



Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee  
 March 28, 2020 – 10:00 AM  
 Council Chambers  
 2020 Hampton Street, Columbia, SC 29204

Yvonne McBride	Paul Livingston	Joe Walker	Dalhi Myers	Chakisse Newton
District 3	District 4	District 6	District 10	District 10

1. **Call to Order** – Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 AM.
2. **Adoption of Agenda** – Mr. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to adopt the agenda as published.

In Favor: Livingston, Walker, McBride and Myers

The vote in favor was unanimous.

3. **Economic relief (businesses)** – Mr. Brown stated a summation of the responses staff believed were more immediate to review. There is more detailed information being sent out. After hearing Council communicate on a couple occasions that sending out a lot of backup detail, and not allowing them to get to the “meat” of the discussion is not always effective. Therefore, if you refer to the information presented in the summary sheet, we tried to communicate the immediate opportunity for us to repurpose funds that could be used to address economic relief. One of those areas is the CDBG funds, which can be allocated to address this particular issue. Specifically, under the guidance provided for special economic development assistance related to businesses. These funds can be used to avoid job loss caused by business closures related to social distancing by providing short-term working capital assistance to small businesses to enable retention of jobs held by small and moderate income persons. It also allows grants or loans to support business expansions to create jobs. Additionally, it also provides assistance for grants, loans, and other financial assistance to establish or stabilize and expand micro-enterprises to provide medical, food delivery, cleaning and other services to support home health and quarantine. Based on this information, staff believes these funds can be used for those purposes, and have asked for the funds, they are aware of now, which is \$734,000, to be allocated to be used to support the relief programs for small businesses. Staff did not specifically define what the program would look like because they need flexibility to immediately address funding resources for the businesses. He is looking for feedback from Council regarding specific target areas that we know we can provide funds to.

Mr. Walker stated, tracking what the Federal Administration is doing, if you look at the CARES Program, buried within the SBA, it outlines exactly what he believes the intent of the committee is, as we discussed opportunities to put forth grants and forgivable loans. The CARES Program, in his opinion, really checks the block for the business community. He would suggest what the Federal Administration has done covers the business community. His recommendation would be, short of some of the other suggested opportunities, such as suspending the Hospitality Tax remittance, the Federal Government has taken care of the need for forgivable loans and grants in the business community; therefore, he would suggest re-appropriating the CDBG funds to other uses.

Ms. Myers stated she believes we have presupposed that the \$734,000 staff has recommended is the “pot” of funds. She would like a discussion on what is actually the CDBG funds. She does not agree with the current way that we have looked at it because it targets two (2) specific programs that Council has not agreed to postpone. Those programs have been postponed for three (3) years. To the extent that we are looking at the

policy of what programs we are repurposing is the starting point, rather than assuming that we agree this is the source and extent of funds. She believes the CDBG funding is larger and more diverse than what has been described. She appreciates staff's desire to point us to these two (2) areas, but she would like the discussion to be broader than just that because Council may decide that is not what it wants reallocated for these purposes.

Ms. McBride requested clarification as Mr. Walker's suggestion on not do anything with our funds and waiting on the Federal funds.

Mr. Walker stated, after reviewing the CARES Act, and the CARES Program, it is his opinion, as someone who attends to use the CARES Act, the Federal Government has more than substantially address the near-term financial needs of the small business community by allowing for forgivable loans in the amount of 2.5 times their trailing average monthly payroll. If they maintain your employment base, or a significant percentage, until June 30<sup>th</sup>, then 80% of the loan will be forgivable.

Ms. McBride stated her concern is that it is going to take a while for the Federal Government to get those programs in place. She believes there is an immediate need for barbershops, beauty salons, etc. that the County needs to move forward and provide assistance immediately until the Federal funds come in.

Mr. Walker stated the Federal Government stripped the responsibility out of the Small Business Administration (SBA) because they were concerned about the SBA's ability to move quickly enough to get the dollars into the hands of the people that need it. They have delegated this authority to the banking community. It is incumbent upon the small business owner to get with their commercial banker immediately. The banker can issue the funds as early as Monday. The Federal Government had the same concerns and removed the bureaucracy and put it in the hands of the private banking community.

Ms. Myers stated she believes the CARES Program will leave some of the businesses out that Ms. McBride spoke of because they are not going to be the first ones their bankers are trying to help. It is going to be a little more difficult for them, and may take them 30 – 45 days to establish the kind of ready documentation needed. These small businesses are concerned, even with the legislature, because it is going to take them longer than they have got since many are living month-to-month with their payroll. She stated because the CDBG funding is reimbursable to the County, she does not know why we would not act as a stop gap. We might require them to demonstrate that the Federal process would disadvantage them in a way that they would not recover.

Ms. Newton stated, as she understands some of the Federal legislation, many of those loans are directed toward people who have a lot of others on their payrolls, and getting those reimbursable loans in exchange for payroll. There are a lot small businesses that operate where they do not have anyone on their payroll, and may not be eligible. She would hate to exclude those people. We may want to look at adapting our parameters for the business support we provide where we initially target some of those people who might be slower to receive Federal funds. She stated it appeared to her, when Mr. Brown was outlining the funds that are potentially eligible, specifically CDBG funds, the reason we are looking at CDBG funds is because that is the only allowable use for us, as we look at COVID response.

Mr. Brown responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Myers stated she agrees with Mr. Brown that CDBG funds are the ones that are available. She just does not know, in Richland County, what that number actually is, other than the staff's recommendation of reallocated funds, because we do not have visibility of anything other than the two (2) suggested transfers staff suggested. Her understanding from the budget, and the Community Development Plan submitted to HUD, there are other funds. She would like for us to look at it holistically, rather than narrowly focused on because, by default, it is a policy decision. She would like for us to affirmatively decide that, rather than defaulting into it. In order to do that, we need additional information.

Ms. Powell stated there is a breakdown of all the County's funds in the larger briefing document forwarded to the committee this morning by Ms. A. Myers. She stated the information that was provided is what is on the County's general ledger for funds that have been drawn down, but have not yet been spent.

Mr. Livingston stated there are two (2) questions: Whether or not we should accept the recommendation to use the current CDBG funds? And, if we are going to use those funds to target businesses, we need to be specific about what type businesses we want to target.

Ms. Powell stated the recommendation does not target any specific project or program. The recommendation simply comes from the CDBG funds, the County has been granted, which we have drawn down from HUD, to date, that are not already committed to a project that is underway or there is an executed contract. It would be difficult for us to claw back funds from projects underway or under contract.

Ms. McBride stated she believes we should utilize the CDBG funding before we go into the General Fund.

Mr. Livingston stated that is staff's recommendation.

