RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING - MINUTES

March 30, 2020

On March 12, 2020, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Chief Mitch Paulette of the Richmond County Department of Emergency Services, declared a Local Emergency at 4:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. This Local Emergency declaration was ratified by the Board of Supervisors on March 30, 2020 at a Special Called Meeting. In addition, on March 30, 2020, the Board of Supervisors adopted an Ordinance to ensure continuity of county government in response to COVID-19 disaster.

Due to the events surrounding the COVID-19 Pandemic, William C. Herbert, II, Robert B. Pemberton and Andrew McRoberts, County Attorney, attended this Special Called Meeting by electronic means (telephonic). The meeting was also recorded with sound and video.

In accordance with §15.2-1418 of the Code of Virginia, you are hereby notified that the Richmond County Board of Supervisors will hold a Special Called Meeting starting at 6:30 P.M. on Monday, March 30, 2020 in the Richmond County Public Meeting Room, located at 101 Court Circle, Warsaw, Virginia 22572.

The Purpose of the Special Called Meeting is:

- Consideration of a Special Ordinance Instituting Emergency Procedures to Ensure the Continuity of the County Government in Response to COVID-19.
- Overview of actions taken thus far by Richmond County in response to COVID-19
- Discussion of further action to be considered throughout the duration of COVID-19

At a special called meeting of the Board of Supervisors for Richmond County, Virginia, held on the 30th day of March 2020, thereof in the Richmond County Public Meeting Room.

Present:
F. Lee Sanders, Chairman
Richard E. Thomas, Vice-Chairman
Robert B. Pemberton, Member (by phone only)
J. David Parr, Member
William C. Herbert, II, Member (by phone only)

Also Present:
R. Morgan Quicke, County Administrator
CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Sanders called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF A SPECIAL ORDINANCE INSTITUTING EMERGENCY PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Mr. McRoberts noted that the ordinance before the Board involved a statue that very few local governments have had to use before and that is for continuity of the government under 15.2-1413. Mr. McRoberts mentioned under that statue you can adopt an ordinance if the Governor declared an emergency, which he has and basically, you’re not able to meet as a body as you normally would.

Mr. McRoberts mentioned most local governments are adopting ordinances similar to this one. Mr. McRoberts noted the form presented is the same form provided to all local governments. Mr. McRoberts noted essentially what it does is because of the COVID-19 disaster and the Governor’s declaration that you don’t physically need to assemble, but doesn’t mean you can’t be assembled if you want to. Mr. McRoberts mentioned with the Governor’s announcement earlier and his order said that operation of Government is an exception to the rules but there are good health reasons to why you wouldn’t want to be fully together.

Mr. McRoberts noted the Freedom of Information Act doesn’t allow typically for the governing body to meet, even when electronic participation is allowed under the Freedom of Information Act 2.23708.2 and typically requires a physical quorum to be assembled and one or two people can call in. Mr. McRoberts mentioned given the circumstances it makes sense to have a broader availability.

Mr. McRoberts stated that all of these special procedures are called a method of continuity of Government that would be in affect up to six months. The governing body could always terminate it, repeal the ordinance if it wishes or add to the ordinance in the future but if you do nothing it expires in six months.

Mr. Quicke clarified that when adopting this ordinance in a special meeting it will have to be revisited in May and the decision will need to be ratified and advertised for two weeks up to the public hearing. Mr. Quicke noted the Board is able to adopt this under these special circumstances and come back for a public hearing in May.
“On a motion made by Richard E. Thomas, the Board voted: F. Lee Sanders – aye; Richard E. Thomas – aye; Robert B. Pemberton – aye; William C. Herbert, II – aye; J. David Parr – aye: to adopt the following ordinance.”

AN ORDINANCE OF THE RICHMOND COUNTY, VIRGINIA BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, INSTITUTING EMERGENCY PROCEDURES TO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 DISASTER.

