

Town Council Special Meeting
Minutes

The East Haven Town Council held a Special Meeting Thursday, March 19, 2020, which commenced at 7:30 p.m. located at East Haven High School, 35 Wheelbarrow Lane, East Haven, in the Library to transact the following:

Chairman Deko called the meeting order at 7:39 p.m.

Attorney Luzzi read the following statement: As indicated in the Notice and Agenda for this meeting, there is no in-person public access and no public comment. A dial-in conference call number was provided for interested persons to listen only. For those listening, I would ask that you mute your phones if you are able so that we do not get any background noise.

I have one very important remainder, every time someone speaks, you must state your name and title for the record. We must be careful not to speak over one another so that members of the public who are listening can hear what is being said and we have a clear record.

We have a number of Council members participating by phone. After each agenda item is presented and before any action is taken, the Clerk will call the roll so that each Council member has an opportunity to make any comments or ask any questions that they wish.

I will now turn this meeting over to the Chairman Joseph Deko who will ask the Clerk to call the roll. For those participating via phone, please indicate so.

Item #1

Roll Call

Roll Call - 12 Present (4 Remotely-Capotorto, Glassman, and Butler) 2 Absent (Maltese and Hennessey)

Staff Present: Mayor Joseph Carfora, Town Attorney Michael Luzzi, Tina Hedley, Police Chief Edward Lennon, Fire Chief Matthew Marcarelli, and Interim Finance Director, James Keeley.

Chairman Deko read into the record the following: Due to Governor Ned Lamonts March 10, 2020, declaration health and civil preparedness emergency orders and subsequently March 16,

2020 issued by Mayor Joseph Carfora an order of a state of emergency for East Haven due to the spread of the Coronavirus 2019 in the State of Connecticut. Due to this emergency public access will not be permitted. Anyone can call in to the number indicated and listen to the entire meeting. A video recording of the meeting will be made available following this meeting on the Town's website. Please remember there is no public comment permitted.

Item #2

Vice Chairman Pacelli entertained a motion to consider and act upon a resolution, pursuant to section 6 "Emergency Appropriations" Chapter VII of the Town Charter, whether to waive a public hearing and notice of such hearing for an emergency appropriation for the total amount of which, per said Charter provision, shall not exceed one (1) percent of the current tax levy in any one (1) fiscal year, to mitigate the effects of the public health emergency posed by the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid 19).

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to approve Section 6 "Emergency Appropriations" Chapter VII of the East Haven Town Charter.

Councilwoman Cesare second the motion.

Attorney Luzzi stated with respect to this item, something like this would normally require a public hearing with advertising within a certain period of time. Given the circumstance the town can not afford to wait with this virus arising. Both Chief's will speak to the public safety concerns so as Town Attorney he is recommending a waiver of the public hearing.

A call to each member for questions or concerns.

Councilman Balter stated just make clear that you have the authority to suspend as requested as per Town Charter and he further asked the Town Attorney if he concurs.

Attorney Luzzi indicated that he is correct.

Roll Call Vote-All in Favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Motion Carried.

Approved Unanimously

Item #3

Vice Chairman Pacelli entertained a motion to consider and act upon a resolution, pursuant to section 6 "Emergency Appropriations" Chapter VII of the Town Charter, to approve an emergency appropriation, the total amount of which, per Charter provision, shall not exceed one (1) percent of the current tax levy in any one (1) fiscal year, to mitigate the effects of the public health emergency posed by the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid 19).

Chairman Deko recognized Police Chief Edward Lennon, Fire Chief Matthew Marcarelli, and Finance Director James Keeley.

James Keeley indicated with regard to the tax levy; the levy is the tax imposed on property owners based on the value of their property and the municipal government's needs. This means the tax assessment multiplied by the mill rate which amounts to \$63,422,192.00, the amount of the emergency appropriations would be \$634,223.00, if this is approved we have already set up an account to utilize. All purchase orders will come through the Finance Department.

