

MINUTES OF A **SPECIAL MEETING** OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, HELD IN THE CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 100 NORTH U.S. #1, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, AT 2:00 P.M. ON TUESDAY, **APRIL 28, 2020**.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Hudson called the April 28, 2020 Special Meeting of the City Commission to order at 2:00 PM.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**3. ROLL CALL**

Present: Mayor Linda Hudson; Commissioner Rufus Alexander; Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson; Commissioner Thomas Perona

Absent: Commissioner Reginald Sessions

Staff Present: City Clerk Linda Cox  
City Manager Nicholas Mimms  
City Attorney Peter Sweeney

Commissioner Sessions arrived at 2:02 PM.

**4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Any person who wishes to comment on any subject may be heard at this time. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes or less, as directed by the Mayor, as this section of the Agenda is limited to fifteen minutes. The City Commission will not be able to take any official actions under Comments from the Public. Speakers will address the Mayor, Commissioners, and the Public with respect. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

Rick Reed  
George Collins  
Barbara Chapman - received in advance and read by City Clerk  
Gus Gutierrez - received in advance and read by City Clerk

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Discussion and identification of funding to provide relief and assistance to city residents and businesses as a result of COVID-19.

As a direct follow up to the City Commission meeting on April 20, 2020, City Manager, Nick Mimms, discussed the identification of funding to provide relief and assistance to city residents and businesses. The City of Fort Pierce is deeply concerned for all residents and businesses regarding the effects of this pandemic. In response, the city has developed a comprehensive strategy and plan utilizing funds that were distributed to the City of Fort Pierce from the Federal Government and from the State of Florida. This will have no effect on the City of Fort Pierce's General Fund.

The plan overview includes helping residents by supporting community-based efforts through testing, food resources; rental or mortgage assistance; and emergency household assistance. To help businesses, the plan includes assistance from the Small Business Emergency Relief Grant and the Small Business CARES Act Relief Grant. Funding sources for our community aid will come from The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act); The State Housing Initiative Partnership Grant (SHIP); Community Development Block Grant (CDGB), and the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency (FPRA).

Regarding food and pantry resources, the City of Fort Pierce has the following community partners: Treasure Coast Food Bank; United Against Poverty; Council on Aging; Mustard Seed Ministries; Graceway Village; and City of Fort Pierce Boys & Girls Club Five-Week Food Distribution Initiative. Funds for food resources will come from FPRA and the CARES Act.

City of Fort Pierce will partner with Dynix Diagnostix for COVID-19 Testing. This is a Fort Pierce based laboratory that is FDA approved. Dynix will be able to test approximately three percent of the population in five days with 24-hour turnaround times. They will also provide antibody testing. Dynix will handle medical staffing, collection, medical supplies, and getting the results directly to the patient as well as the required reporting to the Department of Health.

Alleghany Franciscan Ministries, the Department of Health, Medical Reserve Corps, and the Indian River State College Medical Assisting Program have also expressed interest in partnering with Dynix Diagnostix and the City of Fort Pierce for this endeavor.

Residents will be given the opportunity to apply for a mortgage or rental assistance grant. This grant will be a one-time payment equal to a maximum of two months' rent or mortgage not to exceed \$3,000. Temporary mortgage and/or rental assistance is designed to help avoid displacement due to loss of income as a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Applicants must be able to evidence loss of income directly due to COVID-19. Funding for this program will come from the SHIP Grant. To be eligible for this assistance, the applicant must reside within the city limits, must apply for unemployment benefits, must document the loss of income, reduction in hours or unemployment as a result of COVID-19, must not have received any other financial assistance for mortgage or rent for the time frame that assistance is requested, and must meet gross annual incomes not exceeding 80% of Area Median Income (AMI) limits established for the jurisdiction of St. Lucie County.

