

**Minutes  
Minnetonka City Council Emergency Meeting  
Monday, March 16, 2020**

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor Brad Wiersum called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

**2. Roll Call**

Council Members Susan Carter, Brian Kirk, Deb Calvert, Bradley Schaeppi, Kissy Coakley, Rebecca Schack, and Brad Wiersum were present.

**3. Briefing on COVID-19 response efforts**

City Manager Geralyn Barone thanked council for being present for an emergency meeting. She expressed it became clear over the weekend that there was a need to call a meeting related to the declaration of a local emergency and authorizing certain actions. Barone stated the city has cancelled all public meetings for the rest of the month and that staff would be providing background on plans and measures.

Emergency Management Director and Fire Chief John Vance discussed the emergency plan and pandemic plan for the city. He explained stopping the spread of the virus is the main priority. This can be accomplished by practicing social distancing, proper hygiene, and postponing or canceling events to help slow the spread of COVID-19. He stated this plan is for the safety of employees and the public we serve. The Emergency Operation Center (EOC) has been established and staff has been making daily updates and situation reports.

Calvert discussed the importance of communication channels during this serious time. She suggested all councilmembers should have the director's phone numbers.

Schaeppi asked about the daily reports and updates. He asked for clarification on who gets those and what is included in them. Chief Vance explained they are on #4 of the situation reports. He stated fire, police and public works discuss what they are seeing out in the community and the current situations. They just finished a check on retail establishments concerning food and supplies. They use that information to report to the county and state levels. They also talked about threats to personal protection and the equipment that will be needed to take care of the community at large.

Barone emphasized how as a local government, one of our main priorities is to continue to serve the community with our safety and public facilities.

Chief Vance discussed that council will receive copies of both the emergency and pandemic plans. The fire department is operating with more caution and personal protection than usual. They have been on conference calls with both state and local officials for best practices and have cancelled all trainings and nonessential meetings

until the end of the month. There is some concern, if they were to be hit hard, the supply chain of masks would be a factor. At this time however, they have a good cache. The fire department has been limiting how many personnel have contact with patients by threshold interviews. If patients are not showing life threatening symptoms, they are scaling that back to one person in the room. Alternating staffing plans are also being determined using most of the part-time firefighters, along with the 10 full-time firefighters.

Police Chief Boerboom gave an update on the police department staff including the four teams of patrol, two teams of investigations, command staff and the records staff. They are working to create alternating schedules and remote work when possible. All outreach activities and trainings have been cancelled and they are focused on reactive vs. proactive policing.

Police are limiting the amount of officers on medical calls. He explained the last resort is to bring someone to jail, in order to limit the exposure on both ends. They are working with other communities to combine resources and talents and have instructed officers to report all possible exposures. Boerboom reassured council they are prepared and in a good place.

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea explained that last Friday all recreation programming was cancelled for the remainder of the month. The Minnetonka Community Center, Ice Arena and Williston Fitness Center are also closed. He stated that clients will be credited back funds and the programming department is continuing to work on that. Steve Pieh and other community connections are being contacted for help with reaching out to the senior community. Barone stated the city plans to partner with nonprofits to help the community and add support where needed.

Community Development Director Julie Wischnack discussed staying in compliance with the state and how public meeting cancellations need to be documented properly. In terms of housing in the community, she noted there are many calls being taken about homes that have needs or challenges.

Wischnack explained environmental health are functions delegated from the state through agreements with Department of Agriculture and Department of Health. Currently, these mandates have not yet been released. There has been advisory opinions coming out and they will continue to monitor them. Wischnack stated they are no longer inspecting schools or areas with vulnerable populations. Things like nuisance enforcement are lower priority at this point.

Inspections staff are working under a delegated authority from the state to enforce codes within the city. At this time, they have been advised to continue these inspections. The city is making every effort to keep employees safe while conducting inspections.