Ms. Powell stated what is before the committee is the funds that have been drawn down from HUD for CDBG, which is the "pot" of money that HUD has said that we can use. Staff verified with the HUD representative that is the only "pot" of money that can be allocated for this use. Keep in mind that is just what is left from the current fiscal year's allocation. The County will receive additional funds in subsequent years, and can be drawn against, but staff does not know what the dollar amount will be.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, the projects the \$734,000 would have covered could be completed with the next round of CDBG funding.

Ms. Powell stated staff's recommendation is that the projects be postponed until a subsequent fiscal year, when additional funding is made available, so we can respond more immediately to the needs of the community.

Ms. Myers stated two (2) of these projects have gotten a lot community backlash because we have been promising to do those projects since she came on Council, and the community does not believe us because we have promised things we have not delivered. Ultimately, she will have to be the one to go back to the community and inform them the money is being shifted to this; therefore, she is not in favor of this recommendation.

Mr. Livingston inquired to what extent this delay these projects.

Ms. Powell stated the projects are in preliminary phases. We are gathering design documents and working out a larger MOU with the Recreation Commission. The projects could begin as early as the next fiscal year when we get additional funding allocated. Additionally, she stated she could not estimate when the projects would be shovel ready.

Mr. Brown stated the recommendation was to use \$500,000 to allow immediate matching funds for these small business programs that may be allocated to Federal grants. Based on what Mr. Walker shared, that may not be necessary if the funding is readily available for those other small business that are more consistent with the type of businesses that Council are concerned about. With that being said, instead of allocating the \$500,000 to establish forgivable loan programs, you could utilize the CDBG funds, in the manner you are currently using, and reduce the amount to account for the other smaller businesses that may be left behind or may not meet the range of the program outlined in the CARES Act. He stated that may be another way to approach this so you are substantially deviating from what you have available from the CDBG funds. You will still have some readily available funds to utilize. From the \$1.9 Million in disaster recovery funds, we were allocating an additional \$500,000 for small businesses, which could be reallocated. The CDBG funds we would be utilizing to target immediate uses and flexibility for those small business relief programs (i.e. grants for certain population sizes for employers). On the larger component, we thought to put a "pot" of money aside for more traditional businesses that may need additional funding.

Mr. Walker stated he does believe, to a degree, it will alleviate the burden to the County. It will not remove the need for us to stand in the gap for those that fall through the cracks, but after review of the CARES Program documentation staff will understand the mitigated need for the County.

Mr. Brown stated we may have some funding allocated in this area, which comes to about \$1.2 Million, that we could go back and revisit so it could address both sides of the Council's concerns about immediate funds and funds that will be reallocated, and potentially suspend projects.

Mr. Livingston stated there were some concerns about trying to identify some of those small businesses that may fall through the cracks (i.e. barbershops, businesses without employees). One of the things we can do is try to get an idea of what type businesses we want to focus on so we can complement what the Federal Government is doing.

Mr. Walker suggested to give staff an opportunity to review the Federal program. In his opinion, to be effective for those that do not qualify for the Federal aid, or Federal aid is not substantial enough to allow them to continue in business, we create a stop gap measure at the County level that catches those businesses that fall through the cracks. His concern is in the administration of this, and he would look to the Administrator to tell us if this is an in-house administrated program or if we have a third party community partner in mind that is already built to administer programs such as these, and we are simply a funding source. For the record, he would prefer the County to utilize the third party partner.

Mr. Brown stated, in the larger briefing document, staff expressed concerns about timeliness and the availability of staff to administer this type program. There was \$250,000 funding set aside to address the need for a response consultant to run these programs for the County. Staff is requesting that Council allow us to use this funding for that purpose.

Ms. Powell stated we did set aside the funding, but there is also a list of recommended community partners who we believe has some programs up and running that could facilitate this work without costing the County additional money. The County could pass on the funds to them to put the funding in the hands of those with the greatest needs.

Ms. McBride stated she agrees with the mechanism, but she suggested monitoring and oversight to ensure the funding is distributed equitably.

Mr. Livingston suggested having the Administrator to review the CARES Act and determine which businesses may not qualify or could fall through the cracks, and make a list of those businesses/categories. We use the funding the Administrator has recommended for businesses. In addition, the Administrator will bring back recommendation for administration of the program at the next Council meeting.

Ms. McBride inquired if this would allow us to suggest an amount of funding, and then have the Administrator come back with the criteria.

Ms. Myers inquired if any of the Council members have had a chance to review the 70-page briefing document provided by staff.

Mr. Manning stated he had not received the document.

Ms. Myers stated the document provides the comprehensive information the committee was requesting, and would have answered the question Mr. Walker put forward.

Mr. Brown stated the reason why staff provided the documentation the way they did is because staff was trying to get to the committee members specific targeted recommendations that Council could potentially move on and address the areas already identified. Staff did not send the 70-page document prior to because there has been feedback, in the past, that staff provides too much information and we are not able to get to the "meat" of the conversation we need to focus on. Staff came to this particular meeting with those focused recommendations, the "pots" of money, and the reason for those "pots" of money, so we could give the committee an opportunity to talk about whether or not those funding amounts were to be changed or moved around to address those targeted areas. The larger conversation could be communicated with some of the things we have already identified, and how that could be done. Again, the reason we did not provide a 70-page document was so we would not get our focus off of what money we can allocate, how soon we can allocate it,

and what targeted things can we perform, so we can provide an immediate response and relief to these areas the committee had already identified.

Ms. Myers stated, for her, this is the material she was looking for to make a decision, and would have preferred to have the information prior to the meeting.

Mr. Livingston stated he is focusing on the businesses. The question is whether we want to ask the Administrator to move forward with looking at the CARES Program, and whatever else he may have access to, to identify the type of businesses that may not qualify or may fall through the cracks, and agree to a dollar amount. It does not mean that is the only thing we ever do, but at least it will move us forward. We are not trying to resolve everything about businesses in the world. We are just talking about this one unique issue right now.

Mr. Walker stated, if you could just clearly define the one unique issue, it may help him understand exactly what we are trying to advance.

Mr. Livingston responded what he is trying to advance is looking at those businesses that may fall through the crack, or may not qualify, as it relates to the CARES Act. The Administrator will look at the CARES Act and bring it back a recommendation to us regarding those businesses. We would agree to an amount to move that forward. That does not mean the amount will not change, but at least it will be something to work with.

Ms. McBride moved, seconded by Mr. Livingston, to move forward as outlined by the Chair.

Mr. Walker inquired if that provided staff guidance.

Mr. Brown stated what he heard is that we would need to go back and look at the local businesses who may not be able to take advantage of the CARES Act, and provide Council with that information, but he is not sure if that means there is a targeted program amount we have agreed to address those areas. He is not sure if we are changing the allocations that we recommended, in terms of different "pots".

Mr. Livingston stated he would want to add a dollar amount when you consider the motion. Mr. Walker mentioned bringing a recommendation regarding the administration of the funds by particular groups.

