



MINUTES
EMERGENCY COMMISSION MEETING
FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020 AT 5:30 P.M.
CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH, 2200 A1A South, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor England called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor England led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor England, Vice Mayor Kostka, Commissioner George, Commissioner Rumrell, and Commissioner Samora.

Also present were: City Manager Royle, City Attorney Charlie Douglas, Police Chief Hardwick, and City Clerk Raddatz.

IV. SECTION 1-5 OF THE CITY CHARTER: VOTE TO DETERMINE THAT MEETING IS AN EMERGENCY (Super Majority Vote Required)

Mayor England asked for a motion to determine that is meeting is an emergency.

Motion: to approve the Emergency Commission meeting. **Moved by** Mayor England, **Seconded by** Commissioner George.

Mayor England ask for a role call vote.

City Raddatz took the role call as follows:

Mayor England	Yes
Vice Mayor Kostka	Yes
Commissioner George	Yes
Commissioner Rumrell	Yes
Commissioner Samora	Yes

Motion passes 5 to 0.

Mayor England moved on to Item V.

V. DISCUSSION OF COMPLIANCE WITH GOVERNOR DESANTIS' EXECUTIVE ORDER

Mayor England explained that the Commission, staff and Police have been acting on this pandemic. She explained that Governor DeSantis on March 17, 2020, gave an Executive Order 20-68 and then the staff took immediate action to what was applicable to the City. She advised that she would have staff explained what we have done on this Executive Order. She explained that restaurant seatings were restricted to 50% capacity; discouraged social gathering of groups more than ten; expect social distancing of six feet; and Commission and staff has received numerous emails. She requested that residents be patient and advised staff have tried to do their best on what information they received at the time. She advised that she will have Police Chief Hardwick and City Manager Royle give their reports and explained that there has been suspended public quorum presence, but further research is necessary. She asked City Attorney Douglas why the public has been asked to be outside due to public distancing.

City Attorney Douglas advised that the emergency meeting was properly called in accordance with City policies and procedures and the Florida meeting requirements and Florida in the Sunshine. The City is currently broadcasting the meeting outside under the breezeway where members of the public can hear and inside the room are 10 individuals, so the City is complying with the Governor's Order and CDC regulations. This meeting was called 24 hours after the agenda was posted. He explained that individuals who want to make a public comment will be advised by staff to come in and then leave the meeting after their comments of three minutes.

Mayor England asked Police Chief Hardwick to speak on what has been accomplished this week.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that he has sent information from the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), Local Emergency Management Office (EOC), Department of Health (DOH), the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) and the surrounding St. Johns County and City of St. Augustine. He explained that he finished a meeting with the EOC Policy Group for St. Johns County and a decision was made that tomorrow morning the beaches will be closed to vehicle traffic and vehicle parking will remain open at this time; however, the vehicle access points on the beach will be shut down. He placed signs and message boards throughout the City. He commented that every hour it changes. He explained that Crescent and Vilano beaches are shut down but explained that St. Johns County residents can use the beaches. He commented that there will be a meeting to re-evaluate the situation with St. Johns County, the Sheriff's Office, and the City of St. Augustine Police Department tomorrow. He explained that he went to all the restaurants in the City and spoke with the businessowners that serve food or alcohol and explained the Executive Order from the Governor regarding food and alcohol sales. He commented that there was compliance with the restaurants and bars. He explained that Department of Professional Business Regulation (DPBR) oversees enforcing the Executive Order 20-71. Sealed alcohol sales are permitted and take outs. He and the Sheriff allowed the restaurants to finish out the day and then start take-out the next day. He gets CDC and Public Health Department emails and advised that the residents are worried about being exposed. He explained that two deputies from Putman County will start tomorrow to help with crowd control on the beach.

Vice Mayor Kostka asked if seating on premises means indoor and outdoor.

Police Chief Hardwick advised yes, no seating outdoors or indoors on premises or property. He is looking for clarification tomorrow and DPBR will get back to him tomorrow.

Commissioner Samora advised that he believes that those businesses without a package license can sell alcohol now if it goes with a food order.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that he would give it a benefit of the doubt because every lawyer has a different opinion of the order. He said that he is trying to help the businessowners in St. Johns County to stay open to pay the employees and the businessowners' bills. He suggested that the City interpret the order until the clarification comes out from the Governor.

Commissioner George advised that she agrees with Commissioner Samora and would agree with that interpretation of the order.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that any decision from the Commission can affect the businessowners' livelihoods. He explained that the Police Department will not give out citations unless there is clarification from DPBR and the Governor. He said that the City should move forward with what the Commission decides on tonight until better clarification can happen.