Fire Chief Matthew Marcarelli indicated he is here before the council to request an emergency appropriation at this time for \$150,000.00. We are all aware of the difficult times that the town and nation is facing and we are in desperate need of protective equipment and other supplies to allow them to prepare and manage this Covid 19 event. We are in daily meetings and the information is coming in every hour and ever changing. The last meeting held that day was giving us very concerning information but basically telling the town that we are on our own. We were informed that the 34,000 masks that are being sent by the federal government we will be receiving none of those. The 144,000 masks that are in the state's strategic strong hold we will be receiving 220 masks. It is our prediction based on our current activity level and the prediction of the illness on the general population that we will see as many as 2,500 people seek services from the Fire Department and probably many more than that number through the Police Department. We are in need of adequate protective equipment for our first responders because they too will be getting sick. It has forced us to look at the way we are doing business altering work hours, extending work hours, modifying work schedules, changing locations for work for those working at home in support roles, and most importantly the equipment that we are requiring is causing us to source anywhere we can get it throughout the country. So we are asking for these funds as seed money and with the caveat that we will likely be back before this council. Fortunately, before the presidential declaration was made under the Stafford Act we are entitled to seek reimbursement up to 75% of allowable expenses. So some of the funds will not be reimbursed but those are vetted expenses and we acquire things off of a source list that allows them to be more readily reimbursable.

Police Chief Edward Lennon stated that he does not have much more to add than to emphasize that the meetings we attended the status changes by the hour and as a town and community we are literally on our own and being able to get the protective equipment and supplies that we need to effectively respond to this crisis is of dire need to the departments as best to prepare.

Chairman Deko stated that Councilman Santino is present through the remote connection at 7:54p.m.

A call to each member for questions or concerns.

Councilman Balter thanked both the Fire and Police Chiefs for their departments and the work that you both are doing and he has nothing but respect for all involved. What is the situation at this time?

Chief Marcarelli stated that we are in much better shape than other communities but based upon the call volume and the amount of calls that people are seeing in the surrounding communities we think we have about 1 to 2 weeks worth of supplies, but of course it depends on the call volume.

Councilman Balter asked if they have any lines of replenishment?

Chief Marcarelli stated they are sourcing it from wherever they can get it. We have some items on back-order; the most difficult item to get are N95 respirators. We are receiving 220 from the state that are expired and we had to sign a release so that our employees are aware. At this point we will take whatever we can get; we are in much better shape than some of the other communities. We have about 1,500 respirators on hand but we are getting mixed information from the CDC as to whether or not they are usable. We are not trusting the information we are getting; the last information bulletin received from the CDC stated that we can also use handkerchiefs.

Councilman Balter asked what else can be utilized for protection?

Chief Marcarelli stated the department has a limited supply of different types of coveralls, some painting coveralls, Tyvek suits approved for that use, and we are looking at rain slickers at least they will be deconable and reusable. We are sourcing this equipment wherever we can get it. We are in somewhat better shape than other towns; we had some forethought a few weeks ago to prepare. We are also sourcing disinfectant, bleach, and toilet paper. We will be replacing uniforms, they are no longer allowed to wear their uniforms to and from work. The crews are laundering the opposite crew uniforms so they are not bringing disease home with them. This has changed the entire model of how we operate.

Councilman Balter asked if they know how long we will be on our own.

Chief Marcarelli stated that the last information we received from the Strategic National Stockpile the State of Connecticut has received the request 500,000 N95 masks and Connecticut is getting 34,000 of those and we were told today that public safety is receiving none of that allotment. There are 144,000 masks in the State's Strategic Stockpile and they are expired by 10

years. They were sent for testing and are 85% effective. We were allotted 220 masks from the state. So to answer your question; yes we are on our own.

Councilman Balter thanked the Chief's for their work and dedication to their department and God Bless.

Councilwoman Cesare asked Chief Marcarelli if there is anything to cover the masks to make them more effective.

Chief Marcarelli stated that the CDC is making recommendations, these masks are designed to be for a one time use. At this time Yale New Haven Hospital is working on a process to sterilize the masks to kill the virus for further use. We have a place in each Fire Station to store these used masks until such time that Yale has devised a decontamination process and then we can reuse them. The masks would have pathogens on them and anything that we would cover the masks with would also have pathogens on them, it's something we don't prefer to do.

Councilwoman Cesare asked Chief Lennon, do all the police officers have masks when they go on their shifts.

Chief Lennon stated that they have personal protection; eye protection, respirators, gloves and a small cash of coveralls. With regard to the face shields we just took delivery of 12 today. We can't emphasize enough that we had to track those shields down we share between the two departments.

Councilwoman Cesare asked if every officer has one for their shift.

Chief Lennon stated that at this time they all have face shields but once they are used they have to be decontaminated. The best case scenario would be if Yale perfects the decontamination process that would be the best, but if not we would use a bleach mixture and we also have the mist that disinfects. We have had to change the process of the way we operate to limit any exposure to our officers in the best way we can. Unfortunately, we do have to enter into some situation that we would rather not have to.

Vice Chairman Pacelli asked both Chiefs if they have a contingency plan in the event your officers and firefighters become ill or exhausted and it limits your staff.