Additionally, residents can apply for Emergency Interim Household Assistance. Eligible households must need emergency assistance during safer at home restrictions. This funding will assist with the prevention or elimination of conditions which are detrimental to family and safety welfare. Requests will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis. This would be a one-time grant not to exceed \$750.00 per household. To qualify, residents must reside within the city limits of the City of Fort Pierce; meet gross annual incomes not exceeding 80% of AMI limits established for the jurisdiction of St. Lucie County, and demonstrate emergency needs due to quarantine and social distancing requirements.

Small Business Emergency Relief grants will also be available. The Microbusiness Emergency Relief Grant is a special program assisting small businesses (25 employees or less) in Fort Pierce with a grant of \$3,000. The program provides short-term working capital assistance to enable the viability of the business and the retention of jobs during the severe interruption of business related to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social distancing. The Microbusiness Emergency Relief Grant Program will also assist small businesses (26 to 100 employees) in Fort Pierce with a grant of \$7,500. The program provides short-term working capital assistance to enable the viability of the business and the retention of jobs during the severe interruption of business related to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social distancing. Guidelines for both business assistance grants include that the business must be a local small business with brick and mortar storefront in the City of Fort Pierce; must have documentable information to evidence loss of income, reduction in hours or employees because of the COVID-19 pandemic; the business was in operation prior to state emergency order and intends to stay in operation after the order is lifted; and, the business must have an active Business Tax Receipt on file. Eligible uses for the business grants include commercial lease payments; commercial mortgage payments; employee salary and benefits, funding existing payroll; other sales, general, and administrative expenses deemed critical for business operations; utilities; or, new equipment needed to assist the business to a temporary digital transition.

Applications will be processed on a first-come, first-qualified, first-serve basis. There will be one week of pre-screening all applicants online via survey and by phone. Once the application period closes, qualified applications will be approved on a weekly basis, until funds are expended.

In summary, the CARES Act funding will be in the amount of \$355,045.00; SHIP Grant funding will be in the amount of \$270,440.00; CDBG Grant funding will be in the amount of \$237,500.00; and FPRA funds will be in the amount of \$150,000.00 for a total program fund in the amount of \$1,012,985.00.

Audria Moore-Wells, Special Projects Coordinator provided an update regarding food distribution to our community. The City of Fort Pierce is working in conjunction with the Boys & Girls Club for a program they are launching which will include weekday and weekend food distribution. There are many organizations throughout the county that provide meals and pantry items for those who are in need including Treasure Coast Food Bank, United Against Poverty, Council on Aging, Mustard Seed Ministries and Graceway Village. Council on Aging and Boys & Girls Club will be offering delivery service for those in need who contact them. The City of Fort Pierce has been working weekly with pastors from area ministries to provide updates and information which they pass along to their congregations.

Mr. Mimms stated that staff will continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Council, and the business community to determine how we can help them meet their needs.

City Hall will remain closed with appointment only access to the Building Department. Protective measures are being considered prior to reopening. Regular City of Fort Pierce business has not been disrupted. Business is being conducted via email, fax, virtual

meetings, conference calls and other online platforms. We remain open to the public through virtual means. The City Marina is open and practicing social distancing. Indian Hill Golf Course is open and practicing social distancing. Parks are open except for South Causeway and Jaycee Park. Public Restrooms are open. Boat Ramps are open. St. Lucie County beaches are now open from the dune to the mean high-water level line for recreational use only (walking, jogging, swimming, fishing, etc.).

Our beaches currently remain closed. The City Commission discussed options regarding the reopening of city beaches.

Motion was made by Commissioner Thomas Perona, seconded by Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson to follow St. Lucie County with soft openings of Jaycee Park Beach and South Causeway Beach beginning on 04/29/2020 for recreational use (walking, jogging, swimming, fishing, etc.) with re-purposed city employees monitoring both beach locations.

AYE: Mayor Linda Hudson, Commissioner Jeremiah Johnson, Commissioner Thomas Perona

NAY: Commissioner Rufus Alexander, Commissioner Reginald Sessions  
Passed

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Linda Hudson adjourned the meeting at **4:00 PM**.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR COMMISSIONER