

## City Council Minutes, March 18, 2020

Mayor Sessions called the City Council Workshop/Meeting to order at 4:15PM, March 18, 2020. Those present were Monty Parks, John Branigin, Barry Brown and Spec Hosti. Also attending were Dr. Shawn Gillen, City Manager; Bubba Hughes, City Attorney; and Janet LeViner, Clerk of Council. Nancy DeVetter and Jay Burke attended via teleconference.

**Mayor Sessions** stated the purpose of this workshop/meeting is to see what the City can do to help our businesses and residents during this crisis. She stated it is her recommendation to allow residents or business owners to speak at the meeting. Council confirmed.

**Mr. Hughes** approached Mayor and Council to address the Declaration of Local Emergency is pursuant to the State Statute as well as the ordinance of the City. Once the Governor declared a state-wide health necessity Declaration of Emergency, it triggers the application of the City's Emergency Operation Plan which then authorizes the Mayor to take certain actions. The Declaration in the packet before Mayor and Council is basically in the event the City elects to do anything beyond what the county and State have recommended. The Resolution will need to be completed depending on the wishes of Mayor and Council.

**Mr. Branigin** stated he has spent numerous hours speaking with residents and business owners. He would propose for discussion, all businesses, restaurants, bars, convenience stores, liquor stores must cease the sale of alcohol and dine in food sales as of 10:00PM. The sale of to-go orders or delivery orders are permissible after 10:00PM if ordered via telephone and not in person. He continued, the intent is to have people be home. **Mr. Parks** stated he is recommending people to start selling at 7:00AM the next morning, i.e., closing at 10:00PM and opening at 7:00AM. Mr. Hosti confirmed the hours of operation. His main concern is the health and safety of the residents as well as the visitors. Mayor pro tem Brown stated the business owners are responsible and should be able to set their hours. Most restaurants already close at 10:00PM. Mr. Branigin stated he does not like the word curfew as it means everyone must be indoors at a certain hour. He feels people should have the freedom to walk at night. Ms. DeVetter stated she supports a curfew and the City should follow the CDC recommendations of no more than ten (10) individuals in an establishment at all times. Mr. Burke stated he is in support of Mr. Branigin's proposal. Mr. Parks stated the Governor has indicated he is in support of local government's making their own determinations as the City needs to do what is right for Tybee. Mr. Hughes stated the restrictions would be under the Resolution.

**Resident Support:** Dr. Gillen confirmed he has directed Staff to waive any utility late fees and there will be no utility shut-offs. He made reference to an email that was sent earlier outlining the status of Staff. Dr. Gillen stated the City's non-emergency operations are shut down for the remainder of the week. Police and fire are operating as normal and fire personnel are not allowing walk-ups in the living quarters for health reasons. He continued, DPW is continuing to clean of buildings and public restrooms as well as spraying all public facilities, playgrounds, park benches, and older crossovers. On-call water/sewer personnel will be working for emergency situations as well. River's End Campground is not accepting any new reservations until April 1, 2020 and all public activities are cancelled. Dr. Gillen stated the Finance Department is still operating, remotely for the most part, but Ms. Freeman is at City Hall to process payroll and those things that cannot be done remotely. Inspections are done by the County and as long as the County is working, inspections will continue. He stated as far as City events, no applications are being taken for facilities and all meetings have been cancelled for the week. Friday, March 20, 2020, upcoming meetings will be re-evaluated at that point. Mr. Burke thanked Dr. Gillen for all he is doing for the City and residents.

**Communication Plan:** Mayor Sessions stated it is important for Mayor and Council to be communicating consistently and in the best interest of the citizens to ensure they are getting the best information, the City is going to be the vehicle to put forth the press releases, updates and anything pertinent.

**Business Support:** Mayor Sessions stated the restaurants that are setting up a to-go food/take-out will be allowed to have two parking spaces for patrons. Dr. Gillen stated the businesses will have to provide their own cones and signage and if an issue arises where people not doing take-out are parking in those two spaces, the police can get involved in enforcement.