WHEREAS, on January 31, 2020, the United States Health and Human Services Secretary declared a public health emergency for the entire United States to aid the healthcare community in responding to the novel coronavirus or "COVID-19"; and

WHEREAS, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, by Executive Order No. 51, Governor Ralph S. Northam declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and declared the anticipate effects of COVID-19 to be a disaster within the meaning of Virginia Code Section 44-146.16; and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States found and proclaimed that the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States constitutes a national emergency, beginning March 1, 2020; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, the County's Director of Emergency Management issued, pursuant to Virginia Code Section 44-146.14, a Declaration of Emergency in the County due to the spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Board confirmed or ratified the local Declaration of Emergency on March 30, 2020 and it continues in effect; and

WHEREAS, on March 17, 2020, Governor Northam, jointly with the Virginia State Health Commissioner, declared a continuing public health emergency in Virginia resulting from the spread of COVID-19 virus, and imposed stringent measures to combat the spread of COVID-19, including restricting the number of persons permitted to gather in certain public spaces to 10 persons or less; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors understands and acknowledges that the public health threat posed by COVID-19 constitutes a real and substantial danger to persons in the County of Richmond; that the limitations on physical assembly of persons are urgently necessary to protect the public health; and that the Board of Supervisors and other County boards, commissions, committees, authorities and other public bodies must conduct themselves accordingly; and

WHEREAS, compliance with the limitations on physical assembly occasioned by the COVID-19 public health crisis makes it difficult or impossible for the Board and other public bodies to safely physically assemble to conduct meetings and hold public hearings in accordance with ordinarily applicable procedures; and

WHEREAS, Virginia Code Section 15.2-1413 authorizes any locality, by ordinance, to provide for methods to assure continuity in its government in the event of a disaster such as that created by the spread of COVID-19.
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Supervisors of Richmond County, Virginia:

1. That, in accordance with Virginia Code Section 15.2-1413, the following emergency procedures are hereby instituted to ensure continuity of government during the pendency of the COVID-19 disaster:

   a. Any process, procedure, matter or transaction which typically allows for the physical presence of the public in a county building that has been declared or in the future is declared to be closed to the public during the pendency of the Emergency Declaration is hereby suspended unless conducted in accordance with this ordinance or other provision of law.

   b. The County Administrator is authorized to take actions objectively, reasonably and necessary in the public interest to alter schedules, arrange for alternative procedures consistent with this ordinance, provide programming and services, pay bills, engage contractors, hire employees, set and manage a succession plan effective in the event of unavailability of staff, adjust administrative processes and procedures in light of the disaster, all in keeping with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Virginia Department of Health guidance/directives, and consistent with State and Local Declarations of Emergency and other directives and law.

   c. Meetings required, and agenda items scheduled or proposed to be considered by the Board of Supervisors and other county boards, commissions, committees, authorities and other public bodies, for the duration of the local COVID-19 emergency but not to exceed six (6) months, are deemed continued and extensions therefor are hereby ordered if the body does not meet as permitted herein or in other applicable law and take action during that time, including those items for which applicable law requires an affirmative action to be taken within a particular time and failure to act is deemed approval.

   d. Meetings of the Board of Supervisors and other county boards, commissions, committees, authorities and other public bodies may be held through electronic communication means with a quorum of members participating but without a need for a quorum of members physically present in a single location, in accordance with the provisions of Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), including the public notice requirements, and at such a meeting may consider any item of business which the public body deems essential or is appropriate for the continuity of the work of the public body.

   e. Such meetings may be held without permitting members of the public to be physically present in a single location or in the same physical location as any of the public body members, so long as alternative arrangements for public access to such meetings are made. Such alternative public access may be electronic, including but not limited to audio, telephonic, or video broadcast.

   f. For any matter considered by the Board or other county public body during the pendency of the local emergency which typically require open doors, public attendance, or public participation by law, such requirements are hereby altered and may be met by electronic, telephonic, and/or written means by the body, which may meet electronically or in person or in some combination thereof as circumstances may permit.

   g. For any matter so considered also requiring public comment or hearing, such will be allowed, solicited or received by the body by electronic, telephonic, and/or written means prior to the vote on such matter. All such comments will be heard by or provided to the members of the body and made a part of the record of such meeting.
h. Notices of meetings will be provided by email directly to those who have elected in writing in the previous calendar year to receive such notices under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, and if practicable, will also be provided on the county website and by other means selected by the County Administrator. To the extent practicable, notices will also be provided as provided by general law.

2. That the provisions in Section 1 of this Ordinance shall be in effect until repealed by this Board or expiration of a period not exceeding six months from the adoption hereof, whichever comes first. This Ordinance may be amended as provided herein or by general law. Upon repeal or expiration of this Ordinance, the matters referenced herein shall resume operation in accordance with normal practices and procedures.

