

**MINUTES
COLLETON COUNTY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020
1:00 P.M.
COUNTY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, OLD JAIL BUILDING
109 BENSON STREET, WALTERBORO, SC**

Colleton County Council met in Special Session (Virtual) on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 at 6:00 PM, at the County Council Chambers, Old Jail Building. Steven Murdaugh called the meeting to order with Council Members Gene Whetsell, Dr. Joseph Flowers, Art Williams in attendance. Phillip Taylor (via telephone)

Others present included: Kevin Griffin, Ruth Mayer, Sean Thornton, Jon Carpenter, Barry McRoy, Dr. David Greene, Marty Stallings, Meagan Utsey

Mr. Taylor gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

Regular Meeting March 3, 2020

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Dr. Flowers and seconded by Mr. Whetsell

The motion carried unanimously.

Administrator's Briefing

Mr. Griffin- We will be acting through a virtual meeting under an Emergency Ordinance which is the 1st Item on the agenda. This ordinance will set the procedures for meetings for Colleton County Council and any of our boards and commissions. This ordinance was developed from guidance from both the South Carolina Association of Counties as well as numerous other counties have selectively gotten together to try to hammer out some procedures that meets our FOIA requirements, our State law requirements, and also meet the safety requirements the current situation we are in with Covid-19. Chairman Murdaugh I do appreciate recognizing our folks here behind us. I wanted to go into a little more detail with that. We are now in our 36 day of Covid response in the county, which means for 36 consecutive days with the exception of our excitement last Monday with the tornado. This group of folks have gotten together every day at 9:30AM, 7-days a week for a local call to make sure that everyone in our community has what they need from PP&E, to food, to anything else regarding this Covid response. Those folks I wanted to go through and name them all real quick. They are on the call and in the room with us every day starting off with David Greene, EMD director, Marty Stallings, Operations director, Adrian Stokes, Planning, Janet Laney, Logistics, Scott Feather, Planning, Mike ...inaudible... also Planning. I also wanted to point out we ...inaudible... Joey Campbell with the Planning section has also been in charge of anytime we have had a personnel

issue regarding the Covid, someone with a possible infection or has possibly been exposed, they work through both Jon Carpenter and back through Joey. Joey goes through the list of conditions that could possibly mean that they need to look at emergency paid leave or some other items whether they need to be on staff or we need to send them home to make sure we are not affecting anybody else and make sure of their personal safety. I want to give a personal thanks to Joey on that. I know he has been called at all hours of the night when there is a possible infection, both Sheriff's Office, EMD or anybody else. Also from the Sheriff's office, Sheriff Ghent, Jason Chapman, and Angela Stallings have been on each call. From DSS Ms. Sandy Polk, from SCDOT Mr. Adam Bishop, our Chairman Mr. Steve Murdaugh from the City of Walterboro Bill Young, Mayor, Jeff Molinari, City Manager, & Hank Amundson, Assistant City Manager, Mr. Raymond Barte, who is our Regional Director with DHEC has been a great help on getting information back from them. It has been somewhat frustrating because it has been a new process for us and during this process, this is the 1st time that on a statewide emergency that SC Department of Health & Environmental has been the lead Agency, not state EMD. This is really something new to them as well. The 1st couple of weeks it was a little touch and go about trying to get information out and how we dealt with it, but I think after a while EMD and DHEC were able to work hand and hand to help us get more information than we were getting to begin with. It certainly has gotten better as we've move along.

I also want to thank Ms. Carla Harvey with engineering, she has gotten particularly busy now that we have had the tornado and hurt one of her areas of responsibility in emergency situations is getting the debris removed and our roads open. Certainly last, but not least Ms. Becky Chaplin, who served as our PIO ...inaudible... and she has been responsible for getting all of our public service announcements out, getting this meeting setup, as well as they are doing virtual meetings for virtual interactions once a week with the community with any questions they come in and can submit them...inaudible... equipment which has worked out really well and we got a good response with that.

