

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-9, upon the affirmative vote of three quarters of the members present, a public body may hold an emergency meeting. Members present: Mayor Theresa Berger, Councilman John Bonevich (via telephone), Councilwoman Pamela Richmond, Councilman Russo. Roll call vote to hold meeting: All aye.

1. Meeting Called to Order

Mayor Berger called this meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

2. Opening Statement and Roll Call

Township Clerk Ciranni read the opening statement. This Special Emergency Meeting of the Howell Township Council is required in order to deal with matters of such urgency and importance that a delay for the purpose of providing adequate notice would be likely to result in substantial harm to the public interest. This meeting shall be limited to discussion of and acting with respect to such matters of urgency and importance; notice of the holding of this meeting was provided by posting written notice of the same in the Howell Township Municipal Building located at 4567 Route 9 North on March 16, 2020, on the Township website on March 16, 2020, and by notification to the Asbury Park Press, Tri Town News, and Star Ledger for information on March 16, 2020. The public body could not reasonably have foreseen the need for such meeting at a time when adequate notice could have been provided given the numerous and frequent responses to the Coronavirus pandemic at the international, federal, and state levels. Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 10:4-9b(1), the Township of Howell may not hear, deliberate on, or decide any matters not listed on the agenda below. Formal action may be taken.

Roll Call: Present: Mayor Theresa Berger, Councilman John Bonevich (via telephone), Councilwoman Pamela Richmond, Councilman Thomas Russo. Also present: Township Manager Brian Geoghegan, Township Attorney Joseph Clark, Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Victor Cook, Howell Township Schools Assistant Superintendent for Business Administration Ronald Sanasac, Township Clerk Allison Ciranni. Absent: Deputy Mayor Evelyn O'Donnell.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Moment of silence.

4. Reports of Township Officials

Township Manager Geoghegan stated that he was asked to organize this meeting last minute today to provide the Governing Body with an update as to the COVID19 virus. As the Governing Body is aware, management has been working in partnership with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the schools. We have also been sharing messages with an email group that includes the Governing Body. As everyone is aware, this is a rapidly evolving situation with things changing by the hour. Currently here in Howell we have closed all municipal buildings to the public, but we are still operating and encouraging people to use the website, phone system, and email. We have created flyers for the website with our mailing address and have a drop box out back. Mayor Berger stated she had been asked if people will be allowed to leave cash. Manager Geoghegan stated that it is preferred that people do not leave

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ON: 3/24/2020

cash. Mayor Berger recommended making a point to say no cash will be accepted. Manager Geoghegan stated he believes that is written on the drop box itself, however, the Tax Collector's office has been instructed to check the box almost hourly now, so in the event there is cash, it will be picked up quickly.

Township Manager Geoghegan announced that Howell Township OEM Coordinator Victor Cook and Howell Township Schools Assistant Superintendent for Business Administration Ronald Sanasac are present and they have been asked to provide a quick update of their situations or any information they may have. Mr. Sanasac stated that as of today the schools have stopped bringing children into the buildings. Computers have been sent home with all third through fifth grade students so now children in third through eighth grades have their devices at home. Mr. Sanasac continued that they are implementing their remote learning plan effective tomorrow, so tomorrow will be counted as a school day. The Governor has requested that they still serve children eligible for free and reduced cost lunch; a robocall went out Sunday and another will go out this afternoon telling families how the process will work. Identification will be required in order to pick up lunch. The remote learning plan has been tested to make sure the teachers' technology works tomorrow. Pre-K through Grade 2 students are being provided work directly through the teacher website; they were all sent home Friday with packets for the two weeks. Mr. Sanasac stated there is a rumor that the Governor will be closing schools longer than two weeks as this situation progresses and they are preparing for that as well. The offices are open for business downstairs although as requested by Township Manager Geoghegan they are trying to limit traffic. They are working on student registration because there is still the obligation to register students. Mr. Sanasac stated the schools will have a meeting Wednesday and will put their tentative budget in on time. Councilwoman Richmond asked if there will be staff in the schools tomorrow. Mr. Sanasac stated there will be administrative staff, and support secretaries and clerks are reporting. Teachers can avail themselves of their classroom if they choose to do remote learning from there rather than from home. Mr. Sanasac added that even if all teachers showed up they would still be under the current social distancing occupancy recommendations. Councilwoman Richmond asked how many of the students have access to internet and computers. Mr. Sanasac stated that for third through eighth graders, wifi is being made available through one of the providers to every student in Howell if they need it. He continued that K through 2 students are not dependent on wifi because they have their packets, but it is available for them as well.