3. This ordinance shall be effective upon adoption.

ADOPTED by the Board of Supervisors of Richmond County, Virginia, this day 30th March 2020.

__________________________ Date: Monday, March 30, 2020
F. Lee Sanders, Chairman

RESOLUTION- RATIFICATION OF THE DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY, ENACTED 4:30 P.M. TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2020

Mr. Quicke read the following resolution to ratify the Declaration of Local Emergency.

"On a motion made by Richard E. Thomas, the Board voted: F. Lee Sanders – aye; Richard E. Thomas – aye; Robert B. Pemberton – aye; William C. Herbert, II – aye; J. David Parr - aye: to adopt the following resolution."

RESOLUTION BY THE RICHMOND COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO RATIFY THE DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia declared a State of Emergency in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to §44-146.21.a of the Code of Virginia, a local emergency may be declared by the local director of emergency management with consent of the governing body. In the event the governing body cannot convene due to the circumstances, a local emergency may be declared, subject to confirmation by the governing body at its next regularly scheduled meeting or at a special meeting within 45 days of the declaration, whichever comes first, and

WHEREAS, in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, Chief Mitch Paulette of the Richmond County Department of Emergency Services, declared a Local Emergency at 4:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 17, 2020,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Richmond County Board of Supervisors, does hereby ratify the decision made by the Chief of Emergency Services, on Tuesday, March 17, 2020, to declare a Local Emergency in Richmond County.

_____________________________ DATE: March 30, 2020
F. Lee Sanders, Chairman
OVERVIEW OF ACTIONS TAKEN THUS FAR BY RICHMOND COUNTY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Mr. Quicke noted Chief Paulette and EMS have done a great job over the past couple of weeks. Mr. Quicke mentioned there are no confirmed cases at this time in Richmond County.

Mr. Quicke stated a Local Declaration of Emergency was declared March 17th.

Mr. Quicke noted the County went to office closure with full staffing effective March 18th until further notice. Mr. Quicke mentioned all county offices are staffed and available to conduct all public business through phone, e-mail, fax, mail, outside drop boxes and in some cases special appointments. Mr. Quicke mentioned to date, he feels the County has been able to accomplish this task as well as expected.

Mr. Quicke mentioned he expects to begin allowing County Administration Staff to work from home as needed in the future, as well as other offices will have the ability to do so if they wish.

Mr. Quicke noted professional cleaning of the county court rooms was done Wednesday, March 25th. Mr. Quicke also noted professional cleaning of EMS facility was done Thursday, March 26th, and will be cleared weekly until at least the end of April. Mr. Quicke mentioned County staff continues to clean office buildings in a thorough manner daily.

Mr. Quicke mentioned County Convenience Centers continue to operate at normal conditions for the time being.

Mr. Quicke noted there have been a number of conference calls over the last week for the region that the County with the Health Department have been apart of, to help us locally understand and plan for the impacts. Mr. Quicke mentioned Dr. Williams with the Health Department has been invaluable.

Mr. Quicke stated the Planning Commission / Board of Supervisors Joint meeting for April 6th has been postponed. Mr. Quicke noted he has had conversations with the Strata Solar and that will be on hold until further notice.

Mr. Quicke noted the Board will still meet for the April 9th Board of Supervisors meeting and if anyone would like to join electronically, Mr. Jett and Mr. Boarman will work to continue this recording and the electronic ability for the foreseeable future so the public can watch from home and still be involved.

Mr. Herbert asked if the April 9th Board of Supervisors meeting will be advertised for the public to live stream. Mr. Quicke noted Mr. Jett and Mr. Boarman have created a YouTube channel for the meeting to broadcast live with a camera in the Board Room. Mr. Quicke mentioned a more thorough job will be done through social media for the regular scheduled meeting to make sure that anyone that wishes to watch and participate and ask questions. Mr. Quicke noted with it
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being a regular meeting it will be open for public comment there will have to be a way for people to be able to get public comment or questions into the Board.

Chief Paulette stated COVID-19 has been a rapidly spreading and evolving disease that has created a global pandemic. Chief Paulette noted we have been fortunate that the Northern Neck has not had any confirmed cases up until this past week. Chief Paulette mentioned there were two confirmed cases in Northumberland County and one confirmed case in Lancaster County. Chief Paulette noted Richmond County has had some patients under investigation (PUI) but do not have any confirmed cases in the County.