Ms. McBride stated she was thinking the Administrator mentioned two (2) "pots". One was the \$250,000 for those businesses that would not fit into the Federal guidelines. The other part was for the Administrator to be able to use the \$250,000 for the necessary procurement process.

Mr. Livingston stated he is still looking for a means to move forward, as it relates to this item on the agenda.

Mr. Walker stated he is favor of advancing a specified amount of dollars for staff to use in this methodology. He wants our dollars to go further. He wants those that really need it to get it, and he thinks that is going to take some coordination of our Administrator understanding the CARES Program. He does not think the current motion provides the type of guidance and advancement of the item the Administrator is looking for. He inquired as to what the Administrator needs from Council.

Ms. Myers offered a friendly amendment to use the team we used for the Allen-Benedict Court relief, excluding the Recreation Commission, allow staff to stand up immediate funding for small businesses of 0-50 people that fall through the CARES Act crack, and provide small business assistance of 3 months' rent as a stop gap.

Ms. McBride inquired if they would be able to do the small businesses.

Ms. Myers responded she believes they would. She thinks they did a good job with the prior relief initiative, and they already had a system with a hotline. This would allow staff to continue to work on whatever they are working on and allow them to supervise the team at a high level.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, the motion included the Administrator looking at alternatives for the administration of the program.

Ms. Myers stated her friendly amendment would not include \$250,000 for outside sources to administer the funding.

Mr. Brown stated what he is trying to get clarification on is, is not the specific nature of a specific program, but the overall administration of these types of programs from the committee. Specifically, he has heard we need to come back and provide a list of individuals who may fall outside of the CARES Act benefit guidelines, and we do not want those businesses to miss out on potential funding. The County would do a stop gap for those businesses. His question is does the committee want to see a list, or a grouping, of types of businesses, or are we simply saying we want to make decisions based on industry types.

Mr. Livingston stated his concern is more the criteria that we use for the business, not so much the business, which may fall through the cracks.

Ms. McBride stated we could give an example of the type of business.

Mr. Walker stated, from an efficiency perspective, all we do is set the criteria and they come to us. If there is not enough concern in the marketplace to come find the free money that is on the individual.

Ms. Newton stated she supports us creating criteria for the kinds of businesses we are trying to help. There is a happy medium here where our job is to set the criteria, but that does not deter staff from thinking through what some of those kinds of businesses are and listing them for example, or having us have a conversation about it. We want to make sure we do not structure our criteria in such a way that it leaves out the people we are trying to help, so having some of those examples that substantiated who we are trying to assist would be helpful. That way if it excluded an entire type of business that we know is affected we could take a look at the criteria. Additionally, it looks like in the supplemental information some initial thought has gone into the kinds of businesses that are going to be impacted. Secondly, in terms of how we go about that, and addressing Ms. Myers friendly amendment, we would prefer to leave that with the Administrator and have him come back to us with options. Personally, she agrees the team that did the Allen-Benedict Court administration did a fantastic job. She knows a lot of those groups are convening now, and having conversations, so it would be good to potentially have a conversation with those groups. When the Administrator makes his recommendations he would have more information, which would be helpful to the County, as opposed to us limiting that at the outset.

Mr. Livingston inquired if we are okay with moving forward with the Administrator looking at the CARES Act, coming up with criteria, and sample businesses that may meet the criteria, looking at a process/consultant to administer the program, and setting aside a certain amount.

Ms. McBride stated in her motion she included the amount of \$250,000 for the businesses and \$250,000 for the procurement process the Administrator mentioned. The amounts can be changed, but we could at least start moving forward.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, the motion is to ask the Administrator to look at the CARES Program, and any other Federal assistance, to develop a criteria for those businesses that may all through the crack, consider options for administration of the program, and set aside \$250,000 in funding.

Ms. Newton inquired about where the amount of up to \$250,000 amount came from.

Ms. McBride stated it was based on the information the Administrator gave us. She believes Mr. Walker stated that certain parts of the business community would follow Federal funds (CARE Program). Then, the unique partners would be up to \$250,000.

Ms. Newton stated, if we are talking about the CDBG Funds, the number she sees is \$730,000. She is not saying we have to use all of that, but if we are going to do an up to, she believes the number should be higher to give us the flexibility we need to come in lower, as opposed to having to redo it.

Ms. McBride stated we were only speaking to the small businesses.

Mr. Brown stated, in the initial part of the conversation, we talked about CDBG funds, which is one “pot” of funds we had allocated for economic relief. The second is \$500,000, which is the Disaster Recovery funds. His understanding, based on developing criteria, Administration would be able to come back to Council to share the collaboration, with the knowledge that we may have additional opportunities for funding. He would not limit our work to just the \$250,000, when it is brought back for recommendations.

Ms. Newton stated, if Administration is not going to limit it to \$250,000, she does not believe it should be a part of the motion.

Ms. McBride and Mr. Livingston agreed to strike the amount from the motion and allow the Administrator to come back with that amount.

Mr. Livingston restated the motion as follows: The Administrator is to move forward, regarding small businesses, look at the CARES Program Act, determine which businesses may fall through the cracks, and create a criteria for businesses, look at potential means for administration of the program, and an estimated amount to do so.

In Favor: Livingston, Walker, McBride, Newton and Myers

The vote in favor was unanimous.

4. **Public Safety** – Mr. Brown stated we have a request from our public safety partners, related to PPEs, which total approximately \$1.7 Million, and personnel (i.e. overtime), which would be approximately \$850,000. Both of these amounts are projections, based on what we actually acquire, and what is ultimately needed. With that being the case, one of the things they are specifically asking the body for, and are terming as Phase I funding, is the allocation of \$500,000, for procurement purposes, so when the equipment is available we can readily procure it. As you have heard, throughout the nation supply chain issues already exist, and without funds readily available we may put our EMS and First Responders in a position where we are not able to capitalize on the purchase requests. Secondly, he wants the committee to be aware, in Phase II, we have projected requests from the Sheriff’s Dept., Coroner, etc. For those types of requests, we will look to reallocate funds within the budget, from various areas, to address those needs. Since those are projected costs, he did not want to tell the committee what they are going to potentially do because it depends on what revenue looks like and where we might have to pull that funding from. Today, we know we have procurement needs, and we need to respond to those quickly, which is why the allocation of \$500,000 is being requested. The additional request we can work through the normal budgeting process, but he wanted the committee to be aware of overtime questions and additional personnel have come up from the Sheriff’s Department and Coroner.

Ms. McBride stated she is still concerned about the mechanism we have in place to address the acquisition of PPEs in advance.

Ms. Myers stated, according to Federal legislation, they will reimburse those costs, so she would support allocating funds and seek reimbursement from the Federal government. She would support not just the General Fund Phase I revenue, as outlined for PPEs needs, but also the overtime because people are incurring that now.