I do want to talk for a few minutes about the tornado that came through. We had some loss of life, which we hate to see in our community. Also Hampton County was greatly affected even more so than we were. The county itself, it looks like next door here that the Buckner Building may be a total loss. We had the IRF in late last week. They are coming back with their structural engineer. Within that building we had over 60 years of Tax Records, Finance Records, Court Records, you name it, were stored in the Buckner Building and in about 9 hours on Tuesday, the personnel from facilities, recreation, summer feeding, and IT as well as Councilman Murdaugh sent over his son Drew, his buddy Carter Smoak and John Tomedolskey, we got 60 years' worth of records moved over to the Hampton Street Auditorium Building. Got those out of harm's way. Luckily we got those done because we got almost another 4 inches of rain the next day and those would have been completely ruined if we had not done that. I also want to thank Walker Tax Service. They donated two U-Hauls to us for that process to get those records moved as well.

Dr. David Greene has prepared a report for you to give you a report of updates on where we are on Covid-19 as well as the latest damages on the tornados.

Dr. David Greene- We started tracking the Covid-19 outbreak in late February early March and issued a Public Service Announcement on March 10th regarding monitoring and virtual care that is available. On March 16th was the day the schools closed. Our EOC moved to Opt Com 2 which enabled us start implementing pieces of our Emergency Operations Plan. We issued instant action plan #1 that day. I have been fortunate enough to serve with the many members of ...inaudible... management team that Mr. Griffin mentioned. They have been working very hard for 36 days straight without a break. We have recorded 215 notable activities. We have had 47 resource requests ...inaudible... including using supplies from the strategic national stockpile. We have never received anything from the strategic national stockpile in the past, but we received three separate shipments. We were instructed to distribute those to all public and private health care providers. Today Colleton County has 23 confirmed cases in total since the inception of this incident and 11 current cases identified within the last 14 days. Although DHEC estimates that there are 10 unidentified cases for every identified case, so this suggest that there could be up to 164 total cases in Colleton County. April 13th we experienced a tornado outbreak. Three were EF1 strength with a path from Synders Hwy. and Cypress Farm Road, through the City of Walterboro and continuing to ...inaudible... in Round O. the 4th tornado rated at EF2 strength occurred on Edisto Beach causing significant damage to several homes along the beach front including several where there were persons trapped, but uninjured. It is thought that the tornado that caused massive damage at the Lowcountry Regional Airport also caused a tree to fall on a residence on Baracada Road one person there self-extricated. Fire Rescue/Firefighter Paramedics assisted by the Sheriff's Office personnel were able to rescue a child that was trapped under the tree and tragically an adult female died as a result of the tree falling. At the peak of the damage there were 33 roads closed including interstate 95 and 12,000 power outages in Colleton County. SCDOT and Public Works have been working diligently over the last week. All roads have been cleared and power has been restored; however there is still considerable debris remaining. On April 16th a pond behind Green Lawn Cemetery on Hendersonville Hwy. had its dam break. It is thought that this was due to trees being down during the severe storms on the 13th. Approximately 14,000,000 gallons of water crossed Hendersonville Hwy. and although it destroyed a sewer lift station there was no residential damage. We are estimating today total infrastructure damage of \$6.4 million dollars, and total private damage of \$1.617 million dollars. We have had 221 calls to the public EOC line and have issued 10 tarps for residential damage. Overall we received 75 reports of damage although there are many more in the City of Walterboro, they are still compiling their statistics. FEMA will be here tomorrow with ...inaudible... to perform a joint preliminary damage assessment for individual assistance and we expect the potential for severe weather again on Thursday unfortunately. Also just as a reminder Hurricane Season begins in one month and 10 days, so we are trying to finish our preparations for that as well.

Mr. Griffin- A couple of other folks I would like to point out. #1 all our Department Heads and Elected officials have operated fabulously in these conditions. I have had no complaints. They came up with plans on their own to operate their departments and we have had very few public complaints. When we have gotten them our folks have reacted quickly and come up with methods to be able for our folks to continue doing business in

