

Canonsburg Borough Emergency Council Meeting
Monday, March 16 th, 2020
6:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Bell at 6:30 pm.

Moment of Silence called by Mr. Bell.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Mr. Eric Chandler - Present

Mr. John Severine - Present

Mrs. Tina Bails - Present

Mr. Edward P. Yorke- Present

Mr. Richard Russo- Present

Mr. Harold Bowman - Present

Mr. Richard Bell, President - Present

Others Present: Borough Manager Denise Lesnock, Mayor David Rhome, Solicitor Joseph Dalfonso and Police Chief Alex Coghill

Absent: Pubic Works Director, Tom Lawrence

GUESTS:

None.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

Mr. Bell explained that the meeting was called for the purpose of discussing the COVID-19 pandemic and that no voting would take place. Mr. Bell stated that he visited the Borough offices

the week before and asked all the employees how they felt and what was needed to make them feel safe in these uncertain times. At that time, the employees felt that nothing needed to be changed but as of March 16th, 2020 and with the new updates on the virus, the concerns had changed. Mr. Bell spoke to Mayor Rhome over the weekend to discuss the incoming updates and it was decided to hold a meeting Monday morning with Jeff Kelly (Executive Director, Canonsburg Ambulance Service), Chief Alex Coghill, Tim Solobay, Tom Lawrence, Denise Lesnock and Mark Mazzeo. Both Harold Bowman and RT Bell were unable to attend. Mr. Bell called explained that he called during the meeting and after the meeting and spoke to Mayor Rhome and Ms. Lesnock about the outcome of the meeting.

Mr. Russo inquired why there was not a representative from council at the meeting, Mr. Bell explained that two council members were invited but that neither were able to attend and did not want to call Mr. Chandler so late in the evening. Mr. Chandler replied that in the future Mr. Bell can contact him whatever time needed and he would make himself available. Again, Mr. Russo asked why council was unaware that there was a meeting about shutting the Borough building to the public, Mrs. Bails explained she called during the meeting and was told about it but was unable to attend. Mr. Bell agreed that he wished that he had contacted Mr. Chandler Sunday night but that everything happened very quickly and that he asked that Ms. Lesnock and Mayor Rhome send an email to all of council after the meeting.

Mayor Rhome explained that he and Ms. Lesnock made phone calls all day with government officials and solicitor Joseph Dalfonso to decide on the next steps that needed to be taken and many things needed to be taken into account, for example the children who depend on school lunches. Mayor Rhome continued that all the decisions that were made during the day were for the safety of the community and council members were invited but unable to attend. Ms. Lesnock explained that things changed constantly throughout the day.

Mr. Dalfonso stated that the meeting was becoming unorganized and explained that the Mayor has the power to declare a state of emergency and that the emergency meeting was to discuss a resolution to extend the state of emergency after 7 days. Mr. Russo explained that he agreed with

the actions that were being taken but believed that council should have been involved and informed.

Mayor Rhome explained that an email to council was being composed but that Mr. Dalfonso had called and said to hold sending the email as Governor Tom Wolf was giving a live statement with updates. Mr. Bell stated that he was in touch with Mr. Dalfonso throughout the day. Mr. Dalfonso explained that this is an emergency situation, that everyone is learning and that everything had to happen quickly. Mr. Chandler asked that in the future, that Mr. Bell makes sure that a council member is present.

Mayor Rhome complimented Borough Maintenance, Jay Rodenski, for the continuing sanitation of the Borough building and reiterated the issue of the students in the area relying on school breakfast and lunches, Mayor Rhome is in touch with Mr. Daniels from Canon McMillan. Mr. Bell explained that it needed to be decided that if an employee is sick that they should stay home, Chief Coghill replied that according to the CDC website, if any employee has a fever of 100 or above, that they should stay home and that temperature guns were ordered. Mr. Bell asked who should use the temperature guns and what legal issues could arise from requiring employees to get their temperature taken. Mayor Rhome explained that the Magistrate's office is only hearing criminal cases and have been rescheduled so that only two are present at a time. Ms. Lesnock presented the building guidelines that have been posted explaining how residents can contact Borough employees during the building lockdown and that the only business that people came in to handle in the morning was pavilion rentals which could be handled online.

