

March 18, 2020

At a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County, held at the Court House, thereof, on Wednesday, the 18th day of March, 2020; at 7:00 p.m., there were present in attendance:

Beverly M. Booth

Pattie Cooper-Jones

J. David Emert

Robert M. Jones

Odessa H. Pride

Jerry R. Townsend

James R. Wilck

Absent: Llew W. Gilliam, Jr.

Also present: Wade Bartlett, County Administrator; Sarah Elam Puckett, Assistant County Administrator; Trey Pyle, Community Development Specialist/Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator; Terri Atkins Wilson, County Attorney; and Magi Van Eps, Tourism Coordinator.

Chairman Townsend called the special meeting to order as an emergency called meeting, in accordance with Section 15.2-1418 and Section 2.2-3708.2(3) of the *Code of Virginia*, for the discussion of the national, state and local declared emergency caused by COVID-19.

Chairman Townsend took roll call of those present for the meeting.

In Re: Briefing by the County Administrator

Mr. Bartlett introduced the staff attending the meeting remotely. He then asked Mrs. Puckett for a briefing on COVID-19.

Mrs. Sarah Elam Puckett, Assistant County Administrator, said Magi Van Eps has been reassigned to the County Administrator's office to assist with the Public Information Office, Social Media and Electronics. She stated Trey Pyle, Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator, has made a significant contribution already; he is coordinating all emergency medical services and health care issues, both within the County and in working with our Regional Emergency Medical Service providers and partners. He is monitoring all the resource shortages, and this falls within a wheelhouse that he is already comfortable with

based on his experience both as an EMS provider and the Fire Chief of the Meherrin VFD. She said both of these employees exemplify what all of the County employees are trying to do for the citizens of Prince Edward County, given the duress and the hardship that we all find ourselves in.

Supervisor Gilliam entered the meeting at this time.

Mrs. Puckett stated there has been one confirmed case of COVID-19 in Prince Edward County, and this student has left the County; there are 77 cases and two deaths have been reported in Virginia as of today. Mrs. Puckett said the challenges and vulnerabilities we face in the days ahead is that all public contact makes employees and citizens vulnerable; our challenge is educating and encouraging citizens to stay home as much as possible. The containment and mitigation actions that the Board and the Governor and the President put into place now are going to be necessary to blunt the spread of the virus and we also want to be ahead of that curve, as a community, as a Commonwealth and a nation. She said the Board will likely hear the most from the citizens about how severe these containment and mitigation actions are, but we are hopeful that they will keep the patient curve down. She said at present, the availability of some cleaning supplies and hand sanitizers is still very limited, and there is a significant shortage of personal protective equipment, especially for medical personnel, such as masks and gowns. She said the County should be prepared to operate with a reduction in force resulting from illness and quarantine; she said we have been working with all partners in the Courthouse, the County departments, the judges; everyone has made a diligent effort on their continuity of operations planning. She said they were briefed last Friday and people are working on ways to maintain their services to the citizens but still keep everyone safe. She commended all in the Courthouse for working hard to provide these services. Mrs. Puckett said that at some point, if significant community spread is reached, Dispatch and volunteer EMS systems may be overrun by call volume or by shortages of volunteers and employees due to the virus or quarantine; that is being watched and monitored.

Mrs. Puckett asked the Board to review the March 17, 2020 Declaration by the Governor and the Health Commissioner; she said that will be the one most discussed, as it declares and restricts the number of patrons allowed inside permitted restaurants, fitness centers and theaters. She said Magi Van Eps and Karin Everhart will be working on a specific web page where the County can post all of this information from a link on the County web site.

Mrs. Puckett said the meetings have been listed as cancelled. She said in Education, the school started their meal distribution, the volunteer firefighters are helping and their departments are being used as points of distribution. Both Fuqua and Prince Edward are starting distance learning to keep the children's minds engaged during this time. Hampden-Sydney [College] will be starting remote instruction through April 3 [2020] and Longwood [University] is beginning online classes. Hampden-Sydney campus is empty; Longwood still has 20-30% students in town. Southside Virginia Community College information was provided to the Board members because of students in the area.

