

APRIL 24, 2020

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CITY COMMISSIONERS OF THE CITY OF ALBANY, GEORGIA
GOVT CENTER – ROOM 100

PRESENT Mayor Bo Dorough
Mayor Pro Tem Jon Howard
City Commissioners: Matt Fuller, BJ Fletcher, Chad Warbington
City Manager: Sharon D. Subadan
City Attorney: Nathan Davis

Mayor Dorough called the (virtual) meeting to order at 8:05 and, following a roll call vote, it was determined to be a quorum with Commissioners Fuller, Fletcher and Langstaff being absent. (Commissioner Young was on the virtual call and, Commissioners Fuller [approx. 8:10 and Fletcher [approx. 8:30] joined the meeting late).

The Clerk read the call as follows:

Mayor and Board of City Commissioners
P.O. Box 447
Albany, Georgia

There will be a Special Called City Commission virtual meeting on Friday, April 24, 2020, at 8:00 a.m. The purpose of the meeting is for the Mayor and Board of Commissioners to encourage residents of Albany to continue to shelter in place.

Sincerely,

/s/ Sharon Subadan
City Manager

/s/ Bo Dorough
MAYOR

Notified via email
JON HOWARD, WARD I
MAYOR PRO TEM

Notified via email
MATT FULLER, WARD II
CITY COMMISSIONER

Notified via email
BJ FLETCHER, WARD III
CITY COMMISSIONER

/s/ Chad Warbington
CHAD WARBINGTON, WARD IV
CITY COMMISSIONER

Notified via email
BOB LANGSTAFF, JR., WARD V
CITY COMMISSIONER

Notified via email
DEMETRIUS YOUNG, WARD VI
CITY COMMISSIONER

Commissioner Young stated that he called this meeting to allow the City Commission to take a stand regarding what is best for Albany as it pertains to the Order from Governor Kemp. He commented on Albany not being ready to open some businesses and suggested that there is a need to stand in support of businesses for the sacrifices they are making, along with health workers and ordinary citizens who are fighting the virus. He stated that as businesses are beginning to open, the City Commission should stand in solidarity with those who have sacrificed and not opened their business. He stated that the number of infections should not qualify for the opening of businesses based on the continued spike in cases and commented on the downward trend that was predicted, but instead, there was a spike in the number of cases. He said that the resolution is not binding, nor is it trying to tell citizens what they should do, however, he again said he feels that the Commission should take a stand on where we are regarding the re-opening of businesses. He then moved to adopt the following resolution, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Howard.

A RESOLUTION NO. 20-113

Encouraging the residents of Albany to continue to shelter in place as set forth in Governor Brian Kemp's Executive Order of April 2, 2020

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Commissioner Young encouraged the adoption of the resolution to urge residents to remain sheltered in place and motivate business owners to remain closed to prevent further spreading of the virus.

Mayor Pro Tem Howard asked how the public will get this information. Mayor Dorough said that it can be on the public access channel and released to the media. Ms. Subadan stated that the information can be put on social media and that it will also go with other information that will be sent to citizens/businesses. In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Howard questioning of those not complying, Ms. Subadan stated that she read through the new order that was released last night, which gave more local control on policing and enforcing; she deferred to Mr. Davis.

Mr. Davis advised that city police will be able to enforce the order and mentioned having a warning/citation from municipal court, etc.

Mayor Dorough mentioned the 26-page executive order and said that it will be enforceable, and that today's resolution is merely advisory and a proclamation from the City Commission indicating its belief that Albany is not ready to proceed with the first opening of businesses. It also encourages businesses/residents to continue to comply with the shelter in place Order issued April 2, 2020, which is referenced in the Resolution. He explained that the guidelines are in the new order that the Governor signed for restaurants, businesses, etc., that will open on Monday and, in reply to Ms. Subadan, he stated that this is a statement that goes along with what other cities have adopted. In reply to Mayor Pro Tem Howard, Mayor Dorough explained that he recalls the Governor's order with the most restrictive provisions expiring on April 30 along with other provisions that will expire May 13, reiterating that today we are asking citizens and businesses as well, to comply with the stay sheltered order.