Commissioner George advised that she does not want a narrower restriction than what DPBR is allowing.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that he wouldn't. He explained that he will get more clarification.

Discussion ensued regarding controlling the spacing of crowds for the takeout orders; Police Department will ask the businessowners for accountability of the crowds; rules from DPBR requires crowd control and if the businessowners don't abide by them, they will suspend the businessowner's license; Police calls for service have increased; suicide threats have increased; road-rage is another issue because people are on edge; waiting in line in Publix is the same as waiting in line for a takeout and people are not following the six feet apart; and the Police Department will make their presence known to make our residents feel more comfortable.

Commissioner Rumrell thanked Police Chief Hardwick for all his efforts.

Vice Mayor Kostka agreed with Commissioner Rumrell and thanked Police Chief Hardwick for taking the lead in this situation and for the leadership that he has shown. She asked if the Police Department can control the crowds on the beach.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that this is going on nationally and each City is dealing with it in their own ways. He explained that he had a meeting with St. Johns Beach Services, the Sheriff's Office, the Fire Department, and St. Augustine Police Department and decided to have signs made that follow the CDC guidelines and also to have seven message boards. He explained that he put out a public service announcement to 67 media sources and educated

the Police Officers to know answers if the public asks. The youth have been the problem not following the guidelines on the beaches and so the beach vehicle entry ways are going to be closed on Saturday. He commented that the Police Officers become babysitters. Being home can cause an unhealthy environment.

Vice Mayor Kostka advised that a person must take a great deal of social responsibility and personal responsibility for doing the right thing. She explained that people should be able to help the residents with any concerns that they have. She advised that Noreen Williams to head up this project and should see something soon.

Mayor England summarized that the Commission followed Executive Order 20-68 to reduce the density and congestion in the City before the next weekend. Our Police Department and staff did an excellent job. She explained that she didn't want to have the same experience that happened last weekend. She explained that the Commission and staff were in touch with St. Johns County and the citizens were heard. She explained that with Executive Order 20-71 there are more certain ways to restrict congestion.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that his office will be opened from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday this week for questions.

Mayor England asked City Manager Royle for his report.

City Manager Royle advised he has been working on internal policies. He explained that Public Works Director Tredik is concerned over losing manpower and not being able to limit household waste. The City of St. Augustine advised that the cities would work together on manpower and equipment and the City could get a contract with Advance Disposal if needed. City Clerk Raddatz has been working on procedures with FEMA and updating the Personnel Manual so workers can continue to get paid. He explained that his staff is researching virtual meetings. There are some procedures for other cities that IT Department will be researching for public comments. Revenues are going to decline and asked that staff and the Commission not to spend on items that aren't essential. State sales will decrease because of the unemployment, which means the City would have less income. He explained that vacancies will not be filled. Department Heads will meet to discuss what the departments can do to reduce the current and upcoming budgets. The Communications and Event Planner is trying to get the most current and correct information out to the public and trying to spread positive information to the public. The Building Department will be maintaining its staff and will continue to be opened. Employee morale is good, but people are afraid and there may be a time to close city hall because key personnel could be sick and cannot provide the service. Public Works staff will disinfect city hall and the Police Department. There will be disinfection bombs for all offices eventually. He explained that he has reduced the April 6, 2020 Regular Commission agenda as much as he could.

Vice Mayor Kostka asked if the departments have online permit and business tax receipt programs.

City Manager Royle advised yes. Staff has online payment processes. Permits and Business Tax Receipts can be done online.

Discussion ensued regarding recycling has been stopped in St. Johns County, but the City is still providing recycling services; whether recycling is being put in the landfill; saving Advanced Disposal contract costs if they aren't picking up; selecting school and trolley bus drivers locally if CDL personnel is needed, instead of using temporary manpower from Advanced Disposal; the City's gasoline supplies are topped off; going to online is the best answer to limit exposure; and the City's limited supply of sanitizers, gloves, and masks.

Henry Dean, St. Johns County Commissioner, District 5, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, FL, explained that he has been working with the City Commissioners and staff and with St. Johns County Policy members. He explained that everyone is trying to deal with the issue of balance of how to protect the citizens and try to make the beaches available to everyone. He would like to keep the beach opened if it is being managed well. Public health is St. Johns County Commissioners first priority and as a team the City and County will be able to get through.

Commissioner Rumrell thanked County Commissioner Dean for coming to the meeting tonight and for his help.

Mayor England thanked County Commissioner Dean for coming to the meeting and helping to balance the efforts of the beach.

