

March 24, 2020

At a special meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Prince Edward County, held at the Court House, thereof, on Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020; at 7:00 p.m., there were present in attendance:

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

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 on COVID-19

Mrs. Sarah Elam Puckett, Assistant County Administrator, stated she has had the opportunity to work with a lot of warriors and heroes in the community in recent days. She asked the Board to think about all of the people beyond the County Staff, in the community that are all working very hard to overcome this tremendous risk and threat that we face as a nation.

Mrs. Puckett said Prince Edward County has one new confirmed case; it is a Longwood University student. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is reporting today, publicly, that there are 290 cases and seven deaths in Virginia due to COVID-19. There are a few more challenges and vulnerabilities; in the future there may be difficulty with the sustainability of the non-profits and the schools with the resources in order

to continue to feed as many citizens that will need that support in the weeks and months ahead. She said a surge is expected in the health care system in the weeks ahead, to include the EMS agencies and hospital. Public contact between employees and citizens continues to make everyone vulnerable, so we must continue to educate and encourage citizens to stay home. The adherence and enforcement of the containment and mitigation actions that have been laid out by the Governor and by the Declaration, and the social distancing, is critical especially at the higher education institutions. Mrs. Puckett said the Department of Social Services is reporting a significant rise in the number of food stamp applications; they are also working very hard to fast track those as we see more unemployment. There will be continuing shortages of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies are limited, there is no good news on the horizon about PPEs and they do not expect the supply chain to repair itself for the next three to six weeks. The Commonwealth of Virginia's access to the resources of the federal stockpile are going to continue to be very limited. There are citizens in the County that have started sewing masks; if you should encounter that, there are heroes of all types in our community. She said there is a group coming together to sew masks for the hospital and the health care workers. She said as expected, the County should be prepared to operate in the future with a reduction in force resulting from illness and self-quarantine.

Mrs. Puckett said the Governor's Executive Order #53 has closed the schools for the remainder of the academic year, all K-12 schools, public and private. It has expanded the limitations on retail and non-essential businesses. Public meetings and events are cancelled; the County Administrator is going to be weighing the cancellation of fishing tournaments at Sandy River [Reservoir] because even that collection of boats could be deemed in violation of the 10-person group.

Mr. Bartlett said he did cancel the fishing tournaments earlier in the day.

Mrs. Puckett said that in Education, meal distribution continues. She said Mr. Bruce Davis reports an average of 500 meals per day and is awaiting guidance from the Virginia Department of Education; the schools in general are awaiting guidance on the continuity of learning and being able to maintain meal delivery through May. Fuqua School continues to implement distance learning.

Mrs. Puckett reported Hampden-Sydney [College] has shifted to remote instruction; there are currently 15 students remaining on campus. Students are being allowed to return to campus to retrieve their belongings and once this is completed, the College will be locking down their residence halls. They have no students self-isolating for health considerations. She said Longwood [University] has moved its classes and

assignments to a fully-online format; the campus continues to be open and the University is encouraging students to go home. As of yesterday, there are about 450 students still in university housing or Longwood managed off-campus housing. The University could not provide a number of off-campus students that still remain in Farmville. Students still have access to residence halls and most campus facilities are still operating, although on amended hours. Longwood reports that they stay in daily contact with students who are in self-isolation via phone, text messaging and meal delivery. Mrs. Puckett said Southside Virginia Community College is also all online.

Mrs. Puckett then reported that the County Administrator and County Attorney are developing an emergency ordinance in order to transact regular business, still with limitations; she said staff is developing options for citizens to have remote access to those board meetings when we transition back to regular business.

Mrs. Puckett said that in the Courthouse, most offices remain open; some staff is transitioning to tele-commuting, the Courts are still operating under the Supreme Court order and we have asked that if anything changes, to let staff know and Mrs. Magi Van Eps and Ms. Karin Everhart are making every effort to keep the information on the web site current for the public so the public will know how to transact business with the County.

