



Luzerne County Council
March 19, 2020
Virtual Meeting
Minutes
March 19, 2020
Special Voting Session

Call to Order

The Luzerne County Council convened for a Special Voting Session via Virtual Attendance on March 19, 2020 at 12:00 NOON. The meeting was called to order by Council Chair Tim McGinley.

Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Ms. Saidman suggested everyone pray for the Corona Virus to be over.

Statement by Mr. McGinley

During this “State of Emergency”, it is important that all branches of government work together to meet the needs of our citizens. The services that the County Government provides to our residents are very critical to their lives.

Hopefully, each individual will be able to practice patience and forgiveness as we work through the challenges that everyone is facing. Without a doubt, the charter authors and many others did not consider this type of “pandemic” emergency.

I would like to thank all the county employees who have been working under some very stressful conditions. They have stepped up to meet the challenges of this emergency.

Please know that the county residents are very appreciative of your efforts.

First, I need to acknowledge that in light of the recent COVID crisis and in strict compliance with advisories issued by the World Health Organization, Center for Disease Control, and the Emergency Declarations issued by Federal, State, and Local Government Authorities, Luzerne County Council is, today, conducting this special meeting of Luzerne County Council entirely through the use of video/teleconference technologies. As advertised, due to the unique circumstances of this crisis, in-person attendance at this meeting by the public is not permitted. That being said, County Council recognizes the legal, ethical, and moral need for meaningful public participation in the official actions of those who govern them. In that regard, and with the goal of substantial compliance with Pennsylvania’s Sunshine Act and the recently issued guidance of the Pennsylvania Office of Open Records, County Council’s goal is to allow the greatest degree of public participation in the meeting without creating the potentially dangerous situation of having Council, the County Manager, County staff and members of the public attend the meeting in-person.

Those members of the public wishing to participate can visit the County's website at www.luzernecounty.org for information on how to participate via live chat and/or email. We intend to make the chat and emails part of the record of this meeting. Each member of Council will have access to and review the chats and emails submitted by the public prior to vote on agenda items. I will also set a period of time after all Council business concludes for members of the public to submit general comments via the same method.

Finally, it goes without saying that this platform of conducting a public meeting is our unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis. There will be hiccups. We are requesting that you understand the magnitude of what we are trying to accomplish today and be patient. Be assured that this is not the final incarnation of this process but an important first step and upon completion of this virtual meeting we, as a team, will evaluate what worked and what did not work and improve on the process where possible.

The clerk, Sharon Lawrence, will now take a roll call of members. When your name is called by the clerk, please acknowledge that you are present and have access to the public chat and emails sent to council by members of the public.

Roll Call

Present

Walter L. Griffith, Jr.

Harry Haas

Linda McClosky Houck

Lee Ann McDermott

Tim McGinley

Chris Perry

Kendra M. Radle

Sheila Saidman, Esq.

Robert Schnee

Stephen J. Urban

Matthew Vough

Also Present

C. David Pedri, Esq., County Manager

Romilda P. Crocamo, Esq., Chief County Solicitor

Vito DeLuca, Esq.

Sharon Lawrence, Clerk of Council

Adoption of Special Voting Session Agenda

Motion to Adopt Agenda by: Ms. Saidman

Second: Ms. Radle

Vote:

Eleven (11) Ayes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

The Special Voting Session Agenda is Adopted

Virtual Public Comment on Voting Session Agenda Items

None

1. Motion to suspend Council By-Laws regarding physical attendance at Meeting (Houck)

Motion by: Ms. Houck

Second: Mr. Griffith

Vote:

Eleven (11) Ayes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

2. Motion to suspend Council Meeting Schedule for a period of thirty (30) days

Motion by: Ms. Saidman

Second: Mr. Stephen J. Urban

Vote:

Eleven (11) Ayes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

3. Motion to introduce Ordinance Supporting Emergency Declaration of the County Manager for the County of Luzerne, Pennsylvania

Motion by: Mr. Haas

Second: Ms. McDermott

Roll Call Vote:

Eleven (11) Yes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

Ordinance is Introduced

4. Motion to adopt Ordinance Supporting Emergency Declaration of the County Manager for the County of Luzerne, Pennsylvania

Motion by: Mr. Perry

Second: Ms. McDermott

Roll Call Vote:

Eleven (11) Yes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

Ordinance is Adopted

5. Motion to introduce Ordinance Allowing a Grace Period for the Rebate Phase for 2020 Luzerne County Real Estate Taxes

Motion by: Ms. Radle

Second: Ms. Houck

After discussion, Ms. Radle withdrew her motion and Ms. Houck withdrew her second.

NEW Motion to remove Agenda Items 5 & 6, Motions to Introduce and Adopt Ordinance Allowing a Grace Period for the Rebate Phase for 2020 Luzerne County Real Estate Taxes

Motion by: Mr. Griffith

Second: Ms. Houck

Vote:

Eleven (11) Ayes – Unanimous

Motion Passed (11-0)

Items 5 and 6 are removed from the Agenda

REMOVED ITEMS

5. Motion to introduce Ordinance Allowing a Grace Period for the Rebate Phase for 2020 Luzerne County Real Estate Taxes

6. Motion to adopt Ordinance Allowing a Grace Period for the Rebate Phase for 2020 Luzerne County Real Estate Taxes

Virtual Public Comment:

EMAILS RECEIVED:

EMAIL Please make the public aware that the existing drugs Chloroquine and the HIV suppressing combination lopinavir/ritonavir are reportedly showing promising results in human tests which made the Covid-19 virus disappear in infected patients. News story appeared on TV a few nights ago and the Daily Mail in Australia's articles by Brittany Chain and Sam Blanchard published March 16 discuss this in detail. University of Queensland in Brisbane infectious disease experts say two existing medications have managed to wipe out Covid-19 infections. To me this is fabulous news, but I hear nothing on daily news broadcasts nor newspapers. Have the powers that be not heard of this? We need some hope in this pandemic. Please help.
Rosalie Burtis, Pittston, PA

EMAIL Please organize food pantries and household needs strategically located in order to make sure there is an adequate food supply for our homebound seniors and disabled to call in requests for food. Volunteers can then bring it to them.

Regards,

Hughie Voso from Hazle Township

EMAIL Can you bring up about release of prisoners with low records and women who are pregnant
Stephen Kerish

EMAIL Rather than change the rebate date, why not waive on line fees for payment? Allow residents to pay, for free, online, instead of physically entering Courthouse for payment.
C Liskowski

Motion to Adjourn: Mr. Schnee

Second: Ms. Saidman

Vote:

Eleven (11) Ayes – Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at 12:44PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Sharon Lawrence

Clerk of Council

* Audio of this meeting can be found in its entirety on the County Council webpage <http://www.luzernecounty.org/county/luzerne-county-council> or by contacting the Office of the Clerk of Council at (570) 825-1634 or via email to sharon.lawrence@luzernecounty.org