

**Special Town Council Meeting Minutes  
Morehead City, North Carolina**

**Tuesday, April 28, 2020**

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City met in Special Session on Tuesday, April 28, 2020, in the Municipal Chambers located at 202 South 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Morehead City, North Carolina.

This meeting was conducted utilizing Zoom Video Communication Inc. software in order to comply with Governor Cooper's Executive Order 121 siting that no more than ten (10) persons should be gathered in the same location at the same time. Those in attendance were:

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmembers George Ballou, David Horton, Keri V. McCann, William F. Taylor, and Diane C. Warrender.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Ryan Eggleston, IT Director Jon Snyder, and City Clerk Cathy Campbell.

OTHERS PRESENT: Elise Clouser of the Carteret News Times;

STAFF PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM: Fire Chief Jamie Fulk, Finance Director Jewel Lasater, Police Chief Bernette Morris, Human Resources Director Susan Nixon, Communications Director Alize Proisy, Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs, Planning Director Sandi Watkins, and Public Services Director Daniel Williams.

OTHERS PARTICIPATING VIA ZOOM: Lisa Rueh of Downtown Morehead City Inc.

Mayor Jones called the special meeting of the Morehead City Town Council to order at 9:14 a.m. with a quorum present. The purpose of this meeting was to provide a Town of Morehead City COVID-19 coronavirus update. Department directors provided an update on their department's operations.

**Communications**

Communications Director Alize Proisy distributed a Communication Update Report noting that the City saw a slight increase in Instagram followers, and released 42 new Facebook posts over the last two weeks. These posts reached 184,806 people. She explained the difference between "viewed" and "engagement" stating that viewed is when an individual pauses to read the post, and engagement is when an individual either clicks on the post, likes it, makes a comment, or shares it on their page. The City also released one (1) emergency alert during this same time period to advise drivers that the Morehead-Beaufort Bridge was closed due to a head on crash, and then again to advise when back open.

Ms. Proisy announced that the new small business loan program was covered by television stations WNCT-9 and WITN-12 as well as the Carteret News Times. She was also happy to share that WCTI-12 would feature Morehead City police officers in two episodes of Morehead City Special Town Council Meeting April 28, 2020

their ENC Heroes segment. The first will air Thursday, April 30, 2020 featuring Morehead City Police Officers helping to brighten a 17 year-old's birthday after learning that his driver's license test was postponed due to COVID-19. The second will feature Officer Bostian who stopped to spend some time with a man and his children.

In closing, Ms. Proisy announced that the City has launched a YouTube channel in order to reach more people. Currently, the channel has just under 200 followers.

### **Police Department**

Police Chief Bernette Morris reported that not much has changed since the last meeting. Her staff continues to answer calls using necessary precautions, take reports via telephone and email, utilizing text and email to provide reports, and maintain cleaning regiments. The Department is taking advantage of this time of social distancing to complete mandatory training online. Chief Morris stated that the pretty weather is bringing more people outside, which may create some problems.

### **Public Services**

Public Services Director Daniel Williams also reported that not much changed in his department since the last meeting. His staff continues to work on projects allowing for social distancing and meeting via Zoom. They too are using this time to complete training on the new work order program.

He stated that the paving of Bridges Street is almost complete with only sidewalks and gutter work remaining. The replacement of drainage pipes down to Calico Creek in the area of North 15<sup>th</sup> Street should be complete next week. In response to a question, Mr. Williams advised that the city is unable to add or enlarge the outfall pipes into Calico Creek; however, the current drainage problems were in the lines not the outfall. The street will be re-stripped after all other work is complete.

The construction of the new city hall continues to move forward. The emergency stairwells and elevator shafts are complete. All first floor electrical conduit is in. The foundation is due to be poured later this week. The steel girders will be delivered on Friday and will start going up next week.

### **Fire Department**

Fire Chief Jamie Fulk reported that his department has responded to 78 potential COVID-19 calls. The way they respond to calls has changed again in that all patients, as well as emergency personnel must now wear masks. This has increased the demand for PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but after receiving additional supplies from the County and State Emergency Management, the Department should be sufficiently stocked for three (3) to four (4) weeks.

Reporting on the two refurbished ambulances, Chief Fulk stated that the Department took possession of the first ambulance this week. He expects the second to be completed and back in service by the end of June 2020.

City Manager Ryan Eggleston confirmed that as of mid-day yesterday, Carteret County reported that they had tested 528 individuals. Of those, five (5) are active, 19 are cleared, three (3) have deceased, one (1) was inconclusive, 19 are pending, and 481 were negative. Checking the County's website, he confirmed that another positive case was reported since that time bringing the total number of cases to 28. Based on EOC (Emergency Operations Center) records, the hospital bed occupancy averages 59 of 89 daily.

In closing, Chief Fulk stated that several Fire-EMS staff members have been tested after exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms. The Department has priority status; therefore, results are received within 24-72 hours.

### **Parks and Recreation**

Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs reported that his staff is staying very busy with boating season starting up, and preparing for when parks and facilities reopen. Bathrooms and playgrounds remain closed but parks are in use and the grounds must be maintained.

Work continues at Shevans Park. The rubber surface is nearly complete with the yellow portion being poured today. Sod will also be delivered and installed today. Staff hopes to have the entire project completed by end of day today or tomorrow. Afterwards, staff will be trained on the splash pad system.

