

City of Willow Springs

Emergency Meeting

AGENDA

Sunday, March 22, 2020

City Hall, 5:00 P.M.

Present: Mayor Brooke Fair, Alderman Danny Bradley, Alderman Susan Rackley, Alderman Troy Yonker, Alderman Phill Knott, City Administrator Beverly Hicks, City Clerk Alicia Worley, City Attorney Zane Privette, City Marshal Bryan Hogan, Assistant Police Chief Wes Ellison, Officer Ben Bishop, Officer Mike Huffman.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF QUORUM

Announcement of Quorum: City Clerk Alicia Worley called the roll.

Mayor Fair opened the Emergency Meeting of the Board of Alderman at 5:02pm with a quorum present.

We were unable to give a full 24-hour notice for this meeting because; the information is rapidly changing regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, this was the only time Council was available and they need to discuss how to move forward with City business. This meeting was streamed live on the City's Facebook page.

NEW BUSINESS

COVID-19 Discussion: (Please keep in mind information is changing daily. This is the most current information at the time of this meeting)

City Administrator Beverly Hicks gave an update on information she has currently received.

- There are zero positive COVID-19 tests in Howell County.
- There have been 24 tests in Howell County and 17 of those test results are still pending.
- There are 90 positive COVID-19 tests in the State of Missouri.
- There is a back log on the tests so the numbers will likely increase as more testing is done and processed.

Today at 3:00pm, Governor Parson will be giving his daily media briefing and will open his remarks by discussing an order from Dr. Randall Williams, director of DHSS, that will go in effect at 12:01am on Monday, March 23, 2020.

Local public health authorities are being directed to carry out and enforce the provisions of this Order by means of civil proceedings. Provisions of this order are outlined below.

1. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, every person in the State of Missouri shall avoid social gatherings of more than ten (10) people. For purposes of this Order, "social gatherings" shall mean any planned or spontaneous event or convening that would bring together more than ten (10) people in a single space at the same time.
2. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, every person in the State of Missouri shall avoid eating or drinking at

restaurants, bars, or food courts; provided, however, that the use of drive-thru, pickup, or delivery options is allowed throughout the duration of this Order.

3. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and prevention, people shall not visit nursing homes, long-term care facilities, retirement homes, or assisted living homes unless to provide critical assistance.
4. In accordance with the guidelines from the President and the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, schools shall remain closed.

This Order does **not** prohibit people from visiting a variety of places, including grocery stores, gas stations, parks, and banks, so long as necessary precautions are taken and maintained to reduce the transmission of COVID-19, including maintaining at least six feet (6') of distance between all individuals that are not family members. For offices and workplaces that remain open, individuals shall practice good hygiene and, where feasible, work from home in order to achieve optimum isolation from COVID-19. The more that people reduce their public contact, the sooner COVID-19 will be contained and the sooner this Order will expire.

This Order shall be in effect beginning 12:01am Monday, March 23, 2020, and shall remain in effect until 12:01am Monday, April 6, 2020 unless extended by further order of the Director of the Department of Health and Senior Services.

City Administrator Beverly Hicks: We need to discuss and start thinking about for the future is at some point we will need to declare a state of emergency. "I want to be clear that this is for procurement reasons only." This will assist the City in getting PPE for our First Responders. FEMA & SEMA have said that they will reimburse the expenses incurred during this time for PPE for Police Officers and First Responders. As a City and because we are small enough to do this, I can go around to the businesses and find out what their plans are during this time. Other items I would like us to discuss:

- Should we close City Hall to foot traffic? There are other options we have available for residents to pay their bills without coming inside the building.
- Sales tax could decrease while Use tax could increase, it may be 2-3 months before we see the affects.
- Possible job reduction in town as businesses make decisions on their operating procedures during this time.
- Reducing purchases on non-essential items for our nonvital departments.

Hicks also went over a preparedness plan she put together, please see attached.