Mr. Walker stated, for clarification, Ms. Myers would support approving the entire PPE procurement list in the amount of \$1.7 Million, and the entire projected overtime allocation of \$850,000.

Ms. Myers responded in the affirmative to set aside the funding because Federal legislation says it is reimbursable and they are incurring the costs now.

Mr. Walker inquired, from a budgetary and financial handling perspective, can we do what Ms. Myers is suggesting.

Mr. Brown responded, based on the funds we have on hand, the answer would be no. It would require additional steps from Council to draw funds from other areas, which are in the current fiscal year's budget, and potentially to make changes to next year's budget and General Fund reserves.

Ms. Myers inquired, for the overtime that is being incurred, if staff is suggesting they are not going to have a recommendation for paying it.

Mr. Brown responded, for the projected costs, we have time, based on the budget, to absorb some of costs, and deal with it as we go along versus saying we are going to commit an unknown amount of funds we do not have access to right now. We only have \$1.9 Million available for disaster recovery in the County's budgeted funds. We are going to pay the overtime, but we can take austerity measures in pulling funds from other areas, as we identify them, to address the overtime issues. In addition, Mr. Hayes has communicated the Magistrate's Office is also incurring overtime costs.

Ms. Myers requested the information on how Administration is planning to accommodate for the overtime issues.

Ms. McBride inquired if we are getting requests for overtime or is this a projection that overtime will be needed.

Mr. Brown stated it is a combination. There are First Responders who are working, and as a result you have some employees who are not able to work because of their exposure to COVID-19. There is also some additional workload that is being requested for services from these departments.

Mr. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. Myers, to approve the Phase I allocation of \$500,000 for procurement, as well as, simultaneously approve a projected overtime cost, as presented in the briefing document. In addition, to encourage the Administrator to seek all sources of reimbursement, as they become available, and put forward, in Phase II, \$1.2 Million to allow Emergency Services to procure the necessary PPEs.

Ms. Newton stated she supports us providing for our PPE needs, as well as, providing for overtime, but she is concerned, in that she feels, the Administrator said, as it stands right now, a different approach, in terms of payment, would be better instead of setting aside money we do not currently have.

Mr. Walker stated, as he is seeing it, in person, with head nods from the Administrator and staff, the overtime projection is more a cash flow management outward projection than a reallocation of existing funds. The only reallocation would be the \$500,000. The projected expenses will be phased into the County's cash flow model and not a reallocation of existing funds.

Ms. Newton stated, for clarification, we are allowing the overtime to proceed, and authorizing the Administrator to fund that as he is currently planning.

Ms. Myers stated it also provides the Sheriff's Department with comfort that Council is moving forward with their overtime payments.

Mr. Walker noted Sheriff Lott was in attendance and he is comfortable with the motion.

In Favor: Livingston, Newton, Walker, McBride and Myers

The vote in favor was unanimous.

Mr. Brown stated the reimbursements are up to 75%. In addition, it is important when you are dealing with FEMA that we have appropriate documentation, since that is the way the reimbursements are based.



Mr. Walker suggested reconsidering the agenda to take up the item in which the Sheriff in attendance for.

Sheriff Lott stated the committee had already addressed the main issues, which were overtime and the equipment needs. He noted they are sanitizing the cars, which is an ongoing need; therefore, he appreciated the committee recommending the funds to provide the additional needs. Otherwise, he is here to answer any questions regarding curfews or stay-at-home orders, and what they are seeing thus far from the residents.

Mr. Walker moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to reconsider the agenda to move the “Stay at Home Declaration” to the next item on the agenda.

Ms. Newton moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to add an “Immediate Needs” category to the agenda. For example, rent assistance is a need that has come to her attention from some of the County’s partners.

In Favor: Livingston, Walker, McBride, Myers and Newton

The vote in favor was unanimous.

**Stay at Home Declaration** – Sheriff Lott stated the majority of the residents are abiding by what is already in place. Those that are not abiding are those that were not abiding to begin with. He stated this is a war and the soldiers on the frontline are public safety, particularly the deputies. The citizens are already scared with the virus, so the last thing they need to be afraid of is crime. There are criminals that are trying to take advantage of this situation. There has not been a rash of crimes because of the high visibility. They are putting everybody, from command staff all the way down, on the street.

Mr. Livingston recalled, when this was discussed at the last meeting, the Administrator was asked to consider another component to help flatten the curve, and help from the health perspective. He inquired if Mr. Brown had an opportunity to get any feedback from any of the health professionals.

Mr. Brown responded the only professional he was able to speak with was the Regional Director from DHEC. At the time, he said he had not heard where any hospitals or partners were being overrun with the concerns, and not being able to respond appropriately. He has not received any feedback from any healthcare providers or the Health Department.

Mr. Livingston stated Council received the guidance from the Attorney General regarding this item.

Ms. Newton inquired if the funding approved earlier in the meeting will cover the additional cleaning protocols for the Sheriff’s Department vehicles and offices, or will they need to come back for additional funding.

Sheriff Lott believes it is being adequately covered, at this point.

Ms. McBride inquired if the Sheriff will be able to obtain the appropriate/adequate PPEs.

Sheriff Lott stated they have a vendor they deal with directly that has assured them they will be able to supply their needs.

Mr. Manning stated, as it relates to “shelter in place” issues, in terms of law enforcement, it is not an issue because the Sheriff has it under control. The other issue about public health, and spread, Richland County, the Health Department, and those health officials we have reached out to, has basically said there is none of that here for us to give attention to.

Mr. Brown stated, based on his conversations with the Midlands Regional Director, Scott Thorpe, he did not have any additional recommendations, other to continue to follow the CDC guidelines.

Mr. Livingston stated he is concerned about us flattening the curve. One of the things he hoped would be enforced is the preventing the crowds. He inquired if the Sheriff Department is enforcing that directive.

Sheriff Lott responded in the affirmative. He stated the community is also self-policing by contacting the Sheriff's Department if they feel uncomfortable with. There were approximately 7 bars that tried to open, and had to be closed.

Mr. Livingston stated some of the large manufacturing companies are still forcing their employees to work, and do not have any protocol in place for protecting those employees. We need to determine a way to deal with this issue, if we are going to flatten the curve.

Mr. Manning stated it was shocking to him that we are having a Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee meeting, and talking about is issue, but do not have a public health official as a part of this conversation.

Ms. Myers requested staff to have someone qualified to answer Council's questions available at the Special Called Meeting on March 31<sup>st</sup>. She has read the Attorney General's opinion and she does not believe we need to vote to impose a stay-at-home order, but she agrees with Mr. Manning that needs to be backed by science, not just law enforcement.