Mrs. Puckett said that regarding the Board's governance, County staff is working with VACo, as is every county in Virginia, and cities and towns are working through VML; she said the Board can meet as many times as it needs to for discussion of the current Declaration of Emergency and the COVID-19 health emergency in this fashion as the Board sees fit with no restriction by the Code. If the Board chooses to continue with the budget process, the Code of Virginia places limitations on how you can conduct that business, primarily that the majority of the members of the Board have to assemble and the assemblage location would have to be made open to the public, bearing in mind the social distancing and the 10-person limitation. She said that in assembling the Board, five members would need to be present. She said there is an effort among Virginia local governments to figure out how that can be changed in the weeks and months ahead.

Mrs. Puckett said the status of the County courthouse offices and facilities, as we know them today, has been sent to all Board members, and will be changing, but will be kept up to date as best as we can so we do not inconvenience our citizens. There is an update on Healthcare and Emergency Services; everything is routine operation with the challenge of the shortage of personal protection equipment. She said the 911 Center and the Sheriff's Office Dispatch have started implementing "High Risk Isolation Protocol" so that when people call into the 911 Center, the dispatchers will pre-screen them to see if they have any symptoms so the responders can have the opportunity to be prepared in the event that the response is to a COVID-19 patient.

Mrs. Puckett said this is going to impact the economy, the restaurant impact is part of the Governor's and the Health Commissioner's public health emergency. She said Mrs. Van Eps has shut down the Visitor's Center and has been reassigned, and will be working with Ms. Everhart on the COVID-19 page; the Everbridge Alerting System can also be used. Under Emergency Management and Planning & Coordination,

she and Mr. Pyle have been in statewide briefings and regionally both with the Health Department, the Department of Emergency Management, working with internal partners in the Courthouse, with the community partners: Longwood [University], Hampden-Sydney [College], the Town of Farmville, Centra [Hospital], Prince Edward County and Fuqua [Schools]. She said Mr. Pyle is coordinating with the regional and internal County partners on EMS. She asked the Board to let her know if there are any other agencies that Prince Edward County needs to coordinate with to include them.

Chairman Townsend thanked Mrs. Puckett for the information.

In Re: Board Decision Points Resulting from COVID-19

Mr. Bartlett stated that of the part-time County employees that may need furloughed, the two most concerned about are the part-time employees at the Visitor's Center. One is 75 years old and because of the age dynamic, it is not wise to bring her into the Courthouse. Another part-time employee may be able to help with answering calls because she is not in that age group that is as affected as others. The only other part-time employees are mainly the collection site attendees. He said the Sheriff's Department has part-time employees but they are working. Mr. Bartlett asked the Board if they would consider paying such employees as if they worked their normal hours.

Supervisor Jones asked about Mr. Coy Leatherwood; Mr. Bartlett said he is considered part-time, but he is working. Mr. Bartlett said Mr. Leatherwood works outside and can keep at a distance from the people that he has to speak with. Mr. Bartlett said all of the inspectors are working together, and that the inspectors from Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland and Prince Edward Counties have discussed it and will work as a team.

Chairman Townsend said the Governor recommends anyone 65 years of age and older should self-quarantine or limit their access to the public as much as possible to minimize the spread of the virus.

Supervisor Jones said the people that would be furloughed, it wouldn't be a great amount of money to the County and the Board should compensate them for the good work they do. Supervisor Wilck agreed.

Mr. Bartlett said it's about a few thousand dollars at most.

Supervisor Jones made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Wilck, to provide compensation to the part-time employees furloughed due to COVID-19; the motion carried:

Aye: Beverly M. Booth
Pattie Cooper-Jones
J. David Emert
Llew W. Gilliam, Jr.
Robert M. Jones
Odessa H. Pride
Jerry R. Townsend
James R. Wilck

Nay: None

In Re: County Health Insurance

Mr. Bartlett said that with the Declaration of a National Emergency, Anthem is willing and in fact, recommending that self-insurance providers, which is Prince Edward County, waive the members cost share which are co-deductibles or copays, deductibles or co-insurance for diagnostic testing related to COVID-19 as well as for the in-network visits associated with COVID-19 whether it takes place in a doctor's office, urgent care center, or emergency department outpatient services. Mr. Bartlett said he costed this out and for every person who is covered under the County's plan, if they go to the doctor and receive a COVID-19 test, it is a little more than \$6,000. This includes spouses, dependents and employees.