the community although it be virtually or ...inaudible... or telephone or what we need to do. I do want to thank all of them as well. Last week our Summer Feeding Program at the Commercial Kitchen took on, between the School District and our feeding program we have been putting out 40,000 meals per week to the children in this community to keep them fed during this time. Last week Cliff Warren from the School District a couple of weeks ago asked us if we could look at, they were on spring break last week, handling one weeks worth of 40,000 meals, we had being doing about 3,000. Ms. Eartha Cunningham and Matt Mardel got together with the resources they had, pulled on some folks that we didn't have currently working, but were able to pull in from the Summer Feeding Program and they prepared roughly 8,000 meals a day Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday of last week. Two of those days were in the dark because of the tornado, so I really do want to point out those heroes and they really did a good job of getting that done. Another ancillary affect to that some information got out what they were doing, we will go back to normal schedule this week, but we have been contacted by some non-profits community foundation over in Beaufort about bringing some financial assistance that the community provide meals to our seniors. They are having troubles getting nutrition, so we are sending off some paperwork out on that about 10 minutes before we came in the meeting and it looks like something we will be able to put together in the next 7-10 days. I want to thank them very much. The last item I have is Jon Carpenter, he and I have been following the revenue situation related to Covid very closely. The SCAC has had a number of briefings as well as one call with our State Economic Adviser Board we had last week and I think you saw here at the end of the week the Governor announced that he will be calling the Legislature back into session for a continuing resolution in June. They are now from my understanding looking at adopting a budget at least until September because of trying to understand where the revenue situation is and where the impact is going to be, so with that being said, Jon's got a report for you and I think it has some information. He will go through it real quick so that you all know where we are with that.

Jon Carpenter- There is a lot of information I just past out to you so I won't go through every line, but try to give you the highlights. As Kevin mentioned, we had a call last week or so with Frank Rainwater the Executive Director of the Revenue & Fiscal Affairs Department. He talked about where the State Budget was at this time. To give you an idea, in February they projected about a 567 million dollar surplus. In March, that surplus had grown to 700 million, now they are projecting as of April they are projecting over a 20% decrease in State GDP for the last quarter of the fiscal year. For the 1st and 2nd quarter of the new fiscal year, starting July 1 they are projecting no growth. For the 3rd and 4th quarter are projected at 4-6% growth rate this could be revised to a decrease if social distancing or other extreme measures instituted in March & April are needed.

As Kevin mentioned they do expect that the State will pass a continuing Resolution and hopefully we will have a new budget sometime in the September/October time frame.

For the county itself I wanted to give you a little bit of an update. Our largest resource of revenue for the county is Property Taxes. Overall we projected for this current fiscal year about 98% of budget. We did not see quite the growth that we had put in the budget on

the assessed values so we are coming in a little short there, but for next year we would project the assessed value to grow about 1-1 1/2 percent, so that would generate another \$150,000-\$200,000 in the budget for next year, which is important because in a lot of areas we project some significant decreases in revenue from this event. Some of the most affected are our Hospitality Taxes, the County Admissions Tax, the Local Option Sales Tax, the County Capital Project Sales Tax, and then some of the County Fees, Fines, and Court Fee Fines as well. Just to give you an idea, the hospitality taxes we had been trending upward, these collections come in a month late. In April we receive collections through the month of March, so we really won't see April, true April numbers until the month of May, but what we are projecting based on some of the obvious closures of hotel and closures of a number of restaurants on very limited services, we expect to come in about 80% of where we thought we would be for the fiscal year. Next year will be pretty close to the same depending how quickly we are able to rebound within our county and within obviously nationwide within the state, but if we come in about 80% that is about a \$200,000 revenue loss for the county. The hospitality tax, admission tax revenues, they support the recreation department, museum, the Colleton Center, as well as several agencies that we provide direct assistance to. The local option sales tax comes in, it's the county 1% local option. It is still on grocery items so it is not affected as greatly as some of the other taxes; however obviously consumer spending overall is down. We are projecting about a 10-15% decrease in the 3rd quarter collection that are remitted from the DOR and expecting about a 50-60% decrease in the 4th qtr. Collections. For next year we project that this revenue could be decreased about 15% from the current year and that would equate to about a \$90,000 loss of revenue for the county for the next budget year. Capital projects sales tax is the 1%, it is not obviously collected on groceries, so expect that the revenue loss there would be a little bit greater. Right now we project annually about 4.4 million dollars a year is collected that goes to pay the debt service to on those bonds. 1st two quarters that we had gotten are running above. We were above we were about 57% of budget and about 7% over the prior year. We project for the 3rd quarter & 4th quarter especially the 4th quarter, we will see significant decreases. Possibly we may not collect enough to cover the annual debt/service that is due for the next year, that's through July 1. We do have excess collections from previous fiscal years that will help cover those bonds/debt service, but obviously some of that excess that we collected is to pay that last year of the bonds when the tax expires. Obviously we will have to watch closely and hopefully during the next fiscal year it will rebound quickly enough to where we are able to maintain collections at the debt/service level. Because of closure of the court systems we do project that court fees/fines are in a drop somewhat, probably like 5-10% over the next fiscal year. That is a small loss, about \$30,000-40,000 a year, but it is a revenue stream that we will have to watch. Also county permitting, fees, and other fines, we project some decrease with the office closures. Again we project about 10-15% decrease there possibly in the next fiscal year. One of the biggest areas we have seen some slow down and will continue is in our recreational revenues. It could be the rec center, museum. Right now we were running about 10-20% above budget at the 1st half of the year. We do project for the 3rd quarter and 4th quarter, since those have been closed, the revenues will not be there. We do project that for next year we could lose about \$300,000 in revenues depending on how quickly we some of our recreation events are able to resume, it depends on how fast tournaments are rescheduled, if they are