Chief Paulette mentioned the department is remaining vigilant at this time and treating any illness call with precautions. Chief Paulette noted the providers are issued and wearing their appropriate PPE for each call. Chief Paulette mentioned dispatch has a series of questions to aid in pre-screening all calls for possible signs and symptoms of the virus or possible contact/travel with patients or areas with known viral outbreaks. Chief Paulette noted providers are instructed to conserve PPE if at all possible. Chief Paulette mentioned per CDC guidelines, if the criteria for exposure is none to low risk, the providers are advised to re-use their issued mask and eye protection and to deccn them after each use. Chief Paulette mentioned at this time we are okay on PPE stock but, if there is an outbreak in the community that will rapidly decline. Chief Paulette noted local health departments and EMS councils are working on securing replacement stock for local EMS departments.

Chief Paulette noted he has remained in contact with the Infection Control Officers for both the Three Rivers Health District and Riverside Tappahannock Hospital. Chief Paulette mentioned the departments infection control plan has been activated since declaring a local emergency and all providers have been instructed to re-read and re-familiarize themselves with exposure procedures. Chief Paulette noted he has also been on almost daily phone conferences with VDEM, Three Rivers, and PEMS concerning the vulnerability in our rural area. Chief Paulette mentioned one of the greatest concerns across the Northern Neck is possible loss of part-time employees and mandatory quarantine for full-time employees.

Chief Paulette mentioned there is a multi-tiered plan that will address their issues if or when they arise. Chief Paulette noted they have the ability to re-structure shift schedules into 4 shifts if they start losing part-time employees that will allow for a 1 on 3 off schedule. Chief Paulette noted if we do see an outbreak in Richmond County that will transition into a 3 day on 9 day off schedule to allow for self-managed quarantine of each shift. Chief Paulette mentioned this last shift change will be worse case scenario and only implemented if there is a heavy outbreak of the virus.

Chief Paulette noted lastly the department, along with Essex County and Westmoreland County, has been selected to pilot a program with VCU for rural EMS to have the ability to teleconference with VCU Doctors at a patient’s bedside. Chief Paulette mentioned if the patient meets their set forth criteria, a telemedicine call will be initiated through an app on a provider’s phones called Pulsara. Chief Paulette noted this will then alert the VCU Covid-19 triage team who will then conference in over video with the patient to determine if they need transport to an ER or if they can stay at home and have another conference in over video with the patient to
determine if they need to transport to an ER if they can stay at home and have another conference follow up in 2-3 days. Chief Paulette mentioned patients with smartphones will be able to download the Pulsara patient app allowing for direct video telemedicine follow-up with the VCU team. Chief Paulette mentioned others will receive a phone call from the team. Chief Paulette noted this pilot program is hoping to be able to stop the surge of patients coming to the hospital who do not meet admission criteria. Chief Paulette noted the pilot program is the first in the state and are honored to have been chosen to work with VCU in this time of crisis and uncertainty. Chief Paulette mentioned The Virginia Office of EMS (VAOEMS) has reviewed and approved the protocol and give their blessing to proceed with the program. Chief Paulette noted the training has been made available for providers and in-house training will start today. Chief Paulette mentioned once trained, each shift will be able to utilize this new tool.

Chief Paulette mentioned they continue to stress following the CDC guidelines for providers on social distancing and hygiene both on and off duty. Chief Paulette noted with nicer longer days he knows that we are all ready to get out and enjoy the spring but, we have to remain vigilant to the virus and keep ourselves and loved ones safe and healthy.

Chief Paulette reported right now we are in Region 5 of VDEMS region. Chief Paulette mentioned in Region 5, 19% of Virginias cases come out of region 5 and as of March 30th, there are 238 cases plus 95 under investigation, 10 deaths plus 1 under investigation in region 5. Chief Paulette noted there is a hotline for frequently asked questions to the Virginia Department of Health that people can call and talk to someone at the Health Department. Chief Paulette mentioned that number is 1-877-ASK-VDH3. Chief Paulette noted they have learned that there is an Urgent Care facility that is offering priority First Responder priority testing to those who may have been exposed.