Ms. Newton stated the intent behind the stay-at-home declaration is one of the things we can do to flatten the curve. She would encourage staff to think about what we can do as a County to continue to get the word out about the guidelines. While she hears everyone talking about adherence to the recommendations, she is receiving reports about places where there are large gatherings of people. The more people we have ignoring these recommendations the longer we limp along, as opposed to having a concentrated effort for a short amount of time.

Mr. Walker expressed his concern about taking this item to Council without a recommendation. He would suggest holding it in committee and review it at each committee meeting. If there comes a time where our curve needs to be flatten, we can revisit it.

Ms. McBride stated her concern is that we have other Council members that have questions, and they want to know what is going on. We need to update them on the committee's discussions, and what we are planning on doing. She also believes we need to have the appropriate consultants come in, particularly from the Health Department.

Mr. Farrar stated, regarding the stay-at-home order, the first thing is what Council's intent is? For example, if you want to take an approach where there is encouragement, you provide information and resources, and buoy public support, you could take that approach. Or you could do as the City of Columbia has done, and pass an ordinance, which criminalized people's movement, if they are not moving in a way the City thinks they should. The philosophical level discuss is, do you want to criminalize a public healthcare problem? The second thing is, if you want to pass an ordinance, then you have to determine if it appropriate to restrict someone's freedom of movement. The way the ordinances are structures, if you take a bike ride on a nature trail you are potentially subject to a citation and prosecution criminally. Your status is different as a US citizen than other countries. This is not a totalitarian government. What you are seeing right now is the intersection of where liberty and security meet. We are seeing a very hard pendulum swing with people saying they want to be safe and secure; therefore, they are willing to accept significant restrictions on our liberty. As Mr. Manning has pointed out, you

have to hear from the public health officials to determine if there is a health need to drive this. Secondly, you look at what the Sheriff is saying about there not being a demand signal for such an ordinance because they have things under control. Thirdly, is there a practical need, apart from the law enforcement need? In addition, there are the legal considerations. In our Constitution there are four (4) different sections in Article I that deal with this sort of thing. The first thing is, when you order someone to stay at home that is martial law. The Constitution says only the General Assembly can impose martial law. The power to suspend laws also only residing the General Assembly. Thirdly, there is something in the US and State Constitution known as the Privileges and Immunities Clause, which basically means if you are driving your car through South Carolina to North Carolina, you cannot be stopped at the North Carolina border and not allowed into the State. You have privileges and immunities to move about freely in this country. Fourthly, you have the right to peaceably assemble. These are constitution guarantees, so he was supposed when he saw the AG's opinion focusing solely on the Governor's powers. These are fundamental constitutional issues, which reside with the Legislature. You can achieve the same thing by a proclamation that lists all the good things you are doing, rather than criminalizing.

Ms. Myers stated there is a lot space between where Mr. Manning is and declaring martial law, as Mr. Farrar has stated. We do have a health emergency. There are very well defined constitutional "get out of jail free cards" for counties and states, when they are looking at that. She stated we are not close to that without a health professional. What she believes Mr. Manning, and the committee, is asking for is not a declaration of martial law, but a request that we get a health official to attend the March 31<sup>st</sup> Council meeting. Maybe we change the agenda item, so it does not alarm the public and make everybody start calling to inquire if we are going to have a stay-at-home ordinance. To simply have a "Health Update", and if it tells us that is where we need to go, we can reconsider the agenda and make it an action item.

Mr. Livingston stated he thinks this item needs to be discussed by full Council, and it does not necessarily need to go on the agenda as a "stay-at-home declaration". It needs to be something very general, and not anything particular about what action we are going to take to resolve that.

Ms. McBride stated we need to provide full Council with some information.

Sheriff Lott requested, when the opportunity arises, Council publicly let the citizens know that you support public safety, and that you have taken some of these actions today. He believes the public/citizens need to know that. We do not want them to be scared. They are scared enough already, but we do not want them to be scared of crime. The fact Council is taking some action to provide additional funds, and fully support public safety will go a long way with relieving some of their fears.

5. **Food Services** – Mr. Brown stated staff recommends allocating \$500,000 for this purpose. Specifically, \$250,000 to be set aside to aid seniors, and \$250,000 of which will be set aside to aid low-to-moderate income individuals exhibiting sufficient needs. Staff also recommends participating an appropriately vetted community partner to administer similar programs, related to food services.

Mr. Walker inquired if staff has a plan for which partners will be utilized, and how much each partner gets, or is the committee being requested to approve the blanket amount, and the funds will be disbursed, as needed.

Mr. Brown stated staff wanted to provide the allocated resources. There is not a specific group that has been identified for Council to consider.

Mr. Livingston inquired if Mr. Brown will be able to provide guidance at the March 31<sup>st</sup> Council meeting, regarding potential groups to be utilized to provide food services.

Ms. Powell stated the briefing document suggests that we do a standard vetting process for all partners we would engage for COVID-19 response, and it is staff's intention to have that process worked out prior to the Council meeting.

Mr. Walker moved, seconded by Mr. Livingston, to approve the \$500,000 allocation, as recommended by staff.

Ms. Newton stated she supports the County addressing food and security, which is a huge problem. As she looks at the document, and the funding mechanisms that have been recommended, her only concern is that we might be addressing food and security to the exclusion of some of the other immediate needs that people are having. In the best of times, people have problems with rent assistance, and is one of the areas she keeps hearing about from the people on the ground is a problem. She is not trying to take away from food services, but she wants to ensure as we look at the amount of funds we have available, we take into account that food and security is not the only immediate need people are facing.

Ms. Powell responded that staff set aside \$250,000 for immediate needs that were not yet aware of, or if we needed to adjust any amount to cover additional funding. She stated we could allocate the funding however the body sees fit.

Ms. McBride stated she wanted to support Ms. Newton's comments, and ensure that when we come to the process of allocation that we include small, community-based organizations, which are directly on ground working with those people in need. We need a process that is easy to use to ensure that we address those citizens in need. She inquired if the \$250,000 was included in the \$500,000 allocation.

Mr. Livingston responded in the affirmative.

Ms. Newton inquired if Ms. McBride's question was answered, and, if not, she requested that the question be restated.

Ms. McBride stated she did not know if the \$500,000 for food services include the \$250,000 set aside for other immediate needs, or is the allocation \$750,000.

Ms. Powell responded the \$250,000, which she mentioned was set aside, the total would be \$750,000. The breakdown would be \$250,000 – Senior needs; \$250,000 – Low-to-Moderate Income Individuals, and an additional \$250,000 for other immediate needs.

Ms. McBride requested the motion be restated.

Mr. Livingston stated the motion was to allocate \$500,000 for food services, for Senior Resources and Low-to-Moderate Income Individuals. The additional \$250,000 was set aside and is not being allocated specifically for anything.