rescheduled, obviously people may or may not be there or there may be some hesitation depending on how things play out. That is something we will have to watch. On a slightly maybe brighter side we have seen some savings in expenses during this period and will continue to try to find savings for any non-essential expenses that we can. Obviously we have seen some savings in our food costs due to the lack of tournament concession stands. We have also seen some savings in office supplies because offices have been slower and some I think closed for different days for some periods as well as we have seen some significant savings like in our fuel pumps, which is obviously a large expense for the county given the current prices of fuel. Those have helped stem some of these losses that we are expecting or projecting in revenues. When we ended fiscal year 19 we had a 9.5 million dollar fund balance. Of that fund balance 8.4 million was unassigned and was available for county use if needed. That is about 120 days/4 months' worth of coverage. If revenue projections possibly come out where we they think they are and we are not able, we may need to dip into fund balance between 5-10 days of that. Each day of expenditures is less than 80 thousand dollars, so we would look at possibly between 300-800 thousand dollars in fund balance that could be needed to help maintain a balanced budget if some of these revenue projections come out on the far end or on the worse case type scenarios. There was a pole that went out from the Association of Counties asking counties what they planned to do for the up-coming budget year. There are some notes in there. Most are budgeting on decreases in revenues, none are projecting any staff furloughs. Several are going to move forward with continued resolutions like what we had talked about. A lot are making adjustments to all their expenditures as well and maybe freezing positions, not providing cost of living or other salary adjustments unless it is essential. The last thing on this paper I provided is just some information on some mandated or some expenditures that will need to be addressed in the budget, some being mandated both from the State and some contractually.

New Business

Emergency Ordinance 20-O-03, Emergency Ordinance Temporarily Suspending the Existing Procedures for Conducting Meetings of the Colleton County Council and Its Boards and Commissions to the Extent Necessary to Protect the Citizens of Colleton County, Colleton County Staff, Board and Commission Members, and County Council Members from the COVID-19 Epidemic and Establishing Temporary Procedures for Such

A motion to approve the emergency ordinance was made by Mr. Whetsell and seconded by Mr. Williams.

The motion carried unanimously.

1st Reading Ordinance 20-O-04 **By Title Only**, To Provide for the Levy of Taxes in Colleton County, South Carolina, for the Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020; to Provide for All Other Appropriations Thereof; and to Provide for Other Matters Related Thereto.

A motion to approve 1st reading was made by Dr. Flowers and seconded by Mr. Whetsell.

The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 20-R-19, To Award the Contract for the Expansion of the Islandton Fire Station.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Mr. Whetsell and was seconded by Dr. Flowers.

The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 20-R-20, To Approve Purchase of a used Caterpillar Motor Grader in Accordance with Section 3.08.215 of the County's Purchasing Ordinance for the Roads and Bridges Department as Included in the FY 2020 Capital Fund Budget.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Dr. Flowers and seconded by Mr. Whetsell.

The motion carried 4-1 (Mr. Williams opposed)

Resolution 20-R-21, To Waive Solid Waste Construction and Debris Landfill Fees related to the Severe Weather Incident on April 13, 2020.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Dr. Flowers and seconded by Mr. Whetsell.

The motion carried unanimously.

Resolution 20-R-22, To Adopt A Continuing Budget For The Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2020, Due To The Covid-19 Pandemic, And To Authorize The Expenditure Of Funds.

A motion to approve the resolution was made by Mr. Whetsell and seconded by Dr. Flowers.

The motion carried unanimously.

No further actions were taken and the meeting was adjourned.

Date: _____

Steven D. Murdaugh, Chairman

ATTEST:

Ruth Mayer, Clerk to Council

******* NOTICE OF THIS MEETING WAS GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE
PROVISIONS OF THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**