

Pinellas County



Minutes - Final

Thursday, June 18, 2020

9:30 A.M.

Virtual Regular Meeting

Board of County Commissioners

Pat Gerard, Chair
Dave Eggers, Vice-Chair
Charlie Justice
Janet C. Long
Kathleen Peters
Karen Williams Seel
Kenneth T. Welch

ROLL CALL - 9:30 A.M.

Present: 7 - Chair Pat Gerard, Vice-Chair Dave Eggers, Charlie Justice, Janet C. Long, Kathleen Peters, Karen Williams Seel, and Kenneth T. Welch

Others Present: Barry A. Burton, County Administrator; Jewel White, County Attorney; Katherine Carpenter, Board Records Manager; and Chris Bartlett, Senior Board Reporter, Deputy Clerk

Office of Technology and Innovation Director Bryan Zumwalt introduced himself and announced that he would be the Technology Moderator for the virtual meeting; and that Chief Assistant County Attorney Don Crowell would serve as Process Moderator; whereupon, he conducted a roll call of the members.

1. Local State of Emergency

Mr. Burton summarized the proposed resolution to extend the Local State of Emergency and indicated that the number of COVID-19 cases in the county continues to rise at an alarming rate; that over the past seven days, 5.6 percent of those tested were positive for coronavirus; and that the largest increasing demographic is 25- to 44-year-olds. He related that he is working with regional officials to provide a more targeted and aggressive outreach campaign to encourage the public's compliance with social distancing requirements.

In response to query by Commissioner Justice, Mr. Burton noted that the case numbers were lower when the county was temporarily shut down; that as public activity increased, there has been a corresponding rise in exposure to the virus; and that it may take several weeks before today's interactions begin to influence the daily reports.

Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County Director Dr. Ulyee Choe responded to queries by the members and shared information regarding the COVID-19 situation in the county, stating that emergency room visits are increasing; and that hospital intensive care units are experiencing a slight decline in availability. He stated that more people need to wear protective face masks for them to be effective, and discussion ensued.

Commissioner Long requested that the Board hear comments from HCA West Florida Chief Medical Officer Dr. Larry Feinman, and Chair Gerard concurred.

Dr. Feinman provided statistics regarding patients with coronavirus who must be hospitalized, noting that the mortality rate of those who test positive and develop COVID-19 is about 3.7 percent, or three times higher than the death rate from open-heart surgery. He strongly encouraged the members to ensure that the public is protected by masks when they are indoors in public places; whereupon, he responded to queries by the members.

In response to queries by Commissioner Peters, Dr. Feinman stated that there is a disconnect between the various information sources when compared with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website; and that the disconnect creates problems when it comes to dealing correctly with the disease; whereupon, he described different types of masks and levels of protection, and Dr. Choe concurred and provided input.

Responding to queries by Commissioner Peters, Attorney White provided information regarding mandating the use of masks in the workplace, and discussion ensued.

Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri reported that limiting establishments to a certain percentage of occupancy is not working; that setting a hard limit on the number of persons allowed would be more effective; and that anyone in the service industry who has repeated contact with the public should be required to wear a mask while doing so. Mr. Burton concurred and discussed compliance issues seen throughout the county and recommendations to limit maximum occupancy to 50 persons and require that protective face masks be worn in indoor facilities.

Commissioner Welch shared documents from Monroe County regarding facial coverings in public places and related that the requirement is clearly stated and easy to follow; and that along with the order from the City of St. Petersburg, it is a good model to help form a similar order for Pinellas County.

Discussion continued regarding the use of protective masks, and Emergency Medical Services Medical Director Dr. Angus Jameson and Dr. Choe provided input. Upon call by the Chair for public comment, the following individuals expressed their concerns:

Trevor Burgess, location not stated
Karen Mullins, location not stated
Norma Wood, location not stated
England Miano, Safety Harbor

During discussion and responding to queries by the members, the following issues regarding an order to wear masks in public were addressed:

- Contact tracing (Dr. Choe)
- Enforcement and exceptions (Sheriff Gualtieri)
- Clearly stating which businesses are included (Attorney White)
- Consideration for young children and those with medical conditions (Commissioner Peters)
- The responsibility of business owners (Sheriff Gualtieri and Mr. Burton)
- Violations would not qualify for the Adult Pre-Arrest Diversion Program (Sheriff Gualtieri)
- Violations should not be a criminal offense (Sheriff Gualtieri)
- Issuing civil ordinance violations, escalating fees for multiple offenses (Sheriff Gualtieri)

Following discussion, the members directed staff to prepare recommendations and a proposed resolution requiring the use of protective face masks for the Board to consider at the June 23 meeting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Seel, seconded by Commissioner Peters, that the order extending the Local State of Emergency be approved. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 - Chair Gerard, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Justice, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Peters, Commissioner Seel, and Commissioner Welch

Resolution No. 20-52 adopted extending the Local State of Emergency established in Resolution No. 20-16 until 3:00 P.M. on June 26, 2020.

