

issue by stating the public importance of the situation and the fact the Courts are presently closed to hear any new eviction matters.

Councilwoman Bowers also inquired on a decision regarding advising residents and commercial tenants of the situation in the City newsletter. The Mayor responded that staff was working on a letter now that would be sent to all residents. He was willing to circulate a draft before it's sent out publicly if members wished to comment. On commercial evictions, the Mayor stated the City is willing to issue something to call for a restriction, even if symbolic.

Councilwoman Bowers was glad the City would do so with the newsletter, which the Mayor indicated should go out next week, with a draft expected by Friday. The Solicitor advises the Law Bureau could draft something on the commercial eviction topic to summarize the de facto restrictions right now. The Mayor suggested it be in the form of an informational Executive Order.

Councilwoman Green reported that in her job, they have been working on a Resource Guide to show how to get access to funds, how to file unemployment, etc. She will share it.

Councilwoman Daniels reported she had no further updates at this time.

Councilman Madsen stated he thought the City should touch on issues of hunger, noting at the last event distributing food, the boxes of food ran out quickly. He has seen other entities doing similar things but would like to maximize efforts. The Mayor agreed there were a lot of positive efforts occurring on food distribution and for other volunteer efforts. He agreed the City can do a better job in getting all that information together.

President Williams noted that Senator Hughes' email also addresses food and housing.

The Mayor inquired if the group was comfortable with an additional call on April 6th to continue an informational exchange and President Williams advised she preferred April 7, which all agreed was a workable date at 5:00 P.M.

Everyone was thanked for their efforts and participation. The Telephonic Meeting adjourned at 5:52 P.M.