



GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes

Special Called Meeting
June 12, 2020
4:40 p.m.

County offices closed for public meetings
Meeting conducted by remote participation

Council Members present by remote participation

Mr. Butch Kirven, Chairman, District 27
Mr. Willis Meadows, Vice Chairman, District 19
Mrs. Xanthene Norris, Chairman Pro Tem, District 23
Mr. Joe Dill, District 17
Mr. Mike Barnes, District 18
Mr. Sid Cates, District 20
Mr. Rick Roberts, District 21
Mr. Bob Taylor, District 22
Mrs. Liz Seman, District 24
Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr., District 25
Mr. Lynn Ballard, District 26
Mr. Dan Tripp, District 28

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Council Members Absent

None

Staff Present by remote participation

Joe Kernell, *County Administrator*
Mark Tollison, *County Attorney*
John Hansley, *Deputy County Administrator*
Regina McCaskill, *Clerk to Council*
Jessica Stone, *Deputy Clerk to Council*
Shannon Herman, *Assistant County Administrator*
Nicole Wood, *Assistant County Administrator*

Others Present

None

Call to Order

Chairman Butch Kirven

Invocation

Councilor Rick Roberts

Item (3)

Consideration of the Greenville County CARES Act Plan

Action:

On behalf of the Committee, Vice-Chairman Meadows moved to approve the Greenville County CARES Act Program as presented by the County Administrator. In an effort to be transparent, the County Administrator must develop a website or a link to the County website that lists all the businesses or organizations, their owners and leaders, and the amount of money granted. Organizations that were granted money as a disbursement to individuals, businesses and organizations, must follow the same requirements as they report this to the Administrator.

Councilor Seman stated she appreciated Mr. Meadows' effort on transparency. Staff had already implemented a website; she suggested adding a reporting mechanism to Council on a regular basis, written or verbal. For flexibility and to be prudent, she suggesting releasing 50% of the money now and revisit the situation in July to get a sense of how things were going.

Action:

Councilor Seman moved to amend the motion to state the County would release 50% of the funds now and a reporting mechanism to Council put in place.

Vice-Chairman Meadows stated the money had already been held for two months; some businesses may have already closed due to that fact. The money needed to put in the hands of the people who needed the money now; there was enough money for all of the potential business applicants, given the maximum amounts allowed. Not all businesses would apply; he anticipated that not all of the money would be disbursed. Mr. Meadows stated it may be better to require applications be made within the next 60-90 days which would give a better idea of where the County stood with allocations.

Councilor Fant stated he agreed with Mr. Meadows; the money needed to be disbursed as soon as possible. It appeared as if everyone who applied would receive some money. The plan could be adjusted, if necessary; he did not like the idea of holding money.

Councilor Roberts stated he agreed with Ms. Seman. Most other agencies had allocated a certain amount of the money to be released initially and then assessed ongoing needs. Mr. Roberts stated he felt there was a precedence to release the money in phases.

Chairman Kirven asked Joe Kernell to speak on flexibility of disbursement of the funds and continual reporting.

Mr. Kernell stated it was unknown what would happen in the future in regards to the pandemic. The key now was getting the money out, especially to the small businesses, as quickly as possible. If the money was not spent, it would not be used for anything else. Mr. Kernell stated Council would be "totally informed" regarding the money; they would be immediately provided all information related to the funds.

Councilor Tripp stated the bridge between Councilor Seman's amendment and the need for transparency would be for the Administrator to report to Council every two weeks, at a minimum. What Council passed could always "be pulled back"; if the reports suggested amendments needed to be made to the plan, Council had the ability to do so. Good information allowed Council to make good decisions. He was not in favor of putting any type of hold on the money; but, there should be an amendment to specify periodic reporting.

Councilor Taylor felt Council should not put any restrictions on the money that would hinder an expedient disbursement; he agreed periodic reporting would allow Council to react quickly enough to solve any problems that may arise.

Councilor Barnes did not agree with holding back some of the money; businesses needed to money to either reopen or remain open. If the money was allocated in different phases, it may not be sufficient to help businesses.

Councilor Ballard inquired how was Council to vote on Ms. Seman's motion as it was a two-part motion.

Chairman Kirven asked Councilor Seman if she wanted to amend her motion.

Councilor Seman withdrew her motion. She was aware “it was all set up exactly the way you wanted it to go down.” She was tired of being belittled; Council’s job was to ask questions and deliberate openly. To be told that she should have all her questions prior to the meeting was not right. To not allow the public to at least view the document, prior to the meeting, was not right. In the end, she was very hopeful the plan would work. She appreciated staff’s hard work but was very disappointed in the process. Ms. Seman stated she hoped Council and staff could improve how they communicated with each other and with the public. The County had to be transparent; if it was doing nothing wrong, it should embrace the ability to be transparent. Minimally, she would appreciate being treated with respect by the Council body.

Councilor Tripp stated the COVID 19 reporting that Council received daily had been “spot on” and very helpful; however, he had been very frustrated over the past couple of weeks on the lack of information provided regarding the proposed plan. He wanted to make sure Council did not go long periods of time without receiving good information.

Action:

Councilor Tripp moved to amend Vice-Chairman’s motion by adding a requirement that the County Administrator report to Council, on a section by section basis, where the County stood with disbursement of the funds. The report would be submitted every Friday by close of business, at a minimum.

Vice-Chairman Meadows stated he saw nothing wrong with requiring Mr. Kernell to submit a report; however, if his original motion was passed, all the information would available online for Council to review.

Chairman Kirven stated he supported Mr. Tripp’s amendment. Reports would give Council the opportunity to review the information and make adjustments, if necessary.

Councilor Fant stated he also supported Mr. Tripp’s amendment. He would not be opposed to a report at every Council meeting; if Mr. Tripp preferred a weekly report, he would support the motion.

Councilor Tripp stated he would prefer weekly reports in order to give Council the opportunity to discuss any issues by the next meeting.

Motion to amend carried unanimously.

Councilor Ballard stated he wanted no misunderstanding if he voted against Mr. Meadow’s motion. He was not in favor of the process and could not condone it.

Motion as amended carried by a roll of eleven (Dill, Barnes, Meadows, Cates, Roberts, Taylor, Norris, Seman, Fant, Kirven and Tripp) in favor and one (Ballard) in opposition.

Item (4)

Adjournment

Action:

Councilor Dill moved to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina G. McCaskill
Clerk to Council