

BLUFFTON TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING AND WORK SESSION MINUTES

ELECTRONIC MEETING

April 30, 2020

Mayor Sulka called the meeting to order at 6 P.M. Council members present were Mayor Pro Tempore Fred Hamilton, Larry Toomer, Bridgette Frazier, and Dan Wood. Town Manager Marc Orlando, Deputy Town Manager Scott Marshall, Town Clerk Kimberly Chapman, and Town Attorneys Terry Finger and Richardson LaBruce were also present.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation were given by Councilman Wood.

Adoption of the Agenda:

Toomer made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Wood seconded. Roll call was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Public Comment:

Public comment was received until two hours before the meeting start time through the website and via email to the Town Clerk and read aloud for the record:

Jae Rocha, Groveview Rd, Bluffton - I went to Sams club on Tuesday, while the store is counting incoming customers it was chaos in the store. More than half the customers were Not wearing masks and not being aware of others space. The employees did not seem to care and there are no one way arrows in the isles I was under the impression there were rules for these stores.

Angela Smith, 897 Fording Island Rd, Bluffton - At this point people's civil rights are being violated. The duration and severity of the restrictions in place are unconstitutional and based on conflicting, false and/or exaggerated numbers and data. The pools and playgrounds should reopen immediately. Kids are playing outside together all of the time anyway, and people are becoming increasingly restless the longer this drags out. Being confined to homes and restricted indefinitely is not living. We have the constitutional rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The fearful and medically fragile can continue to stay inside at their choice but the rest of us should be able to legally start living again (many are finding ways to do so anyway).

Justin Jarrett – 4 Ashbourne Court, Bluffton - I applaud council for being proactive on this issue and attempting to reach a resolution that gives our local businesses a fighting chance to get through this without endangering the public health. I think it's important to remember that we can never know if we were too cautious, while the cost of failing to take appropriate precautions would be devastating. Wearing a mask while in public is the least we can do to the protect the most vulnerable among us during this time, and if we wish to be able to move freely throughout the community, we need to take the responsibility to protect our neighbors. Thank you for your efforts to provide a solution that achieves both.

Stephen Ball, 22 Plantation Park Drive, Bluffton - As a small business owner in the town of Bluffton, The Great Frame UP, my employees are required to work but DO NOT want to wait on people who do not wear masks. As long as the City does not REQUIRE masks and the big box stores do not require masks, then I cannot require them. The resolution means nothing without teeth. I applaud you for stepping out and addressing the mask issue but do not bother if you don't require their use in public buildings and retail establishments.

Mike Raymond, 5827 Ginkgo Lane, Bluffton - Honorable Mayor and Council Members, Beaufort County has had 11 deaths attributed to Covid-19, which, for the 190,000 residents, equates to a risk that is nearly unmeasurable. Nonetheless, the public and local businesses have demonstrated their understanding of and practiced safety measures diligently. At this point, any town resolution to shape or reinforce behavioral policies will be redundant and send a confusing message since it will conflict with state mandates that are winding down and federal guidelines that are about to expire. Thank you

Vallee Bubak, 470 Lake Bluff Drive, Bluffton - Dear Town of Bluffton Elected Leaders and Officials; Remember how Doctors Fauci and Birx said masks could be unhelpful? It was because people who aren't trained medical workers will touch their mask and their face and other surfaces, thereby spreading the virus more broadly than if they had not been wearing a mask. The masks also make it harder to breath and get fresh air. I am concerned that we will have a false sense of security with them, and people will put themselves at greater risk. I wouldn't include masks in the recommendations from the town because of the risks with wearing one. I also would let businesses decide what to do since they are the ones assuming the risks and legal liability. If the Town mandates certain guidelines, then it is assuming responsibility if those guidelines turn out to be problematic. Ultimately taxpayers and citizens could ultimately bear the responsibility for lawsuits against the Town. Please open up and let the public and the business owners make their own decisions.

Carol Weir, Bluffton - Thank you for considering a recommendation that Bluffton residents wear masks when entering local businesses and that employees of businesses serving the public also wear them. While the effectiveness of masks is an ongoing debate, wearing one signifies that the wearer is taking the threat of COVID-19 seriously and practicing social distancing. They are visual reminders that we should all be careful now. The bottom line is that healthcare experts have asked us to do this and we should support our officials and healthcare workers by doing what they ask us to do. Masks say, "I care about the health of others." If we all wear them in public indoor spaces, we are saying to each other: "I care about protecting you, and I can see that you care about protecting me."

Linda Sampogna, 16 Canters Circle, Bluffton - I think it is imperative that the council vote in favor of a mask ordinance. Today a report was published in the Island Packet stating SC was one of the worst places in the country and one of only 7 states to get an F rating for social distancing. Those of us who wear masks and are responsible will not continue to shop or do

business in stores where masks are not required. It's up to you, members of the council, to protect the citizens of Bluffton. It's not political, it's public safety.

Formal Items:

Consideration of an Emergency Resolution of the Town of Bluffton, in Furtherance of the Health, Public Safety and Welfare of the Town of Bluffton, to Urge Businesses and Citizens to Maintain Necessary and Proper Protective Procedures for the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Citizens of the Town of Bluffton – Scott Marshall, Deputy Town Manager

Marshall stated that there were concerns with the proposed Emergency Ordinance to Decrease the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 when Shopping or Visiting Retail Stores that was presented for consideration at the Special Town Council Meeting on April 28, 2020, due to the punitive aspects of the proposed Ordinance and the mandates that were contained within it.