Hicks: What are your thoughts on closing City Hall and the Police Department to foot traffic. We have encouraged the public to not come in, but we have not locked the doors. There are 6 full time employees and 1 part time employee in City Hall. Our offices are spread out enough that we do not sit on top of each other.

City Attorney Zane Privette: I would suggest placing envelopes by the drop box that way people who want to pay cash will have something to put it in.

Hicks: People can also go to willowspringsmo.com and pay online. Alicia has been in contact with GWorks, our software company, to temporarily waive the convenience fees for credit card payments. We are hoping they can have that completed before the new bills come out.

Privette: We need to publish these options on the website, Facebook, and door of City Hall.

Hicks: We are a small town and we need to keep track of our residents. We are going to do everything we possibly can to make sure that if there is someone who we know normally pays cash and then they show up on our disconnect, we need to send an officer or make a phone call to check on them. Should they need someone to come pick up their money, we will do that. We

will not collect money for someone who is capable and has the means to get out and bring it to the drop box themselves.

Alderman Phill Knott: We need to explain everything that was said on the door of City Hall and not in fine print. It needs to be big enough for when people pull up.

Alderman Knott and Alderman Susan Rackley asked Hicks about disconnecting utilities for nonpayment.

Hicks: We are part of Missouri Public Utility Alliance, MPUA. MPUA has been talking with larger non-public utility companies, investor owned. We do not fall under those guidelines. MPUA is also working to make sure we get the information we need so we do stay complaint during this time. One thing I want to be careful of when talking about people not paying their utilities is our cash flow. We collect around \$300,000 in utilities a month. We pay out \$150,000 - \$200,000 in mandatory expenses a month. That would be \$500,000 a month we would have to pay out no matter what. You want to do the right thing, but we also need to make sure we stay financially sound at the City. This coming week will be the lowest foot traffic for the office because of the time of the month. The week following will be busy because of the new bills coming out on the 1st. There was more foot traffic Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday than normal. We have had weather issues going on during this time as well. We have had a lot of water come through. We had people coming in telling us about potholes. Those are non-essential to us during this time. We do want to fix those things and need to know about them but there are other ways for them to contact us. If we are going to do this, let's do it. I'm not saying it must be tomorrow, but it could be by Thursday or Friday.

Motion by Alderman Knott we close City Hall by the end of the week and spell it out on the door for people that come in. Alderman Yonker seconds. Motion passed 4-0.

Rackley: Would you like a more specific date than just the end of the week.

Knott: By Friday

Hicks: So, you're saying make it effective Friday morning.

Knott: Yes.

Police Chief Hogan: For the Police Department I would like to stay open to the public.

Hicks: If you do that then you need to take them into a private office and get them away from some others that may come in. You have more barriers in place than we do in City Hall.

Hogan: We do that anyway and we will monitor who is coming in. We do a lot of stuff by email anyway so if the majority of people coming in are for non-essential things then we may shut the door at that time.

Hicks: I want to talk about employees and how we will handle if a case comes that someone gets sick. I will tell you what I have already been sharing with the employees and that is if you don't feel good, stay home. Don't take the chance. That's why the City gives sick leave. Some of us feel like we just need to come to work because that just what we do. It's not about you, it's about your neighbor. I have directed the supervisors to send someone home if they show up to work asymptomatic. My concern is if someone is asymptomatic and we make them go home, for how long? Should there be a quarantine period? When do you let them come back? Is it the full 14 days? If so, do we make them use sick leave since we would be making mandatory for them to stay home? I have been talking with the West Plains City Administrator about what they are doing. He said they are still in discussion about it. If someone still has symptoms and we let them come back are they exposing other people? If an employee goes to Springfield or chooses to travel during this time, comes back, and chooses to self-quarantine for 14 days how do we handle that?

Mayor Brooke Fair: I think you do need to set a distance for essential workers. They can't expect to go on vacation and then come back and quarantine for 14 days and expect the City to pay for that. It was their choice to travel.