Ms. Newton stated it does not sound like the \$250,000 is included in this motion, but from her perspective, since we added the additional agenda item "Other Immediate Needs" it could be addressed there.

Ms. McBride responded, to save time, we could amend the motion, and include the \$250,000.

Ms. Myers stated she would second such a motion.

Ms. McBride stated that would be the \$250,000 for other emergency needs.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, we are not specifying what those emergency needs, but we are just incorporating those funds into the motion.

Ms. Myers stated, she believes, Ms. Powell suggested they are developing a plan for those \$250,000, and will bring it back.

Ms. Newton stated, from her perspective, it was clearer when it was just food services because the “Other Immediate Needs” is broad, and could potentially be handled differently. As we look at those other immediate needs, there are a lot of non-profits that are expanding their services, who are incurring increased costs to meet those needs. Whether it is rent assistance, or other services, she would hope our plan provided a way to address those needs.

Ms. Roberts inquired if we are proceeding with Mr. Walker’s original motion.

Mr. Livingston stated the motion before us is to approve the \$250,000 for Senior Resources, \$250,000 for LMI Individuals, and approve the additional \$250,000, but not allocate it specifically for anything.

Mr. Walker stated, as the maker of the motion that is not the motion on the table. His motion is to approve the \$500,000.

Ms. McBride inquired if there is an item on the agenda that will address the other \$250,000 for other emergency needs.

Ms. Newton responded in the affirmative.

Ms. McBride withdrew her motion.

In Favor: Livingston, Newton, Walker, McBride and Myers

The vote in favor was unanimous.

6. **Health Initiatives** – Mr. Brown stated staff does not have a funding recommendation related to this matter. For your information, through our EMS Department, we are coordinating with other healthcare providers to provide them with PPEs, as they have needs.

Ms. Myers stated, in the briefing documents, there is a statement from the Eau Claire Medical Cooperative, which speaks to an emergency COVID-19 need. She inquired if staff is recommending that we not address those needs.

Mr. Livingston stated that is listed under “Requests/Issues” as Item b. Health Cooperatives.

Ms. Newton stated, she understands how the Eau Claire Health Cooperative is a health cooperative, but she was curious if the free medical clinic would also be included under Item 7(b).

Mr. Livingston stated we could include other initiatives, under that one, if we wish.

Ms. McBride inquired how it is determined who received the PPEs, and will we use the same process in the future.

Mr. Byrd stated there is a process how the strategic stockpile was distributed that was based off of requests we received prior to the arrival of the stockpile. A percentage of those requests was assigned to the distribution. Any agency/entity that needs, or has a concern about, PPEs can contact us to get on the list. The list is forwarded to the State Emergency Management Division, and ultimately to DHEC, who is handling distribution of PPEs.

Ms. McBride stated, for clarification, we did not make the decision.

Mr. Byrd stated we had to take the amount of supplies we received from the first distribution, and decide to break that up. We had more agencies, and requests, than we received from the Strategic National Stockpile. He stated it was a concern for every county in the State. The equipment was originally designated for nursing homes, and was redistributed at the local level.

Ms. McBride inquired if we are in the process of developing a process.

Mr. Byrd responded we have the process in place. The second distribution was just received, and we are going to determine where those supplies go.

Ms. Newton stated, for clarification, in terms of supplies, we are more of a clearinghouse where everyone makes their requests, we forward them along, and then we distribute the supplies.

Mr. Byrd responded that is partially correct. In the first distribution, we did distribute it. As the State starts to streamline the entire process, we are encouraging them to “drop ship” the big bulk items directly to the entities. We at the County may very well become a distribution site. We do not want that because we think there is a better way to do it, but the State may tell us we have to.

Ms. Newton stated, she understands, everyone is submitting their requests, which we are passing on, and we are then saying these are these are all of the requests we have seen. She inquired if we are vetting, which groups gets what supplies, or is the State making that determination.

Mr. Byrd stated when we receive a request we are putting it in the Palmetto State Tracking System, and we are sending to the State of South Carolina, through the Emergency Management Division, and DHEC, the exact amount they are requesting. We are not altering that, at all. The full amount goes up to the State. In the first shipment, we had to break up the distribution from the random shipment of expired bulk supplies the State sent every county.

**Immediate Needs** – Ms. Newton stated, looking at this list, she has had conversations with several non-profits, including the United Way, which has many partner agencies, and is involved all across the County. She knows they are running into issues related to rental assistance, healthcare, etc. A lot of the non-profits, across the community, are experiencing dramatically increased costs, as they deal with COVID-19. For her, it was not so much to say, lets allocate this specific amount toward a specific need, but rather to recognize there is a larger pot of expenses that we could potentially facilitate. Whether we use the standard vetting process the County has referred to, in their document, or we do something like asking the United Way to administer those funds using our vetting process. As people are affected by COVID-19, there are so many needs that are being exacerbated by that.

Ms. Myers suggested we allow staff to recommend a plan, and come back to us, rather than honing in on any one agency.

Ms. McBride stated she agrees with Ms. Myers, and that staff already understands her concerns.

Ms. Newton stated she also agrees with Ms. Myers suggestion.

7. **Requests/Issues:**

a. **Senior Resources** – This was addressed under “Food Services”

b. **Health Cooperatives** – Mr. Livingston stated the forwarded a request from the health cooperative in regard to them not being able to meet the needs and needing assistance from the County.

Ms. McBride inquired if this is the Cooperative Ministries.

Mr. Livingston stated this is Eau Claire Health Cooperatives and Dr. Stuart Hamilton, which primarily serves the low-to-moderate income individuals. They are requesting assistance because of the overflow, and what they are dealing with, at this time.

Ms. Newton stated, as she looks at the funds that staff proposed were available, we have already allocated a certain amount of funds. She inquired what portion of the funds for Phase I are still available. She stated we have this \$250,000, which we discussed for other immediate needs that we

might be able to have staff address and provide recommendations regarding these requests, and others.

Ms. McBride inquired if Mr. Livingston knows the amount that is being requested.

Mr. Livingston stated he does not recall the amount in the letter, but he knows they referred to the indigent funds we receive from PRISMA. In the past, when talking with Mr. Hayes, those funds are allocated for other sources, so the probability of using those funds is not good. He requested the Administrator to verify with Mr. Hayes if any of those indigent funds we receive from PRISMA are available and how they are being utilized.

Ms. McBride inquired, for clarification, if we receive indigent from PRISMA, or do we allocate funds to them.

Mr. Livingston stated, as a part of the agreement, PRISMA sets aside a certain amount of funds for indigent care. His suggestion would be to wait on a response from Mr. Hayes and the County Attorney about the indigent funds.

Mr. Brown stated, in response to Ms. Newton's question, the previous motions total \$1.5M. For clarity's sake that was for food and security, the PPEs and projected overtime, and the business information. He requested clarification on what the committee has recommended, as it relates to Senior Resources.