OEM Coordinator Victor Cook stated the Howell Township OEM had a lot of personal protection equipment for our first responders on hand already so they were given out right away. All EMS, fire, police, and other responders have been outfitted to handle any calls coming in now for flu-like symptoms. Mr. Cook stated he set up Nixle, an emergency notification service for residents; he sent out an email blast and had over 1,000 people sign up after the first notification. Mr. Cook stated that he will send out information as received and as warranted. Mr. Cook explained that COVID-19 cases are no longer being considered presumptive positive, they are either positive or negative. He emphasized that at this time Howell Township has no positive cases. Mr. Cook stated he has been receiving recommendations from E-teams, a state-run resource computer based program, and that we do have equipment on order to protect first

responders. Mayor Berger stated she heard the CDC changed the parameters for usage of their equipment. Mr. Cook stated they did - you can actually re-use the N95 mask five times as long as it is put on and taken off properly. If someone is not experienced in doing that, it is recommended to use the mask once only. Councilwoman Richmond asked if OEM is training people. Mr. Cook stated they have been trying to organize training because there are a lot of entities involved; however, they are all trained in their separate disciplines on the procedures. Mr. Cook stated he has been holding meetings with fire chiefs, EMTs, and police liaisons to go over things the Township is doing to see what their needs are and how many calls for service we are getting. Mayor Berger commented that she was on Saturday's call and OEM is very well prepared.

Township Manager Geoghegan addressed the governing body to summarize a few things that are being done locally. All board and committee meetings have been cancelled except for the Planning and Zoning boards which are being handled a little differently. The secretary for those boards is reaching out to speak with all applicants to discuss rescheduling so those will most likely be canceled as well. Mr. Geoghegan stated the public is being urged to only use 911 for an emergency; some concerned people with flu-like symptoms have been calling 911 and it is overwhelming our resources as well as medical facilities. If you have flu-type symptoms or questions about the disease, please contact your personal physician for guidance. Mr. Geoghegan stated we are trying to create a method for dealing with building, fire, and code inspectors who go out into the field and occasionally go into residents' homes. As of right now all inspectors have been equipped with personal protective equipment through OEM that they can use if they feel unsafe. Inspectors have been directed to ask questions before going into someone's house or if they feel uncomfortable with a situation, they can opt not to do the inspection and can make arrangements to do so at a later time. Mr. Geoghegan continued, as far as here in town hall, we do still need to conduct business so although the building is closed to public now we will probably roll out a program of by appointment only as we have certain business that needs to be done in person, mainly our registrar functions and certain building permits. If we switch to an appointment only system at least we have the ability to track who is coming and going. Mr. Geoghegan stated the Township will be sending up a number here at town hall for residents who may not have access to the internet. We are going to put a lot of the same information from the website onto a voice message with a specific extension so those without internet access can call in for updates as well. Councilwoman Richmond asked to have that information broadcast on the TV channel as well.

Councilman Bonevich stated he had been asked if marriage licenses will be taken by appointment. Manager Geoghegan stated that yes as soon as we come up with a plan as it is one of the things we have to be able to do in a timely manner. Councilman Bonevich asked if the deadline for primary petitions is being pushed back. Manager Geoghegan stated that there has been no direction from the County Clerk thus far regarding petitions.

Township Manager Geoghegan stated the Governor did a briefing this morning and spoke about several requirements that I would like to go over and put on record. Mayor Berger stated that we just received Executive Order 104. Manager Geoghegan read details of the order: the Governor has ordered the closure of all Pre-K, K-12, colleges, and universities beginning March 18th; closure of all casinos, theaters, race tracks and gyms; closure of all non-essential retail recreational and entertainment businesses after 8 PM tonight; banning gatherings of 50 people or more; all bars and restaurants are closed for eat-in purposes after 8 PM tonight; after 8 PM, establishments may opt for takeout and delivery services only until further notice; restrictions exist during daytime hours. Manager Geoghegan continued: all Pre-K, through grade 12 schools - public, private, and parochial and all colleges and universities will close effective Wednesday, March 18th until deemed by health officials for in person classes to resume. Starting tonight all non-essential and non-emergency travel in New Jersey is strongly discouraged between the hours of 8 PM and 5 AM. This will remain in effect for the foreseeable future. Essential businesses that are necessary for the public's health, safety, and welfare like supermarkets, grocery stores, pharmacies, medical offices, and gas stations may remain open past 8 PM. Effective 8 PM tonight all, movie theaters, gyms, casinos, and racetracks will close entirely until it is deemed safe for reopening; online gambling will continue. Effective tonight all other non-essential retail, recreational, and entertainment businesses must close after 8 PM; during daytime hours these businesses may remain open if they limit their occupancy to no more than 50 persons and adhere to social distancing guidelines. All gatherings of over 50 individuals are canceled effective 8 PM tonight. This will also be added to the Township website.