Chairman Sanders asked if those tests come back any quicker. Chief Paulette noted it all depends on how fast and accurate they are. Chief Paulette mentioned there are test out there that claim 15-minute response but are not very accurate, some of the quick test are suppose to have a five hour turn around are taking 24 plus hours to come back or two- three days for anyone because of backlog.

Mr. Herbert asked what has Tappahannock Hospital done in case of a large outbreak in the area. Chief Paulette noted as far as the beds go Tappahannock will be pushing out some patients and take in the patients they can handle, send patients to VCU, Memorial Regional Hospital and is sure it’s in their continuity plan. Chief Paulette mentioned if there is a heavy outbreak, they do have provisions to set up a tent environment where patients are brought in to be pre-screened before going in the hospital. Chief Paulette noted they are trying to save the beds for admitted patients.

Chief Paulette mentioned this pilot program is being built around Richmond County, Essex County and Westmoreland County and have direct links with VCU’s IT to call with any bugs to be fixed with 24-hour support help. Chief Paulette noted once all the bugs are fixed and VCU doctors get comfortable with this program something will be put out to social media and the paper.
Mr. Parr asked if all hospitals and health care centers have the same protocol for dealing with this virus. Chief Paulette mentioned there all following CDC guidelines but is all in interpretation in how each facility handles it.

Chief Paulette mentioned they are all following under regional protocol, which is PEMS the EMS council.

Mr. Thomas asked is there or where could there be a need for volunteers in this process to help save driving the ambulance. Chief Paulette noted some of the EMS rules and regulations have been made a little more lax during these times and usually it qualifies a ALS unit you have to have at least two providers on the truck which are certified EMT’s. Chief Paulette mentioned they are looking to suspend that and allow people with just license EVOC which is just drivers so just a driver and medic can transfer patients.

Chief Paulette noted issues his guys are having is at the store being limited to two items when they are trying to get dinner for the crew multiple trips to the store are being made.

Mr. Quicke mentioned a phone call was received between the Health Department and the four County Administrator’s of the Northern Neck, about getting a pretty good development to help keep fire, rescue and Sheriff’s Deputies all safe in these times. Mr. Quicke noted the Three-Rivers Health District is going to notify the primary point of contact which is Chief Paulette, if and when there are any positive cases within Richmond County. Mr. Quicke mentioned at that point they will notify the Chief with private information that will help work with the Sheriff’s Office to be able and work through the mapping program and flag these names and residents so that should a call come with a positive patient in that environment all of the EMS, Fire and Police will know prior to getting on scene what to expect.

Mr. Quicke stated again there are no cases in Richmond County at this time, and the message from the Health Department is to treat every call like it’s a possible COVID-19 positive case.

Mr. Quicke noted we are prepared at the old EMS facility to be able to house and live in that building for a period of two-three days, if there is an exposure and the new EMS building goes on lockdown the old EMS facility will be able to run calls.

Chairman Sanders thanked Chief Paulette and his Crew for everything they have been doing.

**DISCUSSION OF FURTHER ACTION TO BE CONSIDERED THROUGHOUT THE DURATION OF COVID-19**

Mr. Quicke brought to discussion an idea or proposal for the Richmond County Disaster Impact Loan Program.

Mr. Quicke noted one of the biggest concerns he has had in the past few weeks is the small businesses in Richmond County. Mr. Quicke mentioned this is going and could be for an extended period of time and the community is doing the best they can to provide support to these establishments.
Mr. Quicke mentioned with this Disaster Impact Loan Program it’s an idea with the County IDA creating a loan up to about $5,000 per qualifying business and a low to zero percent interest payback due over three years with the first 90 days deferred. Mr. Quicke noted the County is doing the best we can through ourselves and the Planning District Commission to help people as much as possible should they come to the County asking for assistance to fill out these loan documents for small business administration.

Mr. Quicke stated this would be a partnership between the IDA and Board of Supervisors with a committee set up of two Board members and two IDA members that have some sort of business/banking experience.

Mr. Thomas noted he thinks it’s worthwhile bringing up a little later but does not think everyone may be knowledgeable of what’s going to be needed at this point.

The Board members recommended putting it back on the agenda for discussion at the April 9th meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Thomas brought up a visibility issue at the intersection of Sharps Road and the Old Tidewater Post Office.

ADJOURNMENT

After no further business, Chairman Sanders adjourned the meeting.

F. Lee Sanders, Chairman
Richmond County Board of Supervisors