Mr. Severine voiced his concern with the Code Enforcement officer being able to do his job, Mr. Dalfonso said that code enforcement would be difficult for the time being. Mr. Bell stated that code enforcement could drive around the borough and look for violations, Ms. Lesnock explained that that is what Mr. Smith did earlier in the day. Mr. Severine explained that code enforcement does home inspections for closings, Mayor Rhome replied that the fire inspector also needs to get into properties and that was told by the Washington County Director of Public Safety and the Canonsburg Ambulance Director that N95 face masks could be used. Ms.

Lesnock stated that the issue of home inspections was brought up at the meeting and the possibility of closing without an inspection and performing it after before the buyers can move in was discussed. Mr. Bell asked what was being done about Public Works, Mayor Rhome replied that both Public Works and the Police Department are changing to one employee in a vehicle and practicing social distancing. Mayor Rhome discussed the issue of holding public meetings during the state of emergency, Mr. Dalfonso replied that it was being looked into, suggests only having one meeting a month for now if absolutely necessary and that phone conferences are a possibility. Mr. Dalfonso also explained that the resolution to be voted on tonight will also give the power to the Borough Manager to make important decisions in the best interest of the Borough without the need of a voting meeting.

Chief Coghill stated that there needs to be a directive for the police department because if an officer comes into work ill and gets everyone sick, it poses a public safety issue and that a memorandum of understanding with other municipalities and/or the PA State police needs to be considered in case the officers are quarantined, Mr. Dalfonso explained that the resolution to be voted on gives the Mayor the authority to participate in inter-municipal governmental contracts. Mr. Russo asked if council could discuss every day business in a group email to which Mr. Dalfonso explained that that could be a violation of the Sunshine Act unless it was an emergency condition and that Ms. Lesnock can send an informational email to all of council but that no decisions can be made in that fashion. Mr. Chandler asked Ms. Lesnock if she could send council members a summary of Monday's events and continue to do daily summaries to keep council informed. Ms. Lesnock asked what should be put on the electronic sign in the front of the building, Mr. Russo answered that the sign should refer residents to the Borough website and the CDC website.

Mr. Chandler asked what was needed to be done tonight, Mr. Dalfonso replied that the Mayor needed to sign his declaration, that council needed to vote on the resolution to extend the declaration and that it needed to be sent to the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Service, the Observer Reporter and posted on the Borough website.

Discussion was held about fixing a few typing mistakes on the resolution and council then read the State of Emergency Declaration to themselves before the Mayor signed it into action.

Chief Coghill explained that since the schools have closed, the Student Resource Officers have not been working at the Canon McMillan Middle School and South Central Elementary and believes that the school district should not be billed for their services, Mr Yorke agreed.

Mayor Rhome then stated his declaration that “may it be noted that as of March 16th, 2020, the Mayor of Canonsburg has declared an emergency declaration for the residents of Canonsburg, Pennsylvania that will be in effect for the next 7 (seven) days.

Mr. Dalfonso reiterated that the next document is a resolution that will extend the 7 (seven) day emergency declaration and stated that he would like to add a third paragraph to the resolution reading “said declaration shall remain in effect until further action of council”. Mayor Rhome stated that he would hand deliver the signed declaration and resolution with corrections to council on Tuesday. Mr. Bell complimented the work that Mr. Dalfonso has done for this Borough not only during this emergency but on a daily basis.

VOTING ITEMS:

1. Motion to approve the Resolution to extend the Mayor’s State of Emergency declaration beyond 7 (seven) days.

Mrs. Bails made a motion to approve a Resolution to extend the Mayor’s State of Emergency declaration beyond 7 (seven days). Seconded by Mr. Chandler.

No questions on the motion.

Roll Call:

Mr. Bowman - Yes

Mr. Yorke - Yes

Mr. Russo - Yes

Mrs. Bails - Yes

Mr. Severine - Yes

Mr. Chandler - Yes

Mr. Bell - Yes

7 Yes. 0 No. 0 Absent. Motion Carries.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Bell thanked council members for coming to the meeting last minute.

Motion by Mr. Chandler to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 PM. Seconded by Mr. Yorke.

All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:04 PM.

Submitted by:

Callie Munch