



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: MAY 20, 2020

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

City Council, Board and Commission Meetings Format During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

ISSUE: What City business to conduct, and in what form to conduct the business, of City Council, Boards and Commissions while the COVID-19 crisis remains a threat?

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council:

1. Hold its June 9 Legislative meeting and June 20 Public Hearing meeting in an electronic format with a widening of docket subject matters to be considered;
2. Determine at a later date in June in what form to hold Council's June 23 Legislative meeting and July 7 Public Hearing meeting; and
3. Provide continued guidance to City Boards and Commissions that they not meet until September, 2020 unless considering COVID-19 matters or matters that relate to the continuity of government.

BACKGROUND: With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic impact on the City of Alexandria and its residents in March, City Council started meeting on March 18 in a fully electronic format as now permitted by State law. The City Council has held its Legislative meetings and Work sessions since then in electronic format using the Zoom platform. This has included the provision of public electronic input during several of these meetings. During the last month, in order to deal with the continuity of government operations, a few boards and commissions have met to deal with matters that could not be deferred or have been long planned to be considered by Council in June (such as the North Potomac Yard /Virginia Tech plans). This has included meetings in May of the Board of Architectural Review, the Alexandria Housing Affordability Advisory Committee, and Potomac Yard Development Advisory Committee. The Planning Commission meeting and

public hearing in early June is planned to be a full electronic meeting.

Given that the Commonwealth of Virginia's reopening status for the State and Northern Virginia (Phases 0 or 1, with Phases 2 and 3 unlikely) is not known at the time of this memo, a decision needs to be made in regard to upcoming Council meetings. It is recommended that the first two Council meetings in June to be held on June 9 and 20th be planned to be held as full electronic meetings, and that the June 23 and July 7 meetings remain to-be-determined in regard to format. Later in June a better determination can be made in regard to whether Council can or should meet in person. Consistent with what City Council decided on April 28 regarding its plan for meetings during the emergency, these dockets will include much of the City Council's more traditional docket items such as appointments, lease considerations, ordinances and land use items. Some of the specific projects for consideration in June are Potomac Yard / Virginia Tech, Silverstone Senior Living, 1200 North Henry and 701 North Henry. However, items such as long range planning decisions or city-wide initiatives will continue to be deferred until the Fall.

It is recommended that Council continue its guidance to City Boards and Commissions that until September, 2020 that Boards and Commissions meet only to discuss COVID-19 issues related to their mission, or meet to handle continuity of government issues such as where there are pending land use applications for which a decision needs to be made.

On June 9, a decision can be made by Council in regard to how to handle the June 23 and July 7 meetings.