Mrs. Puckett then said that Southside Community Hospital is still implementing restricted access and they are screening visitors. There are testing sites in the Farmville area; they have established a hotline to call in and be prescreened. They are also doing drive-through testing sites at the Clinic on South Main Street. Mrs. Puckett said Prince Edward County EMS agencies are continuing to respond to calls and the needs of the citizens; they are continuing to look for PPEs. Mr. Trey Pyle has done a lot of coordination with Deanna [Jones]; the access to PPEs is truly a critical shortage now and as we see that med surge in more calls and cases, it will only get worse. What we hear on the news is true and we are experiencing it.

Mrs. Puckett said fire service is still routine operations and still working with the schools, the 911 Center and Dispatch are still screening callers and the 911 Center is helping us track calls so the County can file for public assistance grants.

Mrs. Puckett said the economic impact is that we have rapidly rising unemployment and we will see a decrease in retail sales and sales tax revenue. She said the Prince Edward County economy employs about 8,900 people and the largest industries are educational services (1,500), health care and social assistance

(1,200) and accommodations and food service (1,100). All three of those are impacted. The severity will be determined by the employers and what the federal government does regarding the people who are laid off.

Mrs. Puckett said the County continues with public information; Mrs. Van Eps and Ms. Everhart continue to work on the County web site and keep it updated. Mrs. Van Eps is going to start on the social media presence.

Mrs. Puckett said we are now being asked to track the Personal Protective Equipment “burn rate,” or usage. In order for the Commonwealth of Virginia to request access to resources from the federal stockpile, they have to justify their request. Mr. Pyle contacts the agencies within our community daily that are using PPEs, not including healthcare which is being counted separately. Mr. Pyle has to submit that information daily to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management so they can track our usage and continue to build the case if we need to request additional resources from the federal government.

Mrs. Puckett said we continue to coordinate with the State, the Town, neighboring counties and First Responder agencies, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the Virginia Department of Health, the offices inside the Courthouse; we have robust communication and coordination. She said that if a Board member should learn of something the Staff may be overlooking, we would be most appreciative that information.

Mr. Bartlett said he spoke with Sheriff Epps about what he is doing concerning enforcement; Sheriff Epps has spoken with the Commonwealth Attorney, and if they see activities which are not allowed under the Emergency Declaration, they will issue a warning and tell them to disperse, then additional action will be taken if required after that. The Sheriff is also increasing his patrols in the residential areas of the County; he is concerned that there may be an increase in break-ins because of people being laid off.

Chairman Townsend asked if Mr. Pyle is getting a count of PPEs used by the Jail. Mr. Bartlett said he spoke with Mr. Jim Davis and got that count for the previous week, and from now on it will be given daily.

Mrs. Puckett said there are eight to ten agencies that Mr. Pyle is tracking; she said he is tracking the agencies in the County and outside of the Town, to include the Juvenile Detention facility.

Chairman Townsend asked about the inventory the EMS units have. Mr. Pyle stated that on a conservative basis, if the calls continue the way they are, probably two weeks, but if call volume picks up, it would be a week to a week and a half before they start running critically low on PPEs. He said that includes

the re-use; they have adopted a re-use or continued prolonged-use policy on the N95 masks to drag the stock out as long as they can. He said that as they become contaminated with known cases, they cannot be reused. He said there are no vendors; the State has secured one but they are eight to ten weeks out on supplying the need. He said we are using friends and neighbors in trying to secure what we can and make do.

Mr. Bartlett asked what the most critical item is currently. Mr. Pyle said is the N95 masks; they are the biggest line of defense that the EMS providers have to filter the particles from the air.

Mr. Bartlett said Mrs. Puckett mentioned local citizens are making masks, and asked how that is progressing and what numbers they can produce. Mr. Pyle said he just learned about that today and will find out more information about the numbers and their effectiveness.