The Ordinance did not receive a motion but that there were good practices that Town Council wanted to consider an alternative that would reinforce the Governor's direction. The intent of the Resolution presented is to express the full support of South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster's Executive Order 2020-28 and to recommend and encourage best practices to protect employees and patrons in light of the allowed opening of additional retail establishments.

The Three Articles contained in the Resolution are as follows:

Article 1. Citizens are encouraged and urged to wear protective face masks and use other recommended safety measures when shopping and visiting retail stores opened by Executive Order of the Governor during the State of Emergency.

Article 2. The Town of Bluffton advises it will enforce all Executive Orders of the Governor of the State of South Carolina that have been issued regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The Executive Orders have been issued to promote the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the Town, its employers, and employees. Executive Order 2020-28 will be enforced, and it mandates:

1) Emergency Maximum Occupancy Rate. The business shall limit the number of customers allowed to enter and simultaneously occupy the premises so as not to exceed five (5) customers per 1,000 square feet of retail space, or twenty percent (20%) of the occupancy limit as determined by the Fire Marshal, whichever is less.

2) Social Distancing Practices. The business shall not knowingly allow customers, patrons, other guests, employees or contractors to congregate within six (6) feet of one another, exclusive of family units.

3) Sanitation. The business should implement all reasonable steps to comply with

any applicable sanitation guidelines promulgated by the CDC, DHEC, or any other state or federal public health officials.

Article 3. A Best Practices Guide for businesses and urges all business owners, employees, and citizens to use legitimate and sincere efforts to implement these Best Practices.

The Best Practices Guide is as follows:

1) Social Distancing Best Practices. To facilitate social distancing, businesses should further implement the following:

- a. Maintain signage and/or mark floors and aisles to remind and help individuals stand at least 6 feet apart, including outside when in line and in store checkout lines.
- b. In stores with multiple aisles, designate each aisle as one-way to lessen cross traffic and enable social distancing.
- c. Frequent reminders to customers and staff about distancing and hygiene.

2) Sanitation Best Practices. To facilitate the best sanitation, the business should implement all reasonable steps to comply with any applicable sanitation guidelines promulgated by the CDC, DHEC, or any other state or federal public health officials. Reasonable steps include:

- a. Operating under heightened hygiene and cleaning standards:
 - 1) Promote etiquette for coughing, sneezing, and handwashing and avoid touching face, especially eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - 2) Avoid handshaking.
 - 3) Encourage the use of masks by employees.
 - 4) Ensure adequate air circulation.
 - 5) Discourage workers from sharing resources or other work tools and equipment, when possible.
 - 6) Require routine disinfecting and perform routine environmental cleaning (e.g., workstations, countertops, handrails, doorknobs, break rooms, bathrooms, other-common areas), either twice a day or after each use.
 - 7) Those cleaning should: Wear gloves; Clean surfaces with soap and water if dirty before disinfecting; Use EPA-registered or similar household disinfectant, diluted bleach, or alcohol solutions; Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, phones, desks, keypads) can be wiped down by employees before each use; provide no-touch trashbins.

- 8) Make hand sanitizer, soap and water, or effective disinfectant readily available at or near the entrance, at checkout counters, or anywhere else where people have direct interactions.
 - 9) Provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible.
 - 10) Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) should not be shared and should be disposed of properly.
 - 11) After using gloves, employees should wash their hands.
- b. Monitoring employees for symptoms:
- 1) Employees who are sick or who appear to have symptoms should be separated from other employees and customers immediately and sent home.
 - 2) Immediately clean and disinfect areas the sick employee visited.
 - 3) Monitor employee symptoms, especially fever. If employees need to take simple medications acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or aspirin, they should take temperature beforehand.
 - 4) Train managers/leadership to spot symptoms of COVID-19 and to be clear on relevant protocols.
 - 5) Discourage employees to come to work if they feel sick.
 - 6) Non-punitive leave policies should be used, so employees do not feel pressured to come to work if they are sick. Remind employees to report any illness to manager, especially if sick with fever, cough, muscle aches and pains, sudden changes in smell or taste, sore throat, and/or shortness of breath.
 - 7) If an employee is confirmed to have COVID-19, employers should inform fellow employees while maintaining confidentiality unless the employee consents to having their name released; fellow employees should self-monitor for symptoms for 14 days.
- c. Providing signage at each public entrance to inform all employees and customers that they should:
- 1) Avoid entering if they have a cough, fever, or feel generally unwell.
 - 2) Maintain a minimum of 6-foot distance.
 - 3) Wear face coverings.
 - 4) Encourage customers to order food and other items online for home delivery or curbside pickup.

- d. Ensuring cleaning wipes are near shopping carts and shopping baskets.
- e. Assigning employees to disinfect carts and baskets regularly.
- f. Wiping down shared equipment before and after use; ensure disinfectants and paper towels to wipe down equipment are available.

Wood made a motion to approve the Emergency Resolution of the Town of Bluffton in Furtherance of the Health, Public Safety and Welfare of the Town of Bluffton, to Urge Businesses and Citizens to Maintain Necessary and Proper Protective Procedures for the Health, Safety and Welfare of the Citizens of the Town of Bluffton. Hamilton seconded. Roll call was taken, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Town Council Work Session:

Roberts Rules of Order- Richardson LaBruce

Richardson LaBruce gave an overview of Roberts Rules of Order for Town Council.

Communication from Mayor and Council:

There was none.

Hamilton made a motion to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. Toomer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Lisa Sulka, Mayor

Kimberly Chapman, Town Clerk