Supervisor Jones made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Booth, to waive the members cost share which are co-deductibles or copays, deductibles or co-insurance for diagnostic testing related to COVID-19 as well as for the in-network visits associated with COVID-19; the motion carried:

Aye: Beverly M. Booth
Pattie Cooper-Jones
J. David Emert
Llew W. Gilliam, Jr.
Robert M. Jones
Odessa H. Pride
Jerry R. Townsend
James R. Wilck

Nay: None

In Re: Waiver of Credit Card Convenience Fees

Mr. Bartlett said the Treasurer has suspended the payment of credit card fees, which are about 2%, for payments made on the County web site. She is unable to waive those fees if someone calls in to make their payment, and cannot waive the credit card fees for those made in her office.

In Re: COVID-19 Impact on Board Meeting Schedule

Mr. Bartlett said the budget schedule states that he is to submit the budget next Tuesday; he recommended that be delayed one week due to COVID-19 taking precedence. He said he could have it prepared but it would be rushed; he said he is not sure the Board would be prepared to have a meeting where only five of the supervisors show up. He said he spoke with the Superintendent of the Schools and she is in agreement with the delay of one week. He said something may come from the Governor's office or the General Assembly that would make it easier for the Board to meet; with the current ten-person limit, with five board members, himself, the Assistant Administrator, the County Attorney, the Clerk to take the minutes, that is nine people. The public could attend other ways; he said eventually we will have to have a public hearing which will be a challenge.

Supervisor Wilck said a newspaper reporter would be there too.

Supervisor Gilliam asked if one-week postponement is enough. Mr. Bartlett said one week would allow him time to prepare the budget and it may need postponed again, but the School Superintendent is concerned if it is delayed much past that because they have to issue contracts for teachers, and they prefer doing that in early May. Mr. Bartlett said there is a requirement in the [County] Code that says the budget will be adopted by May 1; 95% of the counties don't do that, and there is no penalty if it isn't done. Mr. Bartlett said we may get additional information from the Governor's office about this meeting issue in the near future.

Ms. Atkins Wilson, County Attorney, asked what type of notice is required for that type of meeting. Mrs. Puckett said ideally, three days notice is what the Freedom of Information Act would require for regular meetings; an emergency meeting, the public just has to be noticed as it is sent to the Board.

Chairman Townsend said the Board could set up a teleconference as is being conducted and they could call in; more Board members could be at the meeting. Mr. Bartlett said the only time the public needs to give input is for a public hearing, which is scheduled for later on. Discussion followed.

Mr. Bartlett said that if there is still an issue, he can make the documents as usual and deliver those to the Board members and put it on the web site; that way the Board could review it and call Mr. Bartlett with any questions so that once the Board can get together and it is safe to meet, the process could be moved along quickly.

Supervisor Jones commended the staff for "stepping up to bat on this" and for doing so well.

Chairman Townsend made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Emert, to adjust the budget schedule back one week; the motion carried:

Aye:	Beverly M. Booth Pattie Cooper-Jones J. David Emert Llew W. Gilliam, Jr. Robert M. Jones Odessa H. Pride Jerry R. Townsend James R. Wilck	Nay: None
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Supervisor Cooper-Jones made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Wilck, that if it becomes necessary that a Board member needs a COVID-19 test, it would be at the County's expense; the motion carried:

Aye:	Beverly M. Booth Pattie Cooper-Jones J. David Emert Llew W. Gilliam, Jr. Robert M. Jones Odessa H. Pride Jerry R. Townsend James R. Wilck	Nay: None
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Supervisor Pride stated that she has a Town Hall meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2020; she said she is not sure if that will happen but will announce if it will not be held.

Mrs. Puckett asked the Board if this type of COVID-19 briefing should be done on a regular basis. She said there is unlimited access under the Code, or should the staff coordinate through the Chairman if there is new or emergency information to report.

Chairman Townsend asked that the information be relayed to himself; but it wouldn't be a bad idea that if the State of Emergency continues, for the Board to hold a weekly conference call to receive an update on where the County is with contingency plans and how the County is addressing the issues. Following discussion, the Board concurred weekly conference calls will be held Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m. to receive briefings on COVID-19 in Prince Edward County.

Supervisor Jones commended Chairman Townsend on his handling of the meetings during this time; the Board concurred.

On motion of Supervisor Emert, seconded by Supervisor Cooper-Jones, and adopted by the following vote:

Aye:	Beverly M. Booth	Nay:	None
	Pattie Cooper-Jones		
	J. David Emert		
	Llew W. Gilliam, Jr.		
	Robert M. Jones		
	Odessa H. Pride		
	Jerry R. Townsend		
	James R. Wilck		

the meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.