

Lewiston City Council
Emergency Council Meeting Minutes
March 17, 2020
Lewiston City Hall – 5:30 P.M.

1. Call to Order

City Council Meeting called to order by Mayor Beth Carlson at 5:30 pm March 17, 2020. This meeting is being conducted electronically using Zoom.us.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call

Present (4): Mayor Beth Carlson, Councilor Larry Rupprecht, Councilor Dan Robertson and Councilor Niles Lavey. Not Present (1) Councilor Carol Boynton.

Others present: City Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Knight, Ambulance Director Matt Essig, Police Chief Scott Yeiter, Public Works Director Curt Benter, Machel Frisbie from the Lewiston Journal, Chris Rogers from the Winona Post, and other members of the public.

City Administrator/Clerk Knight stated there was a recent email sent with an agenda, a proclamation, and a resolution.

4. Agenda- Changes and additions

City Administrator/Clerk Knight requested to add 5.7 Other New Business, in case it's needed. Councilor Robertson motioned for approval of the Agenda with said change. Seconded by Councilor Lavey. Approved 4-0, Carlson, Rupprecht, Robertson, and Lavey voted aye.

5. Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic:

Mayor Carlson stated the environment is constantly changing, we need to rely on those higher up, and we need to take care of the City and our employees. The City needs a formal declaration which would help open up federal funding, if needed.

5.1 Closing city hall to the public (leaving phone calls & email) what are the pros and cons

Mayor Carlson stated this would close the City buildings, but employees would still come to work. There would still be phone and email capability. This is a virus that we know nothing about, and we are trying to keep people home. Councilor Lavey stated this idea was prudent, and we should be taking precautions. Public Works Director Curt Benter stated the department is inside working, so no issue of folks being out in the public.

Lavey asked if payments could be dropped off at City Hall? Yes, there is a drop box to the right of the main doors. Citizens could be met at the door for paper exchange, permits, etc. Work can

still be done by mail, email, or phone. Chief Yeiter stated that the building should be closed if the office is closed to avoid contamination. Councilor Rupprecht agreed with Chief Yeiter. Ambulance Director Matt Essig stated the EMR class will continue as is, just spreading out the class across all space available. There are only three days left to the class, and extra precautions are being taken. Mayor Carlson stated that on the Mayor list-serve, several cities have declared emergencies.

Mayor Carlson motioned to close the City Hall building to the public, but staff would remain working. Seconded by Councilor Rupprecht. Approved 4-0, Carlson, Lavey, Rupprecht, and Robertson voted aye.

5.2 Working remotely options?

Mayor Carlson brought this up in case an emergency would be declared. Laptops should be prepared for both the City Administrator and the deputy clerk, and for the department heads if they feel it necessary. Should someone in the office come down sick, they would be requested to go home.

Mayor Carlson motioned to prepare laptops for City office staff should they need to work remotely. Seconded by Councilor Rupprecht. Approved 4-0 Carlson, Lavey, Robertson, and Rupprecht voted aye.

5.3 Call forwarding in the case city hall is unmanned?

Mayor Carlson questioned if we would want to do call forwarding with our phone system? The City Administrator stated that voice mail messages can be left on our current phone system and retrieved via our email, so this is a non-issue.

5.4 Proclamation by the Mayor

Mayor Carlson stated the City Administrator sent her a draft of a proclamation by the Mayor borrowed from another city. This would be good for three days and would then need to be ratified by City Council resolution. City Administrator Knight stated that under Minnesota Statute, the Mayor is expressly permitted to declare a local emergency.

5.5 Resolution 2020-05 Ratifying the Declaration of Local Emergency by the Mayor of the City and Extended the Declared Emergency Created Thereby for 30 Days Pursuant to Minnesota Statute Section 12.29.

Councilor Rupprecht motioned to approve Resolution 2020-05 Ratifying the Declaration of Local Emergency by the Mayor. Seconded by Councilor Robertson. Approved 4-0 Carlson, Lavey, Robertson, and Rupprecht voted aye.