Chief Lennon stated yes we have a plan to change schedules if needed and we have several different ways to achieve that. We have contacted the Police Union collective bargaining unit because it does affect their contract and they are receptive to doing anything they can to work with the situation.

Chief Marcarelli stated that the department has a modified schedule because they recently changed to 24 hours on and 72 hours off. The alternative to that would be 48 on and 48 off, we haven't gotten to that yet. We have established a quarantine area at one of the schools that would allow us to provide housing during a quarantine period if they choose not to remain in their own houses. There is a possibility that both departments could be down 40% of their work force depending on the pandemic.

Chief Lennon further stated that they are also responsible for dispatch, it is a 24 hour a day operation and they are in close contact with one another. We have developed a plan locally and regionally with our neighboring towns. The likelihood of an exposure to one of our officers or firefighters is slightly different than our dispatchers. The dispatchers are a much smaller unit and if exposed it could be devastating to them. Police officers started today to do remote roll calls so they are not all in one room together.

Vice Chairman Pacelli asked in event of a curfew do you have enough personnel to enforce a curfew and could you call on the State Police for assistance.

Chief Lennon stated part of the emergency response plan in a crisis like this is that we are somewhat on our own. To receive any assistance from the state we must be aware the state has only about 1,000 troopers. Hopefully, we won't need National Guard assistance but we do have a 6 town pack with the towns of North Haven, East Haven, Branford, Guilford, North Branford, and Madison. Last week all the chiefs of those towns met and came up with a plan that is twofold that we will assist in that type of situation. Also, we will go into those neighboring towns if they go down we will not only assist ourselves but another town as well. We have contacted the States Attorney's office for guidance on these issues and the only thing to say is that the west coast was hit badly and have not experienced any issues of that kind per the Kirkland, WA Police Chief.

Councilwoman Parlato asked if there is the possibility of getting any test kits for your staff.

Chief Marcarelli stated it would be nice but they weren't testing in mass until a few days ago and only testing patients who have been hospitalized. Now they have set up mobile testing labs outside the hospitals. We are trying to get prioritized testing for public safety.

Councilman Pompano asked how much of the event would be reimbursable.

Chief Marcarelli indicated under the Stafford Act it allows for 75% reimbursement under the allowable expenses. The equipment we are in need of would be allowable and overtime wages, not regular wages. If we need to decontaminate a fire station that would be allowable as well.

Councilwoman Glassman made the following motion be it resolved, pursuant to section 6 “Emergency Appropriations” Chapter VII of the Town Charter, to approve an emergency appropriation, the total amount of which, per Charter provision, shall not exceed one (1) percent of the current tax levy in any one (1) fiscal year, to mitigate the effects of the public health emergency posed by the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (Covid 19).

Vice Chairman Pacelli second the motion.

Roll Call Vote-All in Favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Motion carried.

Approved Unanimously

Item #4

To consider and act upon a resolution, pursuant to the authority granted by Governor Ned Lamont’s Executive Order 7C, to amend the Board of Finance Budget Workshop Sub-Committee Meeting Schedule and the Town Council Budget Workshop/Public Hearings/Special Meetings Schedule for Fiscal year 2020-2021 Budget.

Chairman Deko recognized Town Attorney Michael Luzzi.

Attorney Luzzi explained that Governor Lamont order “7C” allows municipalities to extend their budget workshop deadlines for 30 days. The town’s date is scheduled for April 28, 2020, at this time it is recommended the town extend the date 30 days. Based on everything you heard this evening and several of the town buildings being closed it makes sense. A revised schedule will be implemented there are a lot of moving parts to the budget process and after numerous meetings with Mayor Carfora and staff, including the Superintendent of Schools and the availability of meeting rooms it makes sense. Also, with input of Senator Len Fasano and Representative Joe Zullo we have received text messages as to whether or not we will make use of provision “7C.” There also might be additional time-lines that will become available and in light of that as Town Attorney he recommends that the town extend the deadlines.

Chairman Deko entertained a motion for a resolution, pursuant to the authority granted by Governor Ned Lamont’s Executive Order 7C, to amend the Board of Finance Budget Workshop Sub-Committee Meeting Schedule and the Town Council Budget Workshop/Public Hearings/Special Meetings Schedule for Fiscal year 2020-2021 Budget.

Vice Chairman Pacelli moved to approve the aforementioned resolution to extend the budget process 30 days.

Councilman Santino second the motion.

Roll Call Vote-All in Favor. None opposed. No abstentions.

Motion carried.

Approved Unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

Roberta A. DeLuca

Council Clerk