Public Works Director Will Manchester stated they are watching their point of contact to keep the risk of exposure low. All services have continued and they are monitoring if anything needs to change. He stated there is an agreement in place with neighboring cities if they need or want to share resources.

Utilities, water and sewer, have daily routine monitoring, making sure those systems are running well. Manchester discussed there has been an increase in flushable wipes causing them to have to pull more pumps than usual. Fleet services continue support and do necessary repairs to emergency vehicles. Custodial and facilities staff continue to work on disinfection and operational maintenance. They have seen a slight backorder on some of those disinfectant supplies. Minnetonka roads will still be cleared per usual in the event of a snowstorm.

City Attorney Corrine Heine discussed the civil division and indicated it has not changed. She noted she does have three additional attorneys to help her if she can no longer do the job for some reason. Prosecution has also not been impacted yet, but there are two attorneys that have the highest exposure due to court appearances. They are attempting to establish distancing but they will continue to go to trial for the time being. Non-attorney staff have been reporting to work currently, but will work remotely if necessary.

Finance Director Darin Nelson stated assessing is the most critical area right now due to the time of year. There are a number of assessment appointments on the books, but all in-home visits with property owners have been suspended per Hennepin County advice.

Local board of review is April 6 and is still tentatively scheduled. The assessing department will update council if that schedule changes. Payroll and vendor payments are still being processed. Nelson stated an account code has been created to track all time during COVID-19, in the event there is a FEMA declaration. Utility billing staff are working on a plan to work remotely, so they do not fall behind on processing monthly payments.

Administrative Services Director and Assistant City Manager Mike Funk gave updates on the communications department. They will continue to update the website for residents and keep the community informed. They will also work with the city manager on any direction given from council tonight. Human Resources is working on policies and questions from directors on teleworking and how to help employees work with school closings and all other critical issues. Allowing sick leave up to negative 40 hours has been implemented to help personnel. He explained shift schedules and paid leave are also being worked on. IT has been very busy setting up each department with remote access and all systems related to being able to work remotely.

Barone discussed that the city is allowing 14 paid days if an employee were to be diagnosed with the Coronavirus in addition to their normal time. She stated the biggest change would be if the city does close, in which case the plan is to pay all employees. From an expenditure aspect that would not change much. There will be changes on the revenue side, with Williston being closed and other activities being cancelled. Staff will keep track of those expenses and the city might be able recoup those losses through a budget stabilization fund or possible federal aid. Barone expressed this is a very fluid situation and leadership continues having daily briefings to stay informed.

Shack discussed the new federal guideline of a maximum of ten people in a group. She questioned what the city is doing about open spaces and large cubical areas. She stated she would like to see people working from home as much as possible for the health and safety of everyone. Shack expressed she was happy to hear the city plans to

continue to pay part-time staff, as that was a big concern for her. She stated she fully supports this policy, and is very proud of the leadership team and staff for all they have done.

Calvert thanked staff for all their hard work and dedication. She questioned about elections, noting that city hall is an absentee voting location and on Election Day, three precincts are located there. Funk explained that there is not another election until August and the city clerk division is working with Hennepin County to determine next steps.

Calvert asked about evictions and what the city is doing to protect our most vulnerable residents. She stated that council needs to advocate for residents and keep roofs over their heads, especially if the Coronavirus is the reason they are not paying. Wischnack stated there are many state statutes that relate to evictions. There is pending legislation with emergency temporary housing assistance, and the city has a long history of working with local organizations.

Wiersum asked what legal authority we have as a city in regards to evictions. He stated he would like to see staff provide a point of view on this issue. Wischnack explained the statutes are very clear on the eviction process, but there are also county level actions on timing of those notices. At the county level, they may be able to delay notices. Heine stated that evictions may not have been put on the high priority list with the courts at this time, which will also help those residents.

