

**City of Alexandria
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 18, 2020, 8:00 PM
EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER
COVID-19 STATUS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY INITIATIVES
Council Chambers**

Present: Mayor Justin M. Wilson, Vice Mayor Elizabeth Bennett-Parker, Members of Council Canek Aguirre, John Taylor Chapman, Amy B. Jackson, Redella S. Pepper, and Mohamed E. Seifeldein.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Mr. Jinks, City Manager; Ms. Anderson, City Attorney; Ms. Triggs, Deputy City Manager; Ms. Collins, Deputy City Manager; Dr. Haering, Director, Health Department; Ms. Garvey, Director, Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS); Ms. Taylor, Director, Finance; Mr. Routt, Director, Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Fire Chief Smedley; Mr. Whatley, Acting Emergency Manager, Fire Department;

Recorded by: Gloria Sitton, City Clerk and Clerk of Council.

FY2021 Budget Work Session on the "Healthy and Thriving" areas of the budget is scheduled from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.

8:00 p.m -- EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL TO CONSIDER COVID-19 STATUS, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY INITIATIVES.

1. Calling the Roll.

Mayor Wilson called the meeting to order and the City Clerk called the roll. All members of Council were present. Councilman Chapman, Councilwoman Jackson, and Councilwoman Pepper participated via telephone.

City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance and observed a moment of silence. Mayor Wilson offered condolences to the family of former Police Chief Samarra, who passed recently.

2. Consideration of COVID-19 Status, Response, and Recovery Initiatives.

a. Overview of Health Status.

Dr. Haering, Director, Alexandria Health Department, provided a status report. Dr. Haering noted that the health department is in full continuity of government status and have cutback many of their clinical services to address this COVID-19 crisis. Dr. Haering explained the role of the health department in providing support and information to community about this disease and how to address it. Dr. Haering responded to questions from Council about testing and criteria for receiving a test, PPE, other resources and staffing and recommendations for social distancing and quarantining.

b. INOVA Alexandria Update.

Dr. Rina Bansel, President of INOVA, stated that the INOVA system has been preparing for the COVID-19 crisis for the past few months and monitoring the rapidly changing situation surrounding the disease. Dr. Bansel noted that the INOVA staff is preparing a real-time response as well as looking ahead to what type of response will be needed as the disease begins to impact the community. Dr. Bansel stated that they setup the emergency screen room to keep the emergency room safe from those who may have been infected and INOVA is being careful with the resources so that last for the length of this crisis. Dr. Bansel responded to questions from Council about INOVA's preparations and resources.

c. ACPS Update.

Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Superintendent of Schools, Alexandria City Public Schools provided a status report on the schools preparations. Dr. Hutchings reported that has worked to ensure that there is a food distribution for the students and their families. Dr. Hutchings noted that they are working to ensure that the distribution locations adhere to the proper guidelines and social distancing recommendations. Dr. Hutchings pointed out that the distance learning activity packets have been distributed to keep the students enriched and engaged during the closures. Dr. Hutchings also noted that the schools were able to send Chromebooks home with students in grade 3-12, so teachers will be able to engage with them. Dr. Hutchings responded to questions from Council about resources for students and staff.

d. City Government Update.

City Manager Mark Jinks provided a status report City government operations. Mr. Jinks reported that the government would provide a continuity of core services but there will be scaling back to protect the community and employees. Mr. Jinks noted that libraries and museums are closed. Mr. Jinks also reported that all events and programs at City recreation centers have been canceled or postponed, with only three remaining open. Mr. Jinks noted that many of the City staff are teleworking and he pointed out that all City employees will be paid during this crisis. Mr. Jinks stated that a soft hiring freeze has been implemented at this time. Mr. Jinks reported that the 72-hour parking rule has been suspended in residential areas. Mr. Jinks noted that restaurants have implemented curbside pickup for customers and he noted that State information regarding small business loans that would be available at the end of the week. Mr. Jinks responded to questions from Council.

e. Human Services Update.

Ms. Garvey, Director, Department of Community and Human Services, provided a status report for services provided by the DCHS. Ms. Garvey noted that the adult daycare

center and the senior centers will be closed to prevent spread among that population. Ms. Garvey stated that there would be continued communication to these clients and they will be provided with food to take home. Ms. Garvey stated that the detox program will be limiting the number of clients served to observe proper social distancing. Ms. Garvey noted that the hours at the mental health facilities will be changed with contact with clients, with emergency services still available to those who need it. Ms. Garvey stated that DCHS is encouraging more people to conduct business over the phone or website, if possible. Ms. Garvey responded to questions from Council about resources and funding to meet the needs of the community.

f. Discussion of Initiatives.

Council discussed the three major areas: human services, small business assistance, and municipal finance and how the ability to address these needs to be a collaborative effort between the Federal and State governments. City Manager Jinks noted that once the needs are assessed information would be communicated to Council about what is possible, particularly on things like rent assistance and tax relief. City Manager Jinks noted that there were initial conversations with businesses in the community to address how to assist them with property taxes and possible small business loans, working with the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership to work on developing a process. City Manager Jinks noted that Planning and Zoning and the City Attorney has determined that food delivery pickup, sidewalk parking, parking lot vending, outdoor dining expansion and sale of off premises alcohol that suspending enforcement would be the best solution and will work with people see what is possible. City Attorney Anderson stated that she will work with Planning and Zoning to bring forward any necessary for Council approval by the Tuesday March 24 meeting. City Manager Jinks noted that staff is already looking at revenue re-estimates and how it will affect the budgets for the rest of this year and next year.

g. Next Steps.

City Manager Mark Jinks reported on initiatives and next steps.

3. Other.

None.

4. Adjourn.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO DISCUSS, upon motion by Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker, seconded by Councilman Seifeldein and carried unanimously, City Council adjourned the Special Meeting of March 18, 2020 at 10:45 p.m. The vote was as follows: In favor, Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker, Councilman Aguirre, Councilman Chapman, Councilwoman Jackson, Councilwoman Pepper, and Councilman Seifeldein; Opposed, none.

APPROVED BY:

JUSTIN M. WILSON MAYOR

ATTEST:

Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk