

March 17, 2020

MINUTES OF CALLED MEETING
SALUDA COUNTY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020 at 11:00 A.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF SALUDA COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
400 WEST HIGHLAND STREET, SALUDA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29138

A. CALL TO ORDER

The Called Meeting of Saluda County Council was called to order by Vice-Chairman J. Frank Daniel, Sr. at 11:04 A.M.

Present were: Vice-Chm. J. Frank Daniel, Sr.
Coun. Justin Anderson
Coun. Jones P. Butler
Coun. Wayne Grice

Also present were: County Director, Sandra G. Padget
Clerk to Council, Karen T. Whittle
County Attorney, Christian G. Spradley
(entered 11:10 a.m.)

B. INVOCATION

Vice-Chm. Daniel delivered the invocation.

C. PUBLIC INFORMATION

It is noted by the Clerk herein that in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the called meeting and agenda were given to the local news media and properly posted, to include the county website.

D. NEW BUSINESS

1. Emergency Management Director, Josh Morton gave a report on COVID-19. As of the afternoon of March 16th, the CDC had reported 3,487 cases in the United States, 33 positive cases in South Carolina including one death, and as of date, no known cases in Saluda County. Mr. Morton reviewed recommendations of hygiene, social distancing, and following guidelines concerning social gatherings in an effort to prevent spreading COVID-19. Mr. Morton said it was being recommended for social gatherings planned in the next few weeks that exceeded the recommended limits be cancelled or postponed, and the guidelines were changing every few days as the CDC found out more about COVID-19.

Mr. Morton said the following were being encouraged and advised:

- employers in the county to have working business continuity plans in place as guidelines changed and became more restricted in an effort to operate within the recommended guidelines while insuring the safety and health of their employees and the public;
- Saluda County citizens that had plans to travel internationally or domestically in areas where outbreaks of COVID-19 were occurring to reconsider or postpone plans if possible, in an effort to reduce the risk of someone contracting the virus and bringing it back into Saluda County;
- to plan and limit shopping trips in and out of the county to reduce exposure;
- individuals who were sick to stay home; do not go to work or get out in the public;
- those who were experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or had been exposed, to utilize MUSC or PRISMA's free online medical screenings for COVID-19 before going to local doctor offices or calling EMS in an effort to not expose individuals in those locations.

Mr. Morton said Saluda County offices were currently open with the exception of the Saluda County Library and Recreation department, but encouraged the public to handle as much business with county offices through online services, phone, and by making appointments before coming to an office. Mr. Morton said the Voter Registration office was currently making appointments for candidate filing to limit the number of people in an office at one time.

Mr. Morton advised Council his office over the next several days would have additional requests and recommendations. Mr. Morton said they were doing everything possible to protect the community with as little impact and inconvenience as possible, but for the public to understand the primary focus was preventing the spread of this illness into and throughout the community.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Morton advised Council of the following, but not limited to, he was working with nursing homes and assisting with additional resources they needed; the detention center had stopped visitations; he had met with emergency services to discuss their inventory of protective equipment and additional protective equipment needed; resources scarce and limited for local and state entities throughout the United States due to people buying up stock; conference calls daily with the state trying to work through resource issues; emergency plan in place, but changing constantly; state of emergency for Saluda County would most likely happen in the next few days with staff currently working on the procedures; working with department heads on continuity of operation plans; and following plans and using resources to keep everyone safe.

After Mr. Morton's report, Vice-Chm. Daniel read the following statement: We recommend employees reconsider international travel or cruises, or travel to places domestically that are experiencing an outbreak. If you decide to go, we also ask employees to advise your supervisor or HR of any such travel plans and return dates, since the local, national and global situation changes daily. Should you travel to one of these areas, you may be asked to self-quarantine for a period of time before returning to work. Employees will be required to utilize leave for this self-quarantine if it is travel-related.

2. Vice-Chm. Daniel recognized Emergency Management Director, Josh Morton for consideration on a policy regarding the use of sick leave for child care due to school closures due to COVID-19.

Mr. Morton read the following statement: On Sunday, March 15th, 2020, Governor Henry McMaster announced that all public schools in South Carolina, to include Saluda County, would be closed through March 31st due to the Covid-19 global pandemic. We recognize that this may place a hardship on county employees with children that may not be able to immediately secure childcare during this closure.

Mr. Morton said staff recommended the following policy during this outbreak: Saluda County employees may utilize sick leave to remain home with children while schools are ordered to remain closed for the Covid-19 global pandemic. In the event that an employee must remain home with their children but does not have adequate sick leave, the employee may, at the discretion of the Saluda County Director, be advanced up to 120 hours of sick leave, which will be deducted from future leave earned.

On motion of Coun. Grice, seconded by Coun. Anderson, it was unanimously approved to adopt the policy regarding the use of sick leave for child care due to school closures due to COVID-19 to be retroactive to March 16, 2020. During discussion Mr. Morton informed Council he had been working with the schools daily over the past couple weeks and had been in constant contact with the school superintendent.