Mayor Sessions stated she has spoken with our local delegation regarding a letter she has sent to Governor Kemp requesting possible deferring sales tax on businesses for March and April 2020. She asked Dr. Gillen is there a fee based service relief the City could offer. Dr. Gillen stated as the Occupational Tax Certifications deadline is approaching, April 1, 2020, late fees can be waived to include other licensing. The deadline could be extended another month and waive late fees that would be associated with those licenses. The new deadline would be April 30<sup>th</sup> rather than March 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Parks confirmed we are not waiving fees. Dr. Gillen confirmed and stated the deadline is extended until April 30<sup>th</sup> the City is waiving late fees.

**Future Meetings:** Mayor Sessions stated there will be a City Council meeting next Thursday as scheduled. It could be postponed if necessary. Mr. Hosti stated if there is not any business on the agenda the meeting could be cancelled and probably wait until Monday, March 23, 2020 to make a determination on the meeting.

**Steve Kellem** approached Mayor and Council. Mr. Kellem stated he agrees with the Council that something needs to be done and he has cancelled entertainment at his establishments for the upcoming weekend. He would recommend moving the closing time to 11:00PM rather than the 10:00PM earlier discussed.

**Calvin Ratterree** approached mayor and Council. Mr. Ratterree spoke in favor of the 11:00PM closing times and questioned the number of people that would be allowed in the establishment. Mr. Parks responded he is only recommending a closing time not how many people would be allowed in the building.

**Eric Thomas** approached Mayor and Council. Mr. Thomas stated by having a curfew it will encourage more people to visit restaurants and bars in a shorter amount of time.

Mr. Hosti and Burke stated they are favor of the 11:00PM closing for all businesses. Ms. DeVetter stated she would like it earlier than 11:00PM. She asked Dr. Gillen if the playgrounds are still open. He confirmed and they being disinfected on a daily basis. Mayor pro tem Brown confirmed he is in favor of the 11:00PM closing as the owners are sensible regarding the circumstances. Mr. Parks stated he supports an 11:00PM closing and opening at 7:00AM and allow pick-up for to-go food until 2:45AM. Mr. Hughes stated Mr. Parks is basically making a motion to add to the Resolution that one action Mayor and Council is taking is **to require all businesses to cease all operations at 11:00PM except for drive-in, ordered by phone, take-out services which ends at 2:45AM. All operations can resume at 7:00AM with the exception of alcohol.** Mr. Parks confirmed. A representative from Chu's Convenience Store approached Mayor and Council. He asked the hours be extended as people purchase gas and other essentials at the last minute at night. Mayor Sessions stated for the record, the idea of Mayor and Council is to help people plan for their needs.

**Jenny Orr** approached Mayor and Council and thanked them for taking action during this time.

**John Branigin** seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous to approve, 6-0. Mr. Hughes stated an end date has not been determined. Mr. Parks amended his motion to include an end date of April 1, 2020 and with the recommendation from Mr. Branigin the effective date be Friday, March 20, 2020. Mr. Branigin accepted the amended motion. Vote was unanimous, 6-0 to accept the amended motion. Mr. Hughes asked the deferral of business licenses, occupation taxes and any other fees through April 30, 2020 and during that time no late charges or penalties will accrue added to the Resolution. **Monty Parks** made a motion that the City defer late charges and extend a grace period on licenses and other fees as determined by the City Manager through April 30, 2020. **John Branigin** seconded. Vote was unanimous to approve, 6-0.

**Mayor Sessions** asked everyone to be mindful of their surroundings and be helpful to each other. **Mr. Parks** publically thanked everyone for their support and patience during this time.

**Monty Parks** made a motion to adjourn. **John Branigin** seconded. Vote was unanimous to adjourn, 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 5:20PM.

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Janet R. LeViner, CMC  
Clerk