Earlier in the meeting and in response to query by Commissioner Peters, Mr. Burton related that the Magnolia Room at the Pinellas County Extension facility has been set up for in-person meetings with proper social distancing; that the June 23 meeting is set to be held at that location; and that should the Board wish to forego meeting in person and instead continue meeting virtually, the public hearings would need to be postponed to allow for proper notice to the public. Attorney White noted that as an alternative, the meeting could be held with both in-person and virtual participants; and that a quorum of the Commissioners would need to be physically present.

Upon the Chair's call for public comment, Mr. Zumwalt indicated that there are no requests from persons wishing to speak on the matter.

A motion was made by Commissioner Justice, seconded by Commissioner Peters, that the June 23 meeting be held virtually; and that the public hearings scheduled on that date be deferred. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 6 - Chair Gerard, Vice-Chair Eggers, Commissioner Justice, Commissioner Long, Commissioner Peters, and Commissioner Welch

Nay: 1 - Commissioner Seel

Meeting Recessed: 11:54 A.M.

Meeting Reconvened: 12:30 P.M.

2. Agenda Briefing

Mr. Burton and Attorney White provided a review of the agenda items to be considered at the June 23, 2020, Commission meeting, with brief remarks regarding the following:

- Item No. 23 Pinellas CARES Phase 2 resolutions, deferred per staff request
- Item No. 24 Ad Valorem Tax Exemption, Commissioner Seel to recuse herself
- Items Nos. 45-49 Public hearings deferred by action of the Board

3. Animal Services

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Analyst Fredricka Collins, with input from OMB Project Coordinator Kristen Kerr, provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request and data collection efforts. She indicated that staffing levels will remain consistent with the previous year; that the budget projection will maintain current service levels; and that the department has completed renovations to the cat shelter and adoption room and the relocation of the accounting office to expand the workspace for staff.

Animal Services Director Doug Brightwell discussed an initiative to have veterinarians enter pet licensing information in real-time, which will reduce or eliminate the use of a data-entry service, and the adjustments to staffing and services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to query by Chair Gerard, he stated that when partner programs are redeployed in Fiscal Year 2021, funding for the programs will be based on current market factors; whereupon, in response to queries by Commissioner Seel, he provided information regarding the Welfare Trust Fund and payments for services from non-profit agencies.

4. Emergency Management

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Analyst Lisa Burley, with input from OMB Project Coordinator Kristen Kerr, provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request and data collection efforts; whereupon, she discussed the decision package of \$310,000 for five portable operation centers. She noted that costs related to the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and call center have been calculated separately from other expenses; that the thin client computers used in the EOC are near the end of their lifespan and must be replaced; and that there are no changes to user fees.

Emergency Management Director Cathie Perkins discussed the restructuring of personnel and other department objectives, and provided information regarding the current EOC activation to lead the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Responding to queries by the members, she discussed changes to public emergency shelters in order to comply with social distancing recommendations, and the use of hotels or motels outside of the evacuation area as non-congregant shelters; whereupon, she provided an overview of how evacuation decisions are influenced by analyzing expected storm surge, and several members expressed their appreciation for her leadership and the extraordinary efforts of her team.

5. Safety and Emergency Services

Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Analyst Jason Miller, with input from OMB Project Coordinator Kristen Kerr, provided an overview of the Fiscal Year 2021 budget request and data collection efforts; whereupon, he discussed department initiatives and budget decision packages. He indicated that revenue and expenses will be directly impacted in response to COVID-19 issues; and that membership program and ambulance user fees will increase, while two other fees will be eliminated due to lack of use.

Safety and Emergency Services Director Jim Fogarty responded to queries by the members and discussed intra-hospital ambulance transfers, employee retention, the expected decrease in tax revenue over the next several years, and other issues, and OMB Director Bill Berger and Ambulance Billing and Finance Services Director Jodie Sechler provided input.

ADJOURNMENT - 2:24 P.M.

Chair

ATTEST: KEN BURKE, CLERK

By _____
Deputy Clerk