

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CHOSEN
FREEHOLDERS HELD ON SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020 AT 2:00 P.M.
IN THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
4 MOORE ROAD
CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE, NEW JERSEY**

The meeting convened with Director Thornton presiding and the following members answering roll call:

Freeholders Desiderio, Hayes, Morey, Pierson and Thornton (5)

STATEMENT OF DIRECTOR

“This meeting is being held as an emergency meeting in accordance with the “Open Public Meetings Act.” Notice of this meeting will be provided following the calling of this meeting by posting notice of the same in writing on the bulletin boards in the County Administration Building, and the County Clerk’s Office and mailing a copy of the notice to the Cape May County Herald and the Atlantic City Press and filing the same with the County Clerk, all being done on Sunday, March 15, 2020.”

MOMENT OF SILENCE- Led by Freeholder Pierson who dedicated the moment of silence to Mark Gose from Wildwood.

FLAG SALUTE

RESOLUTIONS:

214-20 Resolution authorizing the Board to hold an Emergency Meeting on Sunday, March 15, 2020 to 2:00 p.m. to address concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus.

(This Resolution authorizes the Board of Chosen Freeholders to conduct a meeting in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-9(b).)

Freeholders	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent	Motion	Second
Mr. Desiderio	X					
Ms. Hayes	X				X	
Mr. Morey	X					
Mr. Pierson	X					X
Mr. Thornton	X					

Discussions:

Kevin Thomas as lead for the County on COVID-19 gave an overview of what the Health Department has been doing since January. As soon as they had knowledge of what was happening in China they began assessing Health Dept. resources. Their “medical needs trailer” and “point of distribution trailer” were cleaned and inventoried. New tires were installed on the trailers. In February, a Coronavirus brochure was produced and distributed to all libraries. Southeast Regional Healthcare Coalition (SERHC) held a tabletop meeting to discuss strategy. Several internal meetings were held on a regular basis especially with the nurses over the last three months. All information coming down from the State Health Department was read and disseminated as needed. The LINKS Communication System released data. Packages were then assembled to go out to administrators, hospitals and healthcare agencies, OEM and EMS.

Director Thornton asked Kevin for confirmation that the LINKS system had been in place for well over 20 years now.

Kevin asked everyone to think about how fast the virus had spread. The reason nobody knew about it at first was because there was no testing data. They didn’t have tests. It was all fouled up from the state level on down from the federal level. First they had faulty equipment which caused a delay. Now, you have to have very

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specific symptoms to be tested. A fever of 100.4 degrees or over, respiratory distress, and you have to be admitted into the hospital before you can be tested.

Mr. Thornton made the point that the hospital laboratory couldn't actually test for the virus, it had to be sent out.

Freeholder Hayes commented about a self-quarantine scenario regarding a county employee and how this was probably going to be an issue they were going to have to deal with. Were test kits coming to the county she wanted to know?

Kevin addressed rumors around cases in Cape May County. The hospital had four cases tested, results were pending. There were another four out there bringing the total to eight, all with results pending. Two individuals had recovered and were discharged, two were on supportive care. None had been on respirators. He couldn't reveal where the people resided because of HIPPA.

Initially, CHNRC was the only nursing home in the county to be closed to all visitors. Most recent, Kevin had directed that all nursing homes not allow visitors. Everybody complied with the directive. Hospice being the only exception, allowing people to say goodbye to loved ones. No residents of CHNRC were sick. A few staff members were sick and freaked out because of what happened in Washington State at a nursing home.

Kevin requested assets from the State via the on-line portal such as goggles, masks, N-95's, buoys, and test kits for FIT tests. Everything was on back order.

Administrator Bozzelli stated that New Jersey would be getting a supply of PPE's and test kits from the federal government. The supplies would be allocated to each county dependent upon the need. This topic was covered in the daily call in with the State today.

Marty Pagliughi informed that only 1% of the resources requested for New Jersey had been filled as of yesterday. A stockpile of supplies were being held at the Ancora warehouse, being rationed out to those that needed it the most.

Kevin and the task force met with the Superintendent of Schools directing them what to do and not do. He spoke with Captain Felger at the Coast Guard Base to learn that the recruits were confined to the base for the duration.

Ms. Hayes stated that it seemed that they were talking mostly about curtailing social contact. To which Kevin replied the best thing to do is to stay away from somebody who was sick.

Mr. Morey added it was his understanding that the virus could be picked up by touching surfaces like conference table or door knobs, etc.

The most important thing was to clean everything all the time, Kevin recommended. Every person or employee had to be responsible for his own area, not relying solely on F&S one time a day to wipe areas down.

Mr. Morey brought up the fact that prior to this weekend it had been easier to practice "social distancing". It all went out the window on the weekend which brought many, many people to the area. Bars and restaurants were jammed he had heard. The whole notion of social distancing and separation was gone, he stated. He had spoken with Keith Laudeman, Curtis Bashaw and David Craig all of whom were concerned and wanted the government to direct them to close, out of concern for staff members, etc. Nonetheless, each of those facilities had ultimately decided to close for the next two weeks.

Mr. Thornton stated the New Jersey had been asked today about the authority of closing businesses, but danced around the issue. Jeff Lindsay, Counsel reviewed the governor's Executive Order No. 103, Statute 2263 for local health agencies, their general powers and authority, Statute 2613, the model state emergency health powers act which was what the governor implemented with Executive Order No. 103

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and Chapter 40, the general powers and authority of the freeholder board. It was determined the county or health agency does not have the authority to shut down a private business. That authority was vested with the commissioner of the Dept. of Health, the State of New Jersey.