Commissioner Young mentioned business owners specifically outlined in the order, adding that Albany has a lot of barbershops and hair salons and that it is hard to abide by social distancing since a lot of the shops do not have equipment to protect themselves or their customers. He again stated that Albany is not prepared for this to happen due to the high number of cases of those tested and deaths, especially as it pertains to the African American community and the dangerous situation. He stated that we need to ask the community, i.e., those wanting to patronize the businesses, to stay strong to and realize that Albany is not ready for these type businesses to open, the fact that there are no current benchmarks, etc. He again referenced the Governor's order and stated that Albany is in a dangerous situation and citizens should know it is unsafe to be in restaurants, barbershop, etc. There are compliance issues that will be expected at this time and, there is too much uncertainty in enforcing guidelines the Governor has set forth.

Commissioner Warbington stated that we are resolving for citizens to continue sheltering and asking the business community to think twice and be cautious regarding reopening. He said he was tasked by Mayor Dorough to communicate and ensure businesses understand the guidelines and that staff will be working with him to come up with a one-page document to bring clarity, adding that they are targeting the cosmetology area first. He announced that tonight, the Chairwoman of the Professional Standards/Licensing Board of hair salons/barbers, will be on a virtual call meeting to explain the guidelines for those choosing to open. Yesterday, there was a meeting with restaurant owners regarding guidelines and they will be the next group to have city guidelines. He said that he will assist with disseminating information from the 26-page order that the Governor signed, adding that the Chamber is working with staff as well on this project. He mentioned the database of all City businesses that will be very useful in getting the information out via email/addresses/social media, etc.

Commissioner Young stated that the faith-based community and many pastors said they will not be having services at this time to comply with the shelter in place ordinance.

Mayor Dorough applauded the faith-based community with the majority not having services for the next few weeks, adding that many of the restaurant owners said they are not prepared at this time and are refraining from opening until the virus is under control. He commented on the favorable sign, which shows declining admissions at Phoebe [hospital] with less than 100 being diagnosed with Covid 19 for the first time in several weeks. He mentioned Commissioner Fletcher saying yesterday that a large number of citizens are employed at restaurants, gyms, hair salons, etc., which the Commission understands and at this time they are asking businesses to refrain from opening until the virus is under control. He mentioned benchmarks that have not been met by Albany/Dougherty County, with an article in the New York Times stating that Albany's per capita rate is still high. He agreed with

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Commissioner Young's comments regarding the African- American community being particularly hit hard and asked that all be conscious that the virus is still prevalent, and this is why he supports the resolution. Business that choose to be opened will be allowed to, with the City making sure that restrictions are enforced while providing recommendations for best practices.

At 8:30, it was noted that Commission Fletcher joined the call.

Commissioner Fletcher commented on businesses not being prepared to open due to safety issues and said now is not the time for restaurants and bars to open, adding that her restaurant is not prepared to safely accommodate customers at this time, etc. She mentioned those having mortgages, utility bills, etc., and asked the Utility Board to step up to assist business customers and asked gyms and landlords to give a break if they can. She suggested being cautious on how things are handled since there are people who are just a turnkey away from losing their businesses and agreed with moving forward with the resolution with caution. She mentioned those who are trying to make money by cooking from home, food trucks, selling products online, etc., but are operating without a business license.

Commissioner Fuller stated that if there are small business interested in applying for the PPE Program, funding was approved yesterday, and he will assist anyone wanting to apply for this.

Mayor Dorough clarified that Commission Fuller is offering to assist small businesses apply for a PPE loan with Commissioner Fuller replying in the affirmative.

Commissioner Fletcher said that it is important for people to know the kind of paperwork involved, adding that many of those approved for the loan have a great relationship with their bank who assist with the paperwork being in order. A brief discussion of the needed documents (tax returns, payroll, etc.) ensued.

Mayor Dorough agreed that this (PPE) is an important issue and advised that City staff can also assist; he mentioned those hampered by under-banking (disadvantaged businesses owners who do not have experience or knowledge) and said he wants this this information broadcast to those needing assistance.

Commissioner Young stated that callers are not being heard on the broadcast. Ms. Subadan said that the meeting is recorded and can be rebroadcast. She added that the City is working on resources to assist small businesses, with the Downtown office leading that effort, along with the Department of Economic and Community Development, adding that info will be on media platforms as soon as Monday regarding connecting with the City with Commissioners Fuller and Fletcher also providing assistance/info as well. Following a roll call vote, the motion unanimously passed.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:42 am.

MAYOR

ATTEST

CITY CLERK