Mayor England moved on to Item VI, Public Comments.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor England opened the Public Comments section. The following addressed the Commission:

Tom Reynolds, 50 Brigantine Court, St. Augustine Beach, FL, wanted to thank Police Chief Hardwick and City Manager Royle for taking care of City during this time; wanted to know if the summer concerts at the beach are cancelled; and complained about St. Johns County Administrator and Commissioners not being ethical and discriminating against applicants.

Police Chief Hardwick asked if the Betty Griffin House 5K should still go on. He asked for the Commission to pick a date on when to cancel events if needed.

Commissioner Rumrell advised that the Executive Order says to cancel all events for 60 days.

Commissioner Samora advised that it was Executive Order 20-52 and it expires on May 9, 2020.

Jo Ellen Parkey, 3 Coquina Blvd., St. Augustine Beach, FL, thanked Police Chief Hardwick for his work and leadership; closing the beach parking would bring the public into the neighborhoods; and requested the public to support the local businesses and restaurants during this time, who supports the schools.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that several agencies have met and came up with a mutual aid solution that will show a heavy law enforcement presence.

Bryan Ott, 107 15th Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL, thanked Police Chief Hardwick; advised the public was on edge; kids are adjusting to online learning; and asked not to close the beach.

Brud Helhoski, 691 A1A Beach Blvd., St. Augustine Beach, FL, thanked Police Chief Hardwick and the Commission for letting calmer minds prevail; businesses are doing everything they can to promote the requests from the Governor; businesses are on the brink, but thankful for all that the Commission does; and businesses are going to do carwashes, parking fees, takeout food.

Pat McGinnis, 613 Atlantic Oaks Cr, St. Augustine Beach, FL, thanked Police Chief Hardwick; businesses are taking tables away to help spread clients out; wanted to make sure with a takeout order, package alcohol can be with takeout; and locals are conforming, but not tourists.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that he would go to all the businesses again with a simple version of the order.

Susan Brady, 121 14th Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL, thanked the Commission for their hard work; Florida expected to be hardest hit by the virus; leaders need to lower the curve by leadership; the public who take out beer will go to the beach; Duval County closed their beaches so the public is coming to St. Johns County beaches; parking will be an issue to the neighborhood if public parking is closed; supporting local businesses; however, the businesses need to spread people out; taking the protections now will eliminate more of the spreading of the virus, when they don't the Police Department should step in for the health and safety of the citizens; colleges out for the rest of the year and they will come to St. Augustine Beach because the City is still opened; and suggested that Public Works Department call some of the CDL licensed bus drivers.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that he would be dealing with the parking issues tomorrow on a trial run basis and the distancing issue must be self-accountability. The service calls are going to be increased and if there is a call, the Police will deal with it. He commented that some of these kids are City kids who are coming home from college and public schools. He advised that he has dealt with domestic violence and said staying indoors is not the best place to be. Suicides are up. Businesses are helping with social distancing and they want to stay open. Calls being to close in line are coming in.

Mayor England advised that the public must obey the protection rules and there will be an improvement this weekend and next week. She hopes it is better regarding the congestion.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that no one knows if anyone is infected and it is hard to keep distancing, but it must be done.

Mayor England closed the Public Comments and asked if there was any further Commission discussion.

Commissioner Samora asked what the enforcement at the beaches countywide is.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that they are using the resource deputies who are no longer working the schools on the beach, so the beach patrol has tripled. Open containers are not

allowed on the beach. Staff is coming in 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Police lobby. The helicopter will be on all 42-miles of beach. Firefighters are assisting as lifeguards and additional resources are coming from Putman County.

County Commissioner Dean has been in with Police Chief Hardwick, Hunter Conrad, St. Johns County Administrator, and other agencies and the County hopes that they don't have to take the next step, but if it is too big of a problem to manage they will take the next step and close the beaches.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that all of St. Johns County must be consistent regarding the beach.

Commissioner George suggested an interim step between what we have currently and closing the beaches, such as closing all the public parking lots.

County Commissioner Dean advised that they are taking small steps to keep public safety.

Discussion ensued regarding St. Johns County having all the authority regarding the beaches and whether the City Attorney should research what the City jurisdictional rights are regarding the beach; having a joint decision made would be best; whether the City needs to vote on the County's actions regarding what the beach vehicle accesses and decisions are; the current Memorandum of Understanding with St. Johns County and the City gives the authority to close access points for public safety, but that the jurisdiction belongs to the County; Police Department going to give a report to the Commission on how people are following the rules; and Police Department educating the public.

County Commissioner Dean advised that the City Commission may want to have an emergency meeting to discuss what the County wants to do regarding the beaches if this changes.