A tentative summer camp schedule has been prepared; however, the schedule will depend on the availability of collaborating businesses. It is likely that the program will have to be modified. There has been some discussion at the state level regarding the possibility of prohibiting summer camp programs.

Buddy Bengel of Morehead Marlins is working with baseball leagues under the Governor's order and is hoping for a July 1, 2020 start date.

### **Planning and Inspections**

Planning Director Sandi Watkins reported that inspectors continue to conduct live remote inspections, which maintains safety and saves time. SmartGov software has proven to be a great benefit under the current situation and usage continues to increase.

The first virtual Planning Board meeting held on April 21, 2020 went very well. Zoom software was effective for conducting the public meeting and allowing for public comments. Ms. Watkins did not recommend using this technology for quasi-judicial hearings. Currently, there are no pending quasi-judicial applications. Staff continues to research guidance from the School of Government on the topic as well as monitor feedback from other municipalities that are conducting this type of meeting.

Reporting on development projects, Ms. Watkins shared the following:

- Pelletier Creek dredging project should be completed today.
- Paperwork is being processed for the CBDG project to keep it moving forward.
- Staff is reviewing a potential CAMA grant to be introduced at the next workshop meeting.

- The Vining's will be ready for preliminary plat review at the next Planning Board meeting,
- A 7,500 square foot office building is being built along Highway 24.
- Another storage facility is being built at Arthur Park along Highway 70.
- Carteret Health Care is applying for a metal structure.

### **Human Resources**

Human Resources Director Susan Nixon shared that she has been researching the ever evolving Families First Coronavirus Response Act that became effective April 1, 2020, and working to amend personnel policies accordingly and prepare related forms. This act has an expiration date of December 31, 2020.

Research was conducted on employee furloughs and consequently, some part-time staff were furloughed. These employees were notified in writing.

The City has implemented a temperature check protocol that will remain in effect until further notice, and staff is beginning initial discussions about a re-entry protocol.

Open enrollment meetings begin today using Zoom software. Enrollments will be completed remotely utilizing Munis software.

### **Information Technology**

IT Director Jon Snyder reported that he continues to work out of his truck. Jordan Marriner is working on Planning's server migration. In addition, they continue to address issues as they arise via remote access or onsite visits.

### **Finance**

Finance Director Jewel Lasater advised that Billing & Collections is staffed with two (2) employees working from home and three (3) working in office. The Munis "Go-Live" date for the Munis Utilities module was moved to September 2020 due to the inability to conduct onsite training; however, they remain on track to launch the Munis Tax module in September 2020.

A utility payment plan has been developed in compliance with Governor Cooper's Executive Order 124. This will be introduced at the May 5, 2020 workshop meeting. Ms. Lasater stated that water/sewer billings for the period March 6 – April 3 showed a small increase, but she expects to see an impact in the April usage. Sanitation billings remain constant.

Finance is staffed with three to four (3-4) employees working from home and three to four (3-4) working in the office, depending on the week. They continue to work with Downtown Morehead City Inc. and City Attorney Derek Taylor in reviewing the Emergency Small Business Loan program applications. The first disbursements will be mailed out this week to ten (10) different businesses. Three (3) to five (5) additional applications are being reviewed.

Ms. Lasater was happy to report that staff is doing their part in adhering to the new spending policy. Disbursements were down 20% from the same time-period last year.

She continues to work on the FY 2020-2021 budget. Historical data from the last twenty (20) years is being collected in an effort to develop a financial forecast as it relates to COVID-19.

**City Manager's Report**

City Manager Ryan Eggleston advised that the last two Smart Dollar Program segments would be presented in May using Zoom software.

He shared that a representative of The Big Rock will join the May workshop meeting, electronically, to provide an update on their plans. An amended event resolution will be presented as part of the May consent agenda adding alternative dates of July 5-11.

Staff continues to seek revenue forecasting data from ICMA (International City/County Management Association) and the NC League of Municipalities. To accommodate this effort, Mr. Eggleston requested a slight modification to the budget schedule whereby the first budget session would be delayed until May 19, 2020 and an additional meeting would be added for May 26, 2020. The draft budget would be presented on Friday before the May 19 meeting. Council agreed by consensus.

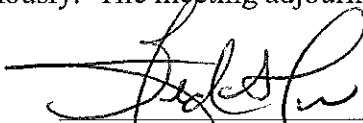
Staff is committed to the Music in the Park series with a tentative start date of May 30, 2020. Some dates may have to be cancelled and others added depending upon the governor's actions. All advertising is prepared and ready for release. Parks and Recreation Director Jerry Riggs was asked to share the tentative schedule on Facebook with information of how dates may change if necessary.


Mayor Jones stated that in response to Governor Cooper's extension of short-term rentals restrictions to May 8, 2020, the City would do the same.

Considering Carteret County's decision to open public beach access, the question was raised if Sugarloaf Island should be reopened. The Council agreed by consensus to reopen Sugarloaf Island to residents. Staff will respond to complaints and patrol periodically to ensure visitors are maintaining social distancing. Citizens should report concerns to 252-726-7911.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Councilmember George Ballou made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Bill Taylor seconded and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

  
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Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor

  
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Attest:  
Cathy Campbell, City Clerk