Mr. Livingston responded, his understanding is, the committee has appropriated \$250,000 to Senior Resources to help feed seniors.

Mr. Walker stated, for clarification, we are asking staff to come back to us with a recommendation on both deployment and amount.

Mr. Livingston responded in the affirmative.

- c. **United Way** – Mr. Livingston stated we were looking at the United Way as a partnership/collaboration.

Ms. Newton stated her understanding is the United Way did not make a specific ask to us, but they are on the ground communicating with their partner agencies, and would be happy to propose something, or provide additional information to help inform Council. In addition, our staff could recommend using them as an administrative agency.

Mr. Livingston inquired if staff has considered the United Way, in terms of a particular role, in this process.

Mr. Brown stated they are a part of our consideration as an administrator.

Ms. Myers requested that we allow staff to bring back whatever suggestions they have the United Way, and other agencies, at the same time, rather than trying to hash it out now.

Mr. Livingston stated it would nice for them to simply say here is what we would propose, in terms of a collaborative effort, and let staff vet it.

Ms. Myers stated she wants to be sure that all other agencies are given that same opportunity, as well.

- d. **Hospitality Taxes** – Mr. Brown stated, in speaking with Legal, one of things we are able to do is to extend the time for remittance of Hospitality Tax to the County until June 20<sup>th</sup>. We do not have the ability to waive or suspend, but we certainly could extend the remittance time, and that would be staff's recommendation.

Ms. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. McBride, to suspend the collection of Hospitality Tax and extend the remittance to June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Livingston stated, for clarification, the motion is to support staff's recommendation.

Ms. Myers responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Brown stated, according to the document provided by Legal, we cannot suspend or waive the collection of the tax, but we can extend the time which is required for it to be remitted.

Ms. Newton stated the briefing document says to extend the remittance to June 20<sup>th</sup>, as opposed to the last day of June. She inquired if there is a technical reason for that. She wanted to be sure our motion was precise and within what was allowable.

Mr. Walker stated hospitality taxes are due on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. For example, March hospitality taxes will be due April 20<sup>th</sup>, and so on, and so forth. He inquired, for clarification, if we are extending March's hospitality tax payment to June 20<sup>th</sup>, April's to July 20<sup>th</sup>, or will March, April and May's hospitality taxes be due on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Staff acknowledges that March, April and May's hospitality taxes would be due on June 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Walker stated you have to be considerate that we are going to be potentially coming out of the worst retail sales cycle, in our lifetime, and asking businesses to pay a compounded amount on one day. While he agrees with what we are doing, on the backside the committee needs to be aware there is going to be follow-up conversation about the reality of the application of this.

Ms. Newton stated, based on the intent of this motion, and what Mr. Walker is prophesying, does he have an alternate suggestion, or is that something that has to be discussed in the weeds later.

Mr. Walker stated he does not have an alternate suggestion. What he thinks is going to happen is we are going to need to task our Legal Department with creating a solution, as opposed to telling us what we cannot do.

Mr. Livingston inquired if it is better to do it, or not to do it.

Mr. Walker stated there is definitely a needed tool for the County, and the economy, right now. He wanted it to be clear the cost of the cure, as implemented, could potentially be detrimental on the backside; therefore, there is going to be a follow-up conversation about how to help on the backside of this thing.

Ms. Myers believes it will come back to Council for anyone that faces an enforcement, so we will be able to address it.

Mr. Farrar stated the Hospitality Tax is permissive. You have an ordinance it. You do not have to have an H-Tax, at all. You can suspend the tax, delay the collection of the tax, etc. because it is permissive. What you do have to do is change it by ordinance. You would have to give it three readings and public hearing. When you go forward with it, if you want to give First Reading to the motion, you invoke the pending the ordinance doctrine, and state this is road we are heading down for this particular period. You should not be hamstrung by what you cannot do.

Mr. Manning stated, as he understands the AG's opinion about stay-in-place, we cannot do something that the Governor has not done. Is that true about the hospitality tax? If the Governor has not done anything about suspending it statewide, does that mean we do not have authority to do it countywide? Secondly, are the businesses still having to pay the State sales taxes, and, if so, it seems not paying one, and holding off and paying it later, then he is not sure the burden of removing one and having them all pile up would be a great savings to them in time.



Mr. Farrar stated what you got is two different things. In this situation, with the hospitality tax, and the expressed statutory authorization that a local governing body “may” impose a local hospitality tax, it is talking about not exceeding 2%, and then it gets into a formula for the size of your county. It is an option. You can opt in for this tax, but you can just as easily opt out. The other issue is a fundamental constitutional issue of who has the authority to restrict movement within a geographical territory of a government.

In Favor: Livingston, Myers, McBride and Newton

Abstain: Walker

The vote in favor was unanimous, with Mr. Walker abstaining, as he is in this industry, and, therefore, could potentially benefit from this motion.

- e. **Garbage Service Contract** – Mr. Brown stated we had feedback from Council members and citizens. They went back to the contractor, who originally pushed the information out to the County, and worked with other surrounding contractors to come to a new agreement to put all the services back on, with the exception of bulk item pick up. Drop off of bulk items is available and accessible to the public.

Ms. Myers inquired if we are reducing their payment under the contract since they are reducing the service.

Mr. Brown stated they have not changed any terms of the agreement. They did talk to them about looking at other options.

Mr. Livingston stated to keep in mind there has been a significant increase in the household waste on behalf of the companies. They are having to expend more because they are having to pick up a lot more household waste and recyclable than in the past.

Ms. Myers noted there have been times in the past where they had less to pick up, but the prices remained the same. She is not trying to be unfair, but to stretch the tax dollars as far as they will go because we know we are about to hit some lean times.

Ms. Newton stated, separately from this, her request would be, as we are having additional vendors that may want to change services with us, as we all deal with COVID-19, this was a case where it seemed before the conversation with the vendor happened, it was announced to our constituents. If we could not have it flow in that way, in the future. In fact, some of her constituents knew before she did. In addition, she understands why services have to be changed, but she is seeing people who are either not aware of the no bulk pick up, or are disregarding bulk pick up. She stated we may have to revisit this issue, as we look at blight in the communities.

- f. **State & Federal Legislative Assistance** – Mr. Brown stated we discussed reaching out to our current contracted group to see what they could do to forward any concerns Council had to the State and Federal level. He has not been in contact with anyone, at this time, so he does not have a specific update. We are aware this needs to be done, so Council can have some opportunity to have their legislative needs addressed.

Ms. Myers stated that was partially her request, and it was different from that. As pointed out this morning, there are opportunities for the County to benefit from legislation. She was not looking to have someone to take concerns to the representatives. She was looking to have a staff person who could immediately digest this information, as it is coming out, and make recommendations to Council where there are opportunities for the County to have costs reimbursed, take advantage of Federal offers, leverage Federal funds to get things done, or where there is some creative uses of Federal funds that someone experienced in this area can help us to see, based on fast moving legislation.