Supervisor Gilliam asked if any other students at Longwood University have been tested; Mrs. Puckett said as she understands it, there is one confirmed case and that there are as many as ten additional students who are self-quarantining because of their contact with him. She said it is not known if those ten have been tested. If they begin to show symptoms, it is likely that they would be tested at that time; she said you can test too early. Mr. Ellington said that is correct.

Chairman Townsend asked Mr. Ellington if those individuals are being monitored to ensure compliance. Mr. Ellington stated that according to Longwood [University], the students are being monitored throughout the day. Mr. Ellington said he requested through Dr. Nash and the Health Department, if they could provide the location of these individuals to enter it into the CAD system to alert law enforcement and emergency Services should they get a call for service to these residents, and according to the Health Department policies, they are not able to release that information to Emergency Services.

Mrs. Puckett asked if the Longwood Police know where the students are; Mr. Ellington isn't sure but he doesn't think so. He said the University is communicating with the students via phone and text messaging.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones said her son is in self-quarantine in Richmond, Virginia. She said he went to a doctor in Richmond, who did not have a test; he has been tested in Prince Edward County at Southside Hospital but has not yet received the results. She said he is back in Richmond and not in Prince Edward County.

Mrs. Puckett said the testing results now are taking six to nine days because of the back-ups in the labs.

Supervisor Jones asked if anything more has been heard about the first Longwood student, and if that student has recovered. Mrs. Puckett said that first student left Prince Edward County a week ago, and returned to her residence outside of Prince Edward County.

Supervisor Gilliam said UVA may have come up with their own test and asked for conformation. Mrs. Puckett said she has not heard that but will research that.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones said she heard their test is a 45-minute test for results. Supervisor Gilliam said he heard several doctors were hoping to create a test that was faster to get the results.

In Re: Board Decision Points Resulting from COVID-19

Mr. Bartlett said there are employees that have concerns about the COVID-19. He said currently the County has the existing Personnel Policy that provides vacation and sick leave. He said the State has a policy called “Public Health Emergency Leave – Administrative Procedure” which includes a section on Pandemics. He said it allows all salaried employees up to 80 hours of paid leave each year to attend to their own medical condition or to care for immediate family members residing in an affected area. He said it also allowed wage or part-time employees to have 80 hours per year, but they would only be paid the number of hours they are normally scheduled to work. He said the agencies would remain open and would be up to the individual department heads to determine if they would have to get a medical certification of being sick or showing symptoms. It also says that agencies should consider expanding the use of alternative work schedules, such as working before or after normal work hours and doing other things to help. The employees are expected to work unless they are ill or they are caring for someone. Mr. Bartlett asked that the Board authorize the County to follow a similar policy for this, which would be developed and ready for consideration at the next meeting. He said there are things that the County would not follow, but this would be limited to 80 hours.

Chairman Townsend stated it is a benefit to the employees, those that are symptomatic and have been to the doctor and put on self-quarantine, they would not be using their leave but the public health emergency leave; if they have a case with child care issues that would qualify them also. He said they have to work the process, first with options of adjusted schedules or tele-working or tele-commuting. He said historically the County mirrors what the state does, and he recommended this policy.

Chairman Townsend made a motion, seconded by Supervisor Cooper-Jones, to adopt the Public Health Emergency Leave for the county and to follow the state guidelines as closely as possible for Prince Edward County; the motion carried:

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	

In Re: Emergency Ordinance Related to Board Meetings

Mr. Bartlett said he received a model ordinance from VACo put together by the Local Government Attorney's Association; Ms. Terri Atkins Wilson, County Attorney, stated there were drafts but have not yet been able to review it. Mr. Bartlett said that will be presented for the next electronic meeting; he said this can be passed during an electronic meeting and this will allow the Board to move forward in a more organized way. Mr. Bartlett said the Governor's Executive Order #53 states "Operations of a government are exempt from the 10-person rule," so we could meet; it may not be wise to do so but the Board can meet and some may want to attend in person and some may not. That can be determined in the future; he said we will always have a call-in and will provide documents to all the Board members so they can participate. He said we will have to continue the operations of government. Mr. Bartlett said staff is developing ways that the public can call in and participate, especially in public hearings which is a requirement.