Schaeppi stated he had some insight on the question from Councilmember Calvert regarding evictions. He stated there was an email today from the Minnesota Supreme Court Chief Justice discussing all civil and criminal cases, ranking them high, medium and low priorities. He explained there is a stay on all evictions throughout the month of March. He suggested to watch and see what the state and county do through March.

Calvert expressed concern for staff and residents on how the city is accepting utility payments. Finance Director Darin Nelson explained that the city has two utility payment drop boxes, and that online and phone payments will still be accepted.

Calvert asked what kind of meetings council could have remotely, allowing them to stay connected and make decisions. Barone stated that IT would continue to work to allow remote meetings and technology.

Coakley thanked staff for all the information and updates given. She questioned what the city council would be able to do for people that are in the process of moving out and are having a hard time finding other available housing. Wischnack explained that staff does a great job helping people in transition, and they will be prepared to help with the potential influx of needs.

Kirk thanked staff for all of their hard work and the work they will continue to do. He suggested creating a phone tree to contact seniors. He also suggested working on projects that are hard to finish when the city is open. He questioned if the remodel is still on schedule and if it is slowing down their response times at all being out of their normal locations.

Manchester discussed that the fire and police facilities are still on track and in progress. Chief Vance reported that response times are being closely watched. Their deployment model was city hall, and now that they are more spread out across the city, there may even be a decrease in those times. Chief Boerboom stated the police are fully operational and he does not expect the relocation to affect them in any way.

Kirk stated he wants the city to be a hub of information. He stated this should include helping residents that want to volunteer or are looking for help from nonprofits such as the ICA food shelf. GERALYN said our internal teams are working with faith organizations and nonprofits to make sure the city is on top of those conversations.

Schaeppi thanked the city for going above and beyond. He stated it is fantastic to hear that the daily status reports are showing real time results and that leadership is making it possible to have staff work remotely. He suggested that part-time staff or the staff that is not working help with the needs of the community by calling residents or working with the food shelf. He stated the importance of focusing on those in need and continuing to look outside the box and be creative.

Carter stated she was very appreciative and recognized staff's efforts. She discussed that she had to be honest about the weaknesses she sees with protocols. She stated a few councilmembers were on a plane just last week. She emphasized the need to be more cautious and more efficient in times like these.

Wiersum stated Councilmember Carter makes a very important point. We have to be very mindful of the seriousness of this virus. Staying very aware of social distancing and doing our part not to overwhelm the healthcare system.

Wiersum suggested looking to work with nonprofits and others to help our most vulnerable residents. He suggested adopting one person to take care of and check in on. He stated everyone needs to do their part, while still being safe and responsible.

Wiersum discussed disinfecting wipes. He said the city needs to communicate to the residents about the complications that it causes when people flush disinfecting wipes. Flushing those wipes causes many problems for the city and could become a potential public safety and health concern.

Wiersum thanked staff for their updates and hard work. He stated they have their regular job to do plus all the new crisis work and are doing it all well.

#### **4. Resolution consenting to mayor's declaration of local emergency**

City Attorney Corrine Heine explained this resolution is needed to keep the emergency declaration in effect until the federal or state action declares an end or if the city council adopts a subsequent resolution ending the state of emergency. During this period, the emergency operation plan is in effect. It authorizes the city manager to take certain steps to continue operations. It also invokes provisions of state law to loosen up certain requirements that would normally be required by the charter and the state.

The resolution confirms that future meetings of the council could be held by telephone or other electronic means. The state law requires all members that are participating must be able to hear one another and all testimonies. Members of the public need to be able to hear the votes and roll call. The law also requires at least one person who is either city council, city manager or city attorney needs to be present in the actual meeting room, unless the health pandemic makes it impossible to use the council chambers.

Schack moved, Calvert seconded a motion to adopt Resolution 2019-029 consenting to the mayor's declaration of a local emergency. All voted "yes". Motion carried.

**5. Adjournment**

Calvert moved, Kirk seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 pm. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Becky Koosman  
City Clerk