5.6 <https://www.lmc.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/Pandemic-Planning-Guidance-for-Cities.pdf>

City Administrator Knight stated this was a planning guide from the League of Minnesota Cities and contained a lot of useful information. Several items have already been reviewed.

For summer rec registration, completed forms can be put in the drop box. The Community Center could be utilized for mass registration if needed. The Winona County summer league meeting has already been cancelled by Rick Schaber, the league director. Councilor Rupprecht asked if we could maybe notify parents via email to drop off forms in the drop boxes so as to avoid a large gathering.

Knight also stated there were no reservations of the Community Center until June 6th, so there were no worries in having to cancel reservations already made.

Councilor Rupprecht made a motion to rescind the motion closing City Hall as stated in item 5.1 above. Seconded by Mayor Carlson. Approved 4-0 Carlson, Lavey, Robertson, and Rupprecht voted aye.

Public Works Director Curt Benter wondered if the entire building would be locked, in reference to the SEMCAC Meals on Wheels program. Discussion followed. Benter will discuss with the Meals on Wheels volunteers.

Councilor Rupprecht made a motion to close City Hall effective immediately. Seconded by Mayor Carlson. Approved 4-0 Carlson, Lavey, Robertson and Rupprecht voted aye.

5.7 Other New Business

Mayor Carlson mentioned the Mayor's Local Response Initiative sponsored by Johns Hopkins Medical Center in cooperation with Bloomberg and Harvard. Carlson signed up the administrator, police chief and ambulance director to also participate in this webinar program. Councilor Lavey wondered about needing gloves for handling external papers coming into the office? Knight stated there is hand sanitizer on every desk, with frequent hand washing instituted. Councilor Lavey also asked Public Works Director Benter if the power grid fails, how long can the City continue supplying fresh water to the City? Benter answered that he has a diesel generator at the well house-so water can be supplied indefinitely.

Councilor Robertson wondered if there would be any water shut offs? Knight stated that shut offs were done in the past couple of months, so most bills are now up to date. Citizens with concerns should contact City Hall, and if warranted, their request would be brought to Council.

Councilor Lavey asked if there were resources to help small business owners during these trying times? Yes, our EDA representative Donna Mack and her organization is attuned to this need and has sent information to us for Facebook posting and to perhaps meet one on one with Ms. Mack. Mayor Carlson wondered how we would notify UPS and FedEx deliveries. UPS knows to use the employee entrance, and we will notify FedEx of the same.

City Administrator Knight raised the question from an ambulance volunteer: if the volunteer was exposed to COVID-19 and subsequently became sick, would they be eligible for worker's comp? Question was forwarded to LMC (League of Minnesota Cities) and a response was received today which states there is no coverage for an "exposure" to a disease under the work comp statute. The person would have to actually become sick in order to be covered under work comp. If the volunteer falls ill due to an exposure, a first report of injury form should be completed and sent to the League for review. There are concerns with this answer received. Police Chief Yeiter stated that the concerns have to do with current recommendations for quarantine. For first responders, namely police, ambulance and fire, the current protocol for a suspected COVID-19 infection is to self-quarantine for 14 days. This work comp information states that without a subsequent positive test for COVID-19, there would be no work comp coverage. For full-time employees, there is sick leave available to cover this time, but for part-time police employees needing to self-quarantine, there would be no paycheck coming in. This would be the same for the ambulance and fire volunteers who leave their paying jobs to serve the City. With a self-quarantine for an exposure, there is no paycheck for them, and no way to pay their bills. Councilor Rupprecht expressed that with the good relationship between the City of Lewiston and State Senator Miller and State Representative Pelowski, why not send a letter to them so they can immediately work to address this? Mayor Carlson wondered if the list serve would be useful, as well as sending feedback to LMC. Councilor Lavey stated he felt this was a significant issue as well.

Councilor Robertson motioned to adjourn the City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Lavey.
Approved 4-0: Carlson, Rupprecht, Robertson and Lavey all voting aye.

The Council Meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:53 pm on March 17, 2020.

Submitted By:
Cheryl A. Knight
City Administrator/Clerk