Mr. Bartlett said he spoke with the Superintendent of Schools about the meeting to be held on Tuesday; she would like to present on the same date either by presenting the materials or in person, and this would have to be discussed. He said he could get all the budget information and deliver it to every Board member beforehand; those who would want to attend in person would be fine and those who wish to participate electronically would be fine too. He said his normal first budget meeting is to review the proposed budget, and may have a preliminary budget from the Schools. Mr. Bartlett said the Board will need to consider any presentations, such as the Health Insurance representative, who can provide a summary to each member and call in to answer questions. Mr. Bartlett stated there hasn't been a big change in the health

insurance; the effects of COVID-19 will be apparent in the future. Mr. Bartlett said he will get the budget out soon.

Chairman Townsend asked how many Supervisors are willing to attend a meeting Tuesday, March 31, 2020 in person. All Board members expressed their willingness to attend in person except Supervisor Wilck, who was undecided.

Chairman Townsend asked the impact to the budget the County will see because of the closing of the businesses. Mr. Bartlett said the major impact will be on local use and sales tax. He said while restaurants and bars have closed, food establishments and hardware stores are busier than they have ever been. He said during the current fiscal year, even if it is reduced by half, that is only approximately \$400,000 - \$500,000 at most. He said that collections were already above that amount. He said there will not be a significant impact on this year's budget. Next year's budget is hard to predict because that won't start until 1 July 2020. It will be determined by a possible lock-down past July. He said there will also be federal relief packages that we don't know about right now. He said the real estate revenues will not be impacted; personal property is not impacted as quickly. There may be fewer sales of new vehicles but that always drives the native values of used vehicles up. He said the County does not have a business license or meals tax and those are two items that are greatly affected by the economic conditions of a locality. He said the sales tax isn't received until two months following the month it is collected; he said we won't know the impact on March until May.

Chairman Townsend questioned the impact on the Jail; he said offender movement will stop and they receive money per inmate which will have a negative impact. Mr. Bartlett said they will likely have to increase spending in the protective equipment; the County receives a per diem from the state based on inmate days. He said it doesn't seem to have impacted us greatly; we have lowered the number of federal inmates for a variety of reasons and that will lower the revenue. Mr. Bartlett said he reviewed the Jail's preliminary budget and made some recommendations; he said it appears our cost will increase on the Jail next year by a few hundred-thousand dollars. There is one rather large item that he needs to discuss with the Jail Superintendent which would be a significant reduction in expenses.

Supervisor Cooper-Jones asked why the Board has not received the weekly updates from Mr. Bartlett. Mr. Bartlett said he has been overwhelmed with everything; he said he started one but the webinars, conference calls and decisions concerning the COVID-19 have taken up an inordinate amount of time.



Supervisor Pride said that because of the COVID-19 event, she will not be holding her Town Hall meeting on April 16 [2020]. She said she will reschedule once this event gets much better. She will make this announcement on Call FLO in the morning.

Chairman Townsend said that Mr. Bartlett's contract date is growing near; he said the supervisors will need to discuss that soon. He said that will likely be on the meeting agenda for Tuesday.

Supervisor Wilck said that because of what is going on now, he would like the Board to consider giving Mr. Bartlett an extension of three or four months until we get through this. He said the contract is up in June, but give him an extension to September or something and then go into it because Mr. Bartlett is in the middle of all of this stuff. Chairman Townsend said he had the same thought, and something to discuss at the next meeting.

Supervisor Booth thanked the County staff for their dedication and hard work during this COVID-19 pandemic. She said their service to the Board and to the County is greatly appreciated. Chairman Townsend agreed.

On motion of Supervisor Cooper-Jones, seconded by Supervisor Pride, 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 7:57 p.m.