Police Chief Hardwick advised that if the beach is closed by the Governor's Executive Order, the City would have to wait on the Governor to open the beaches. He advised that the Governor suggested leaving the beaches open if possible.

Commissioner George shared that all the Commissioners are going through the fear factor this week regarding public safety and the public's constitutional rights. The federal, state and local governments are aware that this is a huge legitimate threat. She trusts what the executive committee has done regarding the public's safety but would like to be involved in the decisions being made regarding closing the beach. She suggested an interim step before that happens and wants aggressive messaging to minimize outside contact. She would like to hire the local unemployed temporary workers for Public Works instead of hiring outside sources. She asked that the community work together and try to tip more for the employees in restaurants. She is glad that the surrounding government agencies have a plan for the beach and are tracking it.

Vice Mayor Kostka said it has been an eventful week and COVID-19 is a real threat and the City is taking careful steps to ensure the safety of the community. She advised that she was on phone conferences with the White House and the State of Florida and explained that there

was no quick fix and it is a crisis. Glad to see the community is coming together. She suggested checking in on your love ones or your neighbors by phone or helping them get supplies. Counseling aspect has not been good and should be improved. She advised that those small businesses who need loan information should look online under the relief act and extra wages for personnel. She suggested putting the information on our webpage. COVID-19 has affected all 50 states and territories and CDC is trying to minimize the spread. Police Department has done a lot of educating the businesses and the community and help them create ways to comply. She was glad to see Home Rule exercised in this process.

Commissioner George advised that there is a webpage for small business loans interest free for the first 12 months at floridadisasterloan.org.

Mayor England advised that the Communications and Events Planner will be taking a subject and publishing it on the webpage and Facebook each month.

Commissioner Rumrell thanked Police Chief Hardwick, Hunter Conrad, St. Johns County Administrator, and County Commissioner Dean who he has been in constant contact with. He explained that the numbers are going to get higher, but don't panic because those numbers are people who are finally being tested. He encouraged people to call him because people need to speak with others and have contact. He said that his heart is with all the businesses and staff. He explained that decisions that the City makes may only last an hour, but we are trying to give the most current information. This will make us a stronger County and City.

Commissioner Samora thanked the staff that is keeping things going and getting the information out to the public. Information changes constantly. He thanked the residents for doing the right thing and keeping together and supporting one another. Thanked other agencies for getting the information out to the City and explained that this is a public health crisis. The sooner this finishes the rest will fall into place and be able to get back to normal.

Mayor England thanked everyone for the emails and information that were shared. Grateful that there has been guidance from the Governor and the County regarding the beaches. She explained that the consistency now is very good. She commented to be vigilant and was proud of the restaurant owners for responding to the Police Department. There will be difficult decisions that will have to be made and she is proud of everyone.

Police Chief Hardwick gave updates that the access for vehicles on the beach will be closed tonight and Anastasia State Park will be closed tomorrow morning at the order of the Governor. He will send the information out for the County and City tonight.

City Attorney Douglas asked how the Commission wants to continue the meetings in the future regarding Executive Order 20-69, which waives the in-person quorum or would the Commission want to be web based.

Mayor England advised that she needs to see Executive Order 20-69 and what the limitations are.

City Attorney Douglas advised that he will work with staff on setting up the meetings. He explained that web based could not be available to all citizens, but the internet could be, so he will work on options. He asked for a vote from the Commission to know what to do.

Commissioner Rumrell asked to research everything available.

Commissioner George explained that the Commission should vote on it now so virtual meetings can be available when the time comes.

Vice Mayor Kostka advised that she agreed and wants to prepare.

Mayor England asked for a motion.

Motion: to approve conducting meeting electronically or in accordance with Executive Order 20-69 as deemed to be in the interest of public health by the City Manager or his designee. **Moved by** Commissioner George, **Seconded by** Commissioner Rumrell. Motion passed unanimously.

Discussion ensued regarding getting a program for electronic meetings by April 6, 2020; computer compatible for the software; prepare for April 6th in case the Governor shuts the City in; recording the meeting; and public comment being able to continue.

Commissioner Rumrell asked City Manager Royle to notify the people who have public hearings if the meeting is delayed.

Mayor England moved on to Item VII, Adjournment.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor England asked for a motion to adjourn.

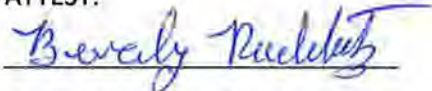
Motion: to adjourn. **Moved by** Mayor England, **Seconded by** George. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.



Margaret England, Mayor

ATTEST:



Beverly Raddatz, City Clerk