Hicks: I absolutely agree with that. So, if they choose to go on vacation and they come back, and we say I'm sorry, but you can't come back to work for 14 days. They should use their sick leave if they have it. My issue is if we send someone home because we think they are asymptomatic. Do we keep them home for 'x' amount of days? My opinion is if they can get cleared from a doctor and be fine in 5-7 days.

Fair: There is a DHSS Hotline they can call and be screened. So, I think that would be one thing they need to utilize. They will go through what symptoms you have had. Have you been swabbed for the flu? They will screen you for that. They need to have spoken with their physician or the hotline number if they have true symptoms.

Knott: I feel that if we send them home with the symptoms you think they have they should stay in the quarantine time.

Hicks: The full 14 days?

Knott: Yes ma'am.

Hicks: If we do that than do, we make them use their sick leave?

Knott: I thought the President said you give them 12 weeks.

Hicks: That hasn't been handed to us quite yet. There are a lot of ideas out there, but no one has settled it for this particular State. Regards to those policies we are on our own right now but that could change.

Fair: If you don't require them to go to the doctor and you just quarantine them for 2 weeks, we are still in flu season. We are still having positive flu cases. If I have the flu I don't want to be gone for 14 days nor do I need to be gone for 14 days. We have to have some kind of confirmation. We do suspect that you have it or no you just have the flu.

Hicks: Some Cities are making that requirement. If you have been sent home or if you have chosen to stay home because you are asymptomatic then you would have to have something from a physician stating, you can come back to work.

Privette: I will say that in recent discussions I've heard, employers are in a precarious position here. There needs to be some statement from their doctor stating they can come back to work versus just making them quarantine for 14 days. I don't know if that is the best course of action but, that is where as employers there are some limitations and risks we take there.

Hicks: We have a responsibility to the rest of the employees. If you don't have something in place, then you have the risk of liabilities to our employees. I do believe if someone travels and comes back, they do not need to be mixed in with the rest of the population.

Fair: I think that we need to have something in place that you are saying as the City Administrator you are halting all vacations at least.

Hicks: I believe we need to make the radius 50 miles. Other cities are doing that. We have 35 employees and even if they come down with the flu, we will struggle to lose a few employees in any department. Are you guys ok with me using my best judgement until we can get it set? I have worked in HR for many years so I will not go against State and Federal law. HIPAA rules have been relaxed for awhile to allow certain questions to be asked.

Alderman Danny Bradley: Can we go back just a little bit? We are going to close City Hall. How are we going to handle our other facilities for example the Golf Course, Airport, or City Parks? Are we going to put signage out or enter at your own risk?

Hicks: We are not going to be renting the OPO Hall but I'm not sure how much risk someone would be on an 80-acre Golf Course, but that would be up to you all. We will put the order on every one of the buildings. Closure I think it needs to be for high traffic areas.

Bradley: I do feel like we would be spread out enough in those areas.

Hicks: Moving on to the financial issues. You are all in agreement with essential spending only for the time being. We will be monitoring it closely. I am concerned on the receipts we will be seeing when it comes to sales tax. We need to keep accounts payable as low as possible that way we can keep the vital departments going.
Council agreed

Hicks: Purchasing PPE. It has been difficult to find the things we need. There are two pots that the State pulls from. They have dipped into the Law Enforcement and Public Safety pot from SEMA to provide supplies to the Medical facilities. The guys have pretty much what they need right now but I'm looking into the future, a few months from now we may not have what we need.

Hicks: We are falling under the Emergency Act of the State of Missouri right now. There may be a need for us to have a declaration and we may need to do that via Skype, email, or however we can get it done.

Motion by Alderman Rackley, seconded by Alderman Yonker to adjourn the emergency meeting at 6:05pm. Motion carried 4-0.

CITY OF WILLOW SPRINGS

ATTEST:

Brooke Fair, Mayor

Alicia Worley, City Clerk