After the vote, Coun. Butler questioned Mr. Morton was there a policy for the fire departments and firemen as far as responding to calls during this time (specifically medical and lifting assistance related calls). Mr. Morton said he had communicated with fire chiefs the morning of March 17th and a policy would be sent later in the afternoon of March 17th to the chiefs concerning this matter.

3. Vice-Chm. Daniel recognized Emergency Management Director, Josh Morton for consideration of a COVID-19 Administrative Leave Policy.

Mr. Morton said staff recommended for Council to adopt the following COVID-19 Administrative Leave Policy for illnesses related to COVID-19:

Covid-19 Administrative Leave Policy

Due to the Covid-19 global pandemic, the following policies are recommended regarding sick and administrative leave:

Non-Covid-19 related illness:

If an employee is ill, but not with the coronavirus, normal procedures regarding the use of sick leave apply.

Covid-19 Related Illness:

If an employee or any member of that employee's household tests positive for Covid-19, the employee will notify their supervisor as soon as possible to ensure the protection of any other employees that may have been exposed.

Presumptive Positive Test

If an employee or member of the employee's household has a presumptive positive test for the coronavirus, the employee will be placed on paid administrative leave, pending the results of the second test.

Positive Secondary Test

If an employee or a member of the employee's household has a positive secondary test, the employee will be placed on paid administrative leave for a minimum of 14 days. The employee will be required to show a release letter before returning to work.

If an employee or a member of the employee's household is ordered to self-quarantine by DHEC or a federal agency due to potential exposure, the employee will be placed on paid administrative leave for the length of the quarantine. The employee will be required to show a release letter before returning to work.

On motion of Coun. Anderson, seconded by Coun. Grice, it was unanimously approved to adopt the Covid-19 Administrative Leave Policy.

4. Vice-Chm. Daniel recognized Emergency Management Director, Josh Morton for consideration of temporary restriction on all non-essential work-related travel by Saluda County Employees.

Mr. Morton said based on the outbreak of COVID-19 throughout the United States and various parts of South Carolina, staff recommended the following:

Effective immediately, all non-essential work-related travel by Saluda County employees will be suspended until April 15th, 2020. Any travel deemed to be essential travel must be approved by the County Director. This includes all trainings, conferences, or meetings held outside of Saluda County.

On motion of Coun. Anderson, seconded by Coun. Grice, it was unanimously approved to suspend until April 15, 2020 all non-essential work-related travel by Saluda County employees.

5. Coun. Anderson advised Vice-Chm. Daniel of one more item.

County Atty. Spradley informed Vice-Chm. Daniel that Coun. Anderson had been in contact with him earlier on March 17th concerning a declaration of disaster and offered to give a presentation to Council.

Coun. Anderson requested Atty. Spradley give the presentation.

Atty. Spradley informed Council in Section 10-35 of the Code of Ordinances for Saluda County and various state laws, Saluda County could declare a state of disaster that could go into effect any time Council decided. Atty. Spradley said the state of disaster would enable Council to meet without a quorum of Council; however many members or as long as two members could meet to make decisions, whether in person, by phone or facetime. Atty. Spradley said the declaration would allow Administration and Emergency

Management to obtain supplies without having to follow procurement codes and would also allow the budget to be used however necessary to protect Saluda County citizens and visitors. Atty. Spradley said the declaration could go further depending on how far Council needed to go, such as no public gatherings, suspending local laws, no public meetings, and Council could take one vote for certain numerous items versus a vote for each item as currently done.

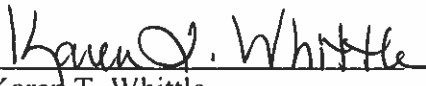
Atty. Spradley informed Council he prepared the declaration with the March 17th date, but Council did not have to approve it as of the date; the declaration document was ready whenever Council decided it was needed. Atty. Spradley and Council discussed the state of disaster declaration would be in effect until Council voted to terminate it.

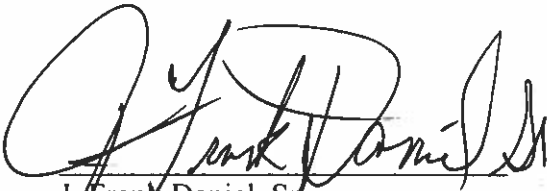
Coun. Butler expressed concern of the declaration not being on the agenda and said it was available when Council wanted to implement it. Atty. Spradley informed Council as a state of emergency, it didn't have to be on any agenda.

Coun. Anderson made the motion to adopt this as written. Vice-Chm. Daniel said you've heard the motion coming from the Councilman that we adopt this state of disaster declaration. Coun. Grice seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (Voting in Favor: Vice-Chm. Daniel, Coun. Anderson, Grice). (Opposed: Coun. Butler).

E. ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Coun. Anderson, seconded by Coun. Grice, it was unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 11:31 A.M.


Karen T. Whittle
Clerk to Council


J. Frank Daniel, Sr.
Vice-Chairman

April 13, 2020
Date Approved