Manager Geoghegan stated the situation is rapidly changing, plans that we are putting in place are being modified before we can get them out. We do have a draft of a state of emergency for local state of emergency; now that this information is out from the Governor, we will probably modify it. We have not signed it as of yet but probably will in the near future.

Councilman Russo asked Mr. Cook if there is a plan to deal with the senior population with regard to someone who cannot leave their home. Mr. Cook responded that he has spoken to representatives of Brandywine and Crossroads and they are sheltering in place since last week so they have not been out to any functions or trips will not in the foreseeable future. He is waiting for a call back from Friendship Gardens, The Villages, and Surrey Downs to meet with management personnel to find out what their needs are and see if we can make sure they are kept informed and get whatever they need. Mayor Berger stated that representatives from Friendship Gardens, The Villages and Surrey Downs should contact Mr. Cook to work out a plan. Councilwoman Richmond stated that people want to find out how they can help our seniors; Melanie Decker is working with some of her office staff who are now available to assist Meals On Wheels. Councilwoman Richmond asked if that extends to seniors outside of the senior center program. Manager Geoghegan stated that the Meals On Wheels program is run privately and he does not believe the service extends to anyone outside of their program. Councilwoman stated that maybe we need to do something outside that realm.

Councilman Russo asked if the Township has been in contact with the local hospitals. Mr. Cook advised that the hospitals report directly to the County health department and then they report to whatever health department is assigned to that individual town. Our health officer is the at County so as we are sending people to the local hospitals, any information that comes back is filtered through the County health department and then comes to me. Councilman Russo asked Manager Geoghegan if the Township has reached out to the Chamber of Commerce about how the town can help businesses that are most likely going to be impacted. Manager Geoghegan stated that has not been done as of yet; they have cancelled any future meetings. Councilman Russo asked if the Township can set up an emergency phone meeting with someone from the Chamber. Manager Geoghegan stated he will reach out to them. Councilwoman Richmond asked Mr. Cook how often he is in contact with the County. Mr. Cook stated that he met with a gentleman from the County this morning and there will probably be another meeting possibly Wednesday morning.

Councilwoman Richmond and Councilman Bonevich asked who is monitoring that businesses are closing at 8 PM. Manager Geoghegan stated the orders were put out with no thought as to how they would actually be enforced. It is most likely going to be on the Police Department although he has not even spoken with the Chief yet. Councilwoman Richmond asked how this situation relates to the budget, as we have not passed one yet. Manager Geoghegan stated that we are still operating normally as of right now and really have not incurred any great expenses. He added we have modified some purchasing with different cleaning materials. Various departments are tracking both hours and supplies purchased, should funding become available down the road. Councilwoman Richmond asked if that includes overtime. Manager Geoghegan stated any overtime would be tracked as well as long as it is related to this disease. He added that is a normal function we deal with usually through OEM due to a major snow storm or hurricane; those expenses would be tracked the same way.

Manager Geoghegan wished to reiterate one more time that there are zero confirmed cases of Corona virus in Howell. Mayor Berger wished to re-emphasize the importance of social distancing, washing your hands, not touching your face, staying out of places with more than 50 people, and driving through to pick up your food. Councilwoman Richmond asked if the Township is planning on providing drive through Corona virus testing. Manager Geoghegan stated that would most likely be coordinated through the Department of Health. Councilman Bonevich advised that drive through testing is currently being done at the PNC Bank Arts Center by the State. Mayor Berger reminded residents to keep checking the Township website as it is being updated frequently.

Governing body members thanked Mr. Cook and Manager Geoghegan for all their hard work.

5. Hearing of Citizens

None.

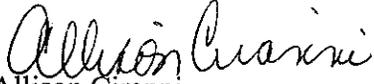
6. Meeting Dates

Regular Meeting - **Tuesday, March 24, 2020**
Executive Session 6:30 P.M.
Regular Session 7:30 P.M.

7. Adjournment

Councilwoman Richmond made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilman Russo. Roll Call: Ayes: Councilman Bonevich, Councilwoman Richmond, Councilman Russo, Mayor Berger. Meeting adjourned at 3:43 P.M.

Respectfully,


Allison Ciranni
Township Clerk
Township of Howell