Freeholder Desiderio added that a meeting was being held tomorrow in Sea Isle City and that the business owners there were looking for direction. Everyone was concerned because many families came down over the weekend for the duration. They planned to stay for the next three weeks while the kids were off from school. Freeholder Desiderio had closed the public gym, cancelled all meetings for senior citizens, and all the clubs. They were also considering the closure of the information center.

Administrator Bozzelli detailed the things done in Teaneck, as an example for the Board to follow if they couldn't flat out order businesses to close.

Morey's Piers had made the decision not to open until Mother's Day and to move as many people as possible out to remote working locations. He commented that our local hospital may not be as equipped at this time to handle so many seriously ill individuals that might require a respirator.

Mr. Thornton informed the hospital had 8 total respirators available, three in use and five in reserve.

Mr. Morey felt it made sense to send the strongest message they could, for the best interest of people in the community, for businesses in such and such category to close for a period of time. People need to recognize that this virus was a real health hazard.

This was the community wide issue, but we would need to address the staffing issue too, should the schools decided to close, Ms. Bozzelli indicated.

Mr. Desiderio directed an education scenario to Will or Marie. Upper Township sent everyone home on Friday, the kids with all their stuff, and were going to be closed. Ocean City needed one more day for Dr. Taylor to enact and put her plan into effect for them to close two weeks. Upper Township jumped the gun and closed it without consulting Ocean City. He also asked if the County could cut New Jersey's recommendation of no crowds gathering over 250 people in half. The discussion went back to social distancing.

Mr. Morey felt it was very important for the Board to pass a resolution in support of the County Health Department directives.

Mr. Thornton commended Jeff Pierson, Marty, Kevin Thomas and Beth Bozzelli for doing such an outstanding job, under difficult circumstances, especially with such mixed information coming from the State. He also recognized Jeff Lindsay's legal advice as keeping them out of trouble.

Mr. Lindsay recommended the Board decide how they were going to deal with employees that would need to stay home with children, once the schools were closed. A brief discussion followed detailing the guidelines for usage of an employee's time. There was the concern that it was unknown how long this would go on. Sara Maloney added to the discussion with the essential/non-essential employee would need to be addressed. Tomorrow a department head meeting would be held to address these topics and others.

Mr. Thornton wanted a minimum contingency plan for two weeks with another plan looking ahead in case things go on longer than 2 weeks.

All were in agreement to implement minimum staffing requirements in departments for the interim. They would follow civil services guidelines, produce a form for schools closing/employee needing to be home for child care and a doctor's form for an employee out with the virus. The forms would need to be submitted to the county

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within 3 days. Sara recommended different codes for employees working vs. non-working for tracking purposes.

Ms. Bozzelli had a concern for the people working down in the Social Services building and those in OEM due to available space in their offices. Many details needing to be worked out and were talked about at the same time.

It was discussed to shut down the libraries and the Park & Zoo tomorrow, with the exception of animal keepers. The COOP/COG plan from 2006 would be followed for direction; how many personnel per department were needed to keep the County up and running. Names of employees would be updated throughout the document, otherwise the plan was essentially a good one it was stated.

Per Director Thornton, a resolution would be written today, going out tomorrow which would recommend business to close for the interim period.

A conference call was planned for March 16 at 2:00 p.m. to include all task force members and mayors of municipalities for a coordinated update from the county.

Jeff Lindsay and Kevin Thomas were tasked with drafting a resolution for release to the public urging them to take the threat of COVID-19 seriously and implement preventative measures.

Diane Wieland had received a phone call asking what the protocol would be for a hotel finding out a patron staying there had tested positive for the virus.

Mr. Desiderio asked that a policy addressing large groups be covered in the resolution.

Kevin recommended every dollar spent be tracked. A payroll code for tracking reimbursement from the federal government for employees was suggested by Ms. Bozzelli.

To recap, the Park & Zoo and Libraries would close on Tuesday. Each department head would be asked to provide a list of employees that have children. The employees would not be docked their personal time. A school form and a separate medical form would be created. For department heads unable to make the meeting tomorrow they would be able to join by conference call.

Freeholder Pierson suggested the municipalities that already acted of their own accord, ahead of the County's resolution be covered under the County resolution.

Mr. Morey stated a version of possible wording for the resolution to release to the public.

215-20 Resolution declaring COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency in Cape May County and urging the immediate implementation of preventative measures.

(This Resolution declares a public health emergency in Cape May County and urges the public and private businesses to immediately implement preventative measures for the protection of health, safety and welfare of our residents and visitors.)

Freeholders	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent	Motion	Second
Mr. Desiderio	X					
Ms. Hayes	X					
Mr. Morey	X					X
Mr. Pierson	X				X	
Mr. Thornton	X					

ADJOURN: 3:26 P.M. FH Desiderio moved/Hayes seconded.

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Freeholders	Ayes	Nays	Abstain	Absent	Motion	Second
Mr. Desiderio	X				X	
Ms. Hayes	X					X
Mr. Morey	X					
Mr. Pierson	X					
Mr. Thornton	X					

APPROVED

DIRECTOR

ATTEST:

ADMINISTRATOR