



TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL

Town Council Meeting Minutes - Draft

Town Hall
405 Martin Luther King Jr.
Boulevard
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Mayor Pam Hemminger
Mayor pro tem Michael Parker
Council Member Jessica Anderson
Council Member Allen Buansi

Council Member Hongbin Gu
Council Member Tai Huynh
Council Member Amy Ryan
Council Member Karen Stegman

Wednesday, March 25, 2020 7:00 PM RM 110 | Council Chamber

Special Meeting

Roll Call

Present: 8 - Mayor Pam Hemminger, Mayor pro tem Michael Parker, Council Member Jessica Anderson, Council Member Allen Buansi, Council Member Hongbin Gu, Council Member Karen Stegman, Council Member Tai Huynh, and Council Member Amy Ryan

Other Attendees

Town Manager Maurice Jones, Deputy Town Manager Florentine Miller (Virtually), Town Attorney Ralph Karpinos, Library Director Susan Brown, Emergency Management Planner Kelly Drayton, Executive Director for Technology Scott Clark, Fire Chief Vencelin Harris, Police Chief and Executive Director for Community Safety Chris Blue, Fire Inspector Greg Peeler, Communications and Public Affairs Director and Town Clerk Sabrina Oliver, and Deputy Town Clerk Amy Harvey.

OPENING

Mayor Hemminger opened the virtual meeting at 7:00 p.m. and explained that it was an attempt to conduct essential business during the COVID-19 virus pandemic. The Council would not vote on any items or take questions from the public, but individuals could submit questions and comments to Council Members via phone, text, or email, she said.

Mayor Hemminger outlined Town efforts to implement social distancing during the pandemic. She emphasized the importance of taking immediate, bold actions and urged all residents to remain calm, stay at home, and wash their hands frequently.

Pending Announcement for the Joint Stay at Home Order [\[20-0221\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger said that a statewide stay-at-home order would take effect on March 27, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and would last until the end of

April. The order would ask residents to practice social distancing and to reduce gatherings to no more than 10 people, she said. She explained that residents would be allowed to continue walking on Town trails but should stay at least six feet away from one another. Town staff was endeavoring to find a way to conduct virtual Council meetings that would allow public input during the stay-at-home order, she said.

Reminder to Fill Out 2020 Census [\[20-0223\]](#)

Mayor Hemminger also reminded residents that the 2020 Census was being conducted. She said that North Carolina's rate of return by citizens was among the bottom 10 states. All residents should have received a card in the mail, she said, and she stressed the importance of filling out and turning in that very short questionnaire.

TOWN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

COVID-19 Presentation [\[20-0222\]](#)

Physicians Amir Barzin and Adam Goldstein, of the UNC Department of Family Medicine, provided additional information on the spread of COVID-19 throughout the world. Dr. Barzin said that North Carolina had reported its first COVID-19 deaths that day. Several surrounding communities had been issuing stay-at-home orders as well, he said.

Dr. Barzin pointed out that current U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines urged all Americans to stay at home. He described COVID-19 symptoms and said that medical staff had been evaluating respiratory complaints in an isolated setting at UNC Hospital. They had tested more than 780 patients and had found that 26 were COVID-19 positive, he said.

Dr. Barzin praised the Town for its stay-at-home order and repeated the guidelines that Mayor Hemminger had outlined. He recommended that residents check the NC Department of Health and Human Service's website for daily virus updates and said that the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) contained easily accessible information as well. He said that a COVID-19 emergency hotline could be reached by dialing 211.

Town Manager Maurice Jones described the Town's Emergency Management coordination efforts, which had begun in January 2020. He said that the Emergency Operations Center was activated on March 15th, Town departments were closed, public meetings were suspended, and Town bus service was running on a reduced schedule, he said.

Mr. Jones described the Town's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which consisted of a team from various Town departments that coordinate with UNC, Orange County, and state partners. The EOC included a Call Center (919-969-5005), which was available Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., he said. He also noted a COVID-19 page on the

Town's website. The Town had increased its social media content and had produced a special podcast about life under COVID-19, he said.

Mr. Jones advised residents to call 919-245-6111 (or text 888777) for updates from the Orange County Health Department. He said that the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services was available 24 hours-a-day (1-866-462-3821) as well. He would provide information about the 211 hotline that Dr. Barzin had mentioned at a later time, he said.

Mr. Jones said that most Town functions were being carried out in a modified manner and that most Town staff was working remotely. The Town's Revenue Office would continue to accept payments via phone, online, and in a drop box at Town Hall, he said. He outlined the current process regarding permits and site inspections and explained how the Public Works, Police, and Fire Departments would conduct operations during the shut-down.

Mr. Jones said that the Town's Crisis Unit would continue to reach out and connect vulnerable community members with services. He said that the Housing and Community Department had been working with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School System, Orange County, and regional non-profits to assess needs, share information, and coordinate delivery of services. He said that a Community Resource Guide was available on the Town's website.

Mayor Hemminger described community efforts to provide food to those most at risk. She said that the Inter-Faith Council's community kitchen had been converted to take-out in order to practice social distancing. She emphasized that local organizations needed donations of food, funds and volunteers.

Council Member Anderson asked if there was a single location where residents could go for help, regardless of the issue.

Mr. Jones replied that the Call Center had been providing such a service. He said that he would be discussing establishing a broader regional center with regional partners. He pointed out that the situation was changing each day and that it was important to continue collaborating with regional partners.

Council Member Buansi confirmed with Mr. Jones that one internet provider had offered to give free service for a period of time to those who do not have internet access. Staff would continue to look for such opportunities and would post any related information on the Town's website, Mr. Jones said.

Mayor Hemminger said that the Town had been collaborating with UNC, UNC Healthcare, nearby towns, Orange County, law enforcement, town attorneys, the Chamber of Commerce, and others. She pointed out that Chapel Hill was home to many medical professionals and researchers who needed to remain safe while still going to work.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned 7:54 p.m.