

Minutes of an Emergency Meeting of the Verona Township Council on March 12, 2020 beginning at 7:30 p.m. via teleconference.

Call to Order:

Municipal Clerk reads notice of Open Public Meetings law. The notice requirements of the Open Public Meetings Act have been satisfied with respect to this meeting, however the normal requirements of the law regarding 48 hours notice have not been met due to lack of time and subject matter, however notices of this Emergency Meeting were sent to the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger; and which notice provided that at 7:30 p.m. on March 12, 2020, a conference call-meeting will be held of the Verona Township Council for an emergency meeting to discuss the emergence of the COVID-19 virus and urgency needed to prevent community spread.

Roll Call:

Mayor Jack McEvoy; Deputy Mayor Alex Roman; Councilman Ted Giblin and Councilwoman Christine McGrath are on the line. Township Manager Matthew Cavallo, Township Attorney Brian Aloia, Municipal Clerk Jennifer Kiernan and Chief of Police Christopher Kiernan are also on the call. Councilman Ryan is not present.

RESOLUTION No. 2020-072

A motion was made by Deputy Mayor Roman; seconded by Mayor McEvoy that the following resolution be adopted:

EMERGENCY MEETING

WHEREAS, this emergency meeting has been called for the following purpose of discussion and prevention of the community-spread of COVID-19 and;

WHEREAS, the normal requirements of the law regarding 48 hours notice have not been met due to lack of time and subject matter, however notices of this Emergency Meeting were sent to the official newspapers of the Township, the Verona Cedar Grove Times and the Star Ledger; and which notice provided that at 7:30 p.m. on March 12, 2020, a conference call-meeting will be held of the Verona Township Council for an emergency meeting to discuss the emergence of the COVID-19 virus and urgency needed to prevent community spread; and

WHEREAS, this emergency meeting is called in order to prevent substantial harm to public interest likely to result from a delay in holding meeting; and

WHEREAS, the need for such adequate notice could not reasonably have been foreseen at a time when adequate notice could have been provided.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that there should be a vote on this Emergency Meeting of 3/4ths of the members of the Township Council.

ROLL CALL:

AYES: McGrath, Giblin, Roman, McEvoy

NAYS:

ABSENT: Ryan

The Township Attorney states that for the record that given the circumstances of the meeting his legal opinion is that it is fine to conduct this meeting opinion that it is find to hold this meeting, but notes for the record that this is an emergency meeting and normally this conversation would be held in open session and the public would still be allowed to participate, but based upon the nature of the emergency, social distancing and other measures being taken so as to not spread the disease, we are proceeding with this meeting and recognizing that the public does not have the ability to participate and because of the emergent nature, there was no way to set up their participation via electronic means or otherwise and it is clearly improper to hold a meeting with all members present because that would potentially spread this disease.

Emergency Business:

Mr. Cavallo reports to the governing body that at about approximately 7:45 pm this evening, the Superintendent of Verona Schools, Dr. Rui Dionisio, will notify parents and guardians that Friday, March

13, 2020 will be a half day for students. School staff will remain in site for a meeting regarding virtual learning. Monday and Tuesday will be used as "snow days" for students. The teachers will be in the schools setting their curricula as Wednesday, March 18, 2020 schools will remain closed and conduct online classes in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. Pomptonian food service will be delivering lunches to students in need.

All recreation events will cease at the end of the day tomorrow. The Township has prohibited out of state travel and conferences through April 15. The Township Manager is considering closing Town Hall to the public while keeping employees on site. The public will be encouraged to use telephone and email at that time. The vestibule on Gould Street will be open to the public with a lock box in that to receive payments, etc. All public board and committee meetings will be canceled through March 30.

Mr. Cavallo reports that the administration has tested live-stream capability and plans to work out how to include the public portion of the meeting. At this time, the 2020 Municipal Budget needs to be approved at the regular meeting scheduled for March 23. Right now, the Council may need to restrict public access to the meeting, but conduct Public Participation via conference call.

The Township will cancel the Senior bus transportation through April 1, with the exception of traveling to food stores.

Township employees have been instructed to enhance office cleaning. The sick time policy has been updated to reflect Civil Service communications regarding COVID-19. Employees who are struck by the virus, are caring for a loved one diagnosed with the virus, or need to care for a child who subject to school closure will not be charged with use of sick time.

Today the Police Department personnel were refitted and tested on N95 masks. We are waiting on guidance for the Municipal Court.

The Library Director is considering a "no gathering" policy where the public can come in, sign out or return books, but are not to stay on the premises. Also, the only entrance to the library will be from the Gould Street entrance.

The Township Manager states that these communications will be messaged throughout the Township through social media, press releases and the Township website. Residents of Claridges I and II and Hillwood Terrace will have a letter delivered to each location for distribution.

At this time, the Governor has suggested that everyone follow social distancing protocols and cancel all events of 250 people or more. Mr. Cavallo reminds the Council that the Township's OEM Director can declare a State of Emergency, but we are not there, yet.

Mr. Cavallo assures the governing body that what the Board of Education is doing today will be followed by many other districts by Monday.

Going forward, the Township will keep the public informed and promote the CDC website and other valuable links. Mr. Cavallo also states that the Township is suggesting bars and restaurants encourage social distancing, but can only order those business to close through the declaration of a State of Emergency.

Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn the Emergency meeting at 8:00 is moved by Deputy Mayor Roman; seconded by Councilman Giblin. Vote: 4 ayes.

The next regular scheduled meeting is March 23, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Kiernan

Jennifer Kiernan, Municipal Clerk

Jack McEvoy

Jack McEvoy, Mayor

APPROVED: March 23, 2020