Mr. Livingston stated that is why he raised the question about utilizing a group like TetraTech to do the vetting for us. We generated a lot of funding, and revenue, from their assistance during the flood. His concern was trying to figure out somebody to simply look at it and say here is something you need to go after.

Mr. Brown stated we have someone on staff, but they also have put aside funding, as mentioned earlier, to procure a consultant or services, to assist us.

Ms. Myers stated that allocation sounded like you were asking for someone to help administer the current funds we have in house, which is why she said she did not agree with \$250,000 to administer what is currently in-house funds. She requested the Administrator to clarify what he is asking for.

Mr. Brown stated it is to provide us with assistance that will allow us to capture some of these programs that members of our staff are not aware of. It would also allow us to potentially have somebody we could procure carry out some of those things. For example, TetraTech provides us with some information, but they also did some work for us. Those opportunities would exist within those funding sources. The money, and the flexibility, to use whichever way we need it. Whether it is them bringing us information, which we can then execute, or if we are procuring somebody's services to do those things for us.

Ms. Myers stated the Administrator has the authority to spend up to \$100,000 without coming back before the body. In this context, she believes this would be information the body would want to have before the contract was let, so we would know what is going on. She does not know that extending it up to a \$250,000 is necessarily because it is not going to be something that is urgent, but she agrees we should be looking for those people to help.

Mr. Brown stated he was not looking for additional authority or expenditure of that amount. That was an amount to set aside in case we have to get multiple individuals and/or parties to assist in those areas.

Mr. Manning stated at the last Coronavirus Ad Hoc Committee meeting this issue was discussed, and as he recalls the answer was that TetraTech was still under contract. Staff was going to reach out to them to determine if this was a service they could provide. It would seem to him that we would have had that information, and been able to move. He suggested we move on that quickly because when we had the flood we were the only people looking to contract a company that does this. If there are companies that do this, he is afraid between when we had this conversation earlier in the week, and today, they may be booked up by people that followed up. He does not think this is something that we can let any time get by on us.

Ms. Powell responded that staff has made initial contact with TetraTech. We have not had a full response from them because there are questions, in terms of what the County would actually be asking them to administer or do. Staff needed greater clarification from this body to go back with that information to them, but staff has had initial conversations.

Mr. Manning inquired if they do this kind of work.

Ms. Powell stated they do disaster recovery work. The question is what are we specifically asking for in response to the pandemic, and if that fits into the type of work that TetraTech does.

Ms. Myers suggested that staff needs to help us narrow this, but what she thinks what we are looking for is to establish something like the Blue Ribbon Ad Hoc Committee that handled the flood for the COVID-19 pandemic, and to seek all available Federal resources to assist the County recover from what is going to be a worldwide disaster.

Ms. McBride stated there are all kind of Federal resources coming out, and we need to have somebody on hand who understands Federal guidelines, how to apply for these funds, and to move

forward as quickly as possible. In terms of implementing the funds that is a different area, but we need to start looking at the funding that is available.

Mr. Manning stated that is what TetraTech did after the flood. They knew how to read the FEMA and the Federal regulations, how to figure out what we were eligible for, and what we needed to do to get it.

Ms. McBride stated she thinks we should look at TetraTech, but to also look at others as a backup. Mr. Manning stated the question was do companies like TetraTech handle pandemics or do they only do hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. Then, we could have moved forward on to determine who wants to provide that service to Richland County.

Ms. Myers requested that all of the briefing documents be provided to full Council, so everyone is prepared for the Special Called meeting. She believes we should handle the pandemic the same way as the flood with a committee modeled after the Blue Ribbon Ad Hoc Committee.

Ms. Powell responded that she will forward the document to full Council. Additionally, staff will be leading in the formation of the recommendation, but their recommendation would be to keep a simple program as we did with the flood disaster recovery program.

Ms. Myers stated the document she ultimately got was excellent, and if we had that document from the beginning we might have just approved those recommendations, as outlined in the document. She urged staff, in the future, to send out your work product.

Ms. Powell apologized for not having it out earlier, but she only completed the documentation this morning.

Ms. McBride stated whatever funding is available we need to know as soon as possible, and what the County will be doing to get these funds.

Ms. Newton noted there are several places where we are trying to provide remedies to our citizens where we need feedback/answers from different parts of State government. She wants to ensure that all of those things are being recorded and we are using whatever the appropriate channels are to follow-up. For example, there is a place where we are looking at how we can alleviate credit card fees that we are charging, and we need information, permission, or guidance from the Treasurer's Office. She just wants to ensure all of those issues are being tracked, Council is made aware, and the issues are being elevated in the appropriate ways. There are some remedies that we could be making available to the constituents if we got the okay from the State.

Mr. Brown stated that is one of the items listed on our recommendations. According to our recent communications the language we put in the document was specific to the purpose. It says, "absorb the costs of convenience and processing fees associated with online payments." Within the document, one of the things, in talking with the Treasurer, he was going to attempt to do was to get the a waiver of electronic checks, but in terms of the other convenience fees associated with the major credit card companies, those charges are still coming. The County could absorb those costs right now. The Treasurer estimates those costs were \$150,000 prior to the pandemic. With there being more of a push from the County to have citizens to pay online, we would anticipate that number would increase. Therefore, the absorption would be another funding source the County would be picking up, in terms of expenditures not accounted for.

Ms. Newton stated her request is, when there are issues that we are trying to elevate to State bodies, which would allow us to provide relief to the citizens that those issues tracked, make Council aware and elevate those.

Ms. Myers stated we are pushing people to online platforms, and essentially closing the doors to people coming in. She stated we need to find a way to absorb this, or find a legal avenue here because

there may be someone comes back and says, “You forced me to spend this money that I otherwise would not have spent had I been able to come in.” We probably need to push something out so that people know we are invoking some sort of emergency procedure because of the pandemic, so that is in writing. She requested the Legal Department to watch how we word our recommendations for citizens to use these online platforms, until we can get these fees waived.

Mr. Brown inquired, for clarification, if we are going to be absorbing the fees. Is that something we are taking to Council for them to consider? As Ms. Myers is saying, fees are being waived at other places. He wants to make sure the committee is aware of what that means, and whether or not we are going to actually do that, so we can begin to financially account for that.

Mr. Livingston stated it is something we could put on our Council agenda.

Ms. Newton stated she does not know if we identified a potential funding source to account for the absorption of these fees. If that is a recommendation that is going to go to Council, everyone will appreciate a potential funding source being mentioned.

Mr. Manning requested that meeting invites and information be sent to full Council.

8. **Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:25 PM.