

At an Emergency meeting of the Town Council holden in and for the Town of Gloucester on March 24, 2020;

I. Call to Order of Emergency Session

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Members Present: George O. (Buster) Steere, Jr., President; Walter M. O. Steere, III, Vice-President (**arrived immediately following Roll Call**); William E. Reichert; Patricia Henry; and Julian (Jay) Forgue.

Also Present: Jean Fecteau, Town Clerk; Tim Kane, Town Solicitor; Joseph DelPrete, Chief of Police; Matt Floor, IT Director; Melissa Bouvier, Senior Center Director; Ken Johnson, Bldg./Zoning Official Diane Brennan, Finance Director; Karen Scott, Town Planner (electronically); Christine Mathieu, Deputy Town Clerk; Jane Steere, Tax Collector; & Gary Treml, Public Works Director

III. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Per Rhode Island General Law: **MOTION** was made by Councilor Reichert to **CONVENE**, pursuant to R.I.G.L. 42-46-6 (c), to address an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public; seconded by Councilor W. Steere

Discussion: This meeting was called with less than the forty eight hours notice, required by law, due to the changing status of the COVID-19 virus in the State;

VOTE: AYES - G. Steere, W. Steere, Reichert, Henry and Forgue
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

IV. Covid-19 (Corona virus)

1. Update on status/Actions - Discussion and/or Action

G. Mosca gave updates on the statistics in Rhode Island relative to cases of COVID-19. G. Mosca stated he has been working with Town employees regarding the food needs of specific groups of our residents. G. Mosca stated he has been working on plans for our community outreach in a "worse case" scenario. G. Mosca gave information on the actions of other communities and surrounding states and emergency plans being made by RIEMA. G. Mosca also updated on MED Pod plans should that operation be needed. G. Mosca stated he has put in requests with the state for equipment and that he has been given clearance to obtain supplies which may be reimbursable by the Federal Government with no bidding process required.

Councilor Henry expressed concern with people not following the social distancing guidelines or the lack of limitations on people entering stores. G. Mosca stated the Town Council can put restrictions in place if necessary.

G. Mosca reiterated that people should not hoard products.

Council discussed ways these establishments could work towards insuring better social distancing. After discussion, the EMA Director agreed he would create a letter and/or make a robo call and work with businesses to try to encourage better enforcement.

2. Town Departments/Employees

- a. Determine Essential employees -To discuss and or take Actions necessary to facilitate possible emergency plans and actions for Town/Town Services in light of Corona Virus. Discussion and/or Action

Discussion followed on staffing in each of the town departments and splitting up our employees in certain departments so that we have two groups of staff that can do the essential jobs should someone have to be quarantined.

All department heads expressed the ability to keep their departments functioning by rotating in office staff and working from home.

J. Branch explained how her office and the Food Pantry will be functioning.

State/Federal Food drop locations, should they be needed, and providing food for school children in the free and reduced lunch program was discussed. G. Mosca stated he will report unmet food needs to the state.

M. Floor, IT Director, assured Council that he will be able to set up the people that will work from home with the connections they need.

J. Fecteau questioned if the employees that do not work from home but do not come into work will continue to be paid.

Discussion followed on possible lay offs, rotating schedules, and hourly employees.

D. Brennan stated we should be fine with payroll for the time frames proposed. D. Brennan stated if this becomes a long term situation we will have to develop a plan.

G. Treml expressed the importance of being able to continue operations, with healthy staff, at the Transfer Station.

- b. Determine plan for continuation of essential services, staffing levels and/or Tiered Response, and financial functions should shut down, Town or State, occur. Discussion and/or Action

Councilor G. Steere stated at the last Town Council meeting the Council adopted the Tier 3 status. There was a consensus to remain at that Tier at this time and let Department Heads determine the employee schedule.

Councilor W. Steere questioned which positions would be considered essential if a mandated shut down occurred. It was agreed that if that occurred another emergency meeting could be called.

Discussion followed on land use applications and whether there would be a tolling period for deadlines. K. Scott stated she has asked the League that question and is waiting for some guidance. K. Scott also stated that currently we have two applications pending and she will work with applicant for an extension should one be needed.

T. Kane stated the Governor may have to adopt a ruling in an Executive Order to allow for a tolling period going forward.

Chief DelPrete spoke regarding his department's staffing.

MOTION was made by Councilor Reichert to AUTHORIZE Town Department Heads to allow staff, including themselves, to: 1. work at home and 2. to allow staff to work on rotating schedules with the discretion of the Dept. Head; effective immediately and remaining in effect until further notice; seconded by Councilor Forgue

Discussion:

Councilor W. Steere questioned if there were any employees that cannot work from home. It was agreed, if so, those employees could alternate schedules.

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, W. Steere, Reichert, Henry and Forgue
 NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED

MOTION was made by Councilor Henry to EXTEND the Town of Gloucester, Declaration of a State of Emergency, dated March 16, 2020 (and extended to March 31st), to April 7th, 2020; seconded by Councilor Forgue

Discussion: L. DeSantis questioned if the revaluation hearings are still on hold. Discussion followed and it was determined that the hearings are put off to a date to still determined.

Councilor Henry stated she has sat in on a Municipal Leaders Call with representatives from the Governors office and she expressed guidance towards all cities and towns working towards the same goal.

3. Financial Plans
 - a. Discuss and/or pass Emergency Spending or Non-Spending Policies
 - b. Financial processes - updates and/or action

D. Brennan addressed the Council and stated the Charter gives the town the ability to spend but it does not address revenue. D. Brennan discussed options should we need to continue spending at current budget rate. Councilor Henry stated that as we approach our last quarter payment we should hold off on extending any extensions at this time. J. Steere stated she doesn't feel we should offer any change at this time and revisit the need as this goes on. D. Brennan stated the League is working with the Governor's Office and conveying our suggestions. D. Brennan stated all departments are watching spending and no action is needed at this time.

- V. Seek to Convene to Executive Session Pursuant to:
 - A. RIGL 42-46-5 (a)(3)) Discussion regarding the matter of security (as it relates to Corona Virus outbreak) NOT NEEDED, NO ACTION.
- VI. Reconvene Open Session
Disclosure of votes taken or # of votes taken in Executive Session - Discussion and/or Action NOT NEEDED, NO ACTION
- VII. To discuss and or take Actions necessary to facilitate possible emergency plans and/or action on Town Services in light of Corona Virus NOT NEEDED, NO ACTION

Council offered their help to each department, if needed.

VIII. Adjourn

MOTION was made by Councilor Reichert to ADJOURN at 4:45 p.m.; seconded by Councilor Forgue

VOTE: AYES- G. Steere, W. Steere, Reichert, Henry and Forgue
NAYS-0

MOTION PASSED