

The Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Panama City Beach, Florida, related to Beach Activity Safety Standards, held on April 30, 2020.

ROLL

MAYOR MARK SHELDON

COUNCILORS:

PAUL CASTO

PHIL CHESTER

GEOFF MCCONNELL

MICHAEL JARMAN

CITY MANAGER:

TONY O'ROURKE

INTERIM CITY CLERK:

JO SMITH

CITY ATTORNEY:

AMY MYERS

Mayor Sheldon called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Councilman Jarman gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Sheldon read the Community Announcements.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - NON-AGENDA BUSINESS (LIMITED TO THREE MINUTES)

Mayor Sheldon opened the Public Comments section at 9:02 A.M. and asked for comments.

1 Ms. Debbie Ward. Ms. Ward said there was a link on the City website for the public to login for the meeting.

2 Mr. Charles Lyons. Mr. Lyons said he did not want the beaches open fulltime nor have the visitors come here to expose the community to the virus.

3 Mr. Burnie Thompson. Mr. Thompson thanked the Council for restoring public comments. He said he was concerned over a second wave of the virus and encouraged wearing face masks.

4 Mr. Chris McCall. Mr. McCall spoke of his concerns about the Nautilus Shopping Center and not being able to access the traffic light due to the new North Nautilus. He said the contractor was pouring the concrete today and had not been contacted about having to use the median on the Parkway.

With nothing further, the Mayor closed the Public Comments section at 9:07 A.M.

SPECIAL MEETING- DISCUSSION/ACTION

ITEM 1 EMERGENCY ORDINANCE 1521-E, BEACH ACTIVITY SAFETY STANDARDS. Ms. Myers read Ordinance 1521-E by title. She explained amendments had been made after receiving the Governor's orders and the new language was in red. She said the effective date would be May 1st with currently no sunset date.

Mayor Sheldon opened the floor for comments at 9:08 A.M.

1 Mr. Michael Steinkirchner. Mr. Steinkirchner expressed his concerns for visitors.

2 Mr. Charles Lyons. Mr. Lyons said opening the beach all day would invite out of town visitors. He asked the Council to protect the locals and provide limited beach access for our people.

3 Ms. Debbie Ward, Public Information Officer. Ms. Ward indicated that she had received 19 emails to open the beach, 11 emails to close the beach and one to keep limited hours for the beach. She said some concerns were for public safety, and several comments were about the lack of testing.

4 Ms. Lori Philput. Ms. Philput said the meeting was livestreaming on both local tv stations.

5 Ms. Jessica Lopez. Ms. Lopez said most of the local residents would like the beaches opened for mental health.

6 Ms. Gail Sasser. Ms. Sasser urged opening the beach. She said the economy would not survive without the tourists.

7 Ms. Catie Higgenbotham. Ms. Higgenbotham urged the Council not to vote for restricted activities.

8 Mr. Tom Klomps. Mr. Klomps said he had listened to the Bay County Board of Commissioners this morning and no one addressed the health of the residents. He urged the Council to vote against opening the beach.

9 Ms. Jessica Lopez. Ms. Lopez said she favored opening the beach because it was good for mental health & would restore the economy.

With nothing further, the Mayor closed the Public Comments at 9:25 A.M.

Councilman Casto said he believed in the social distancing and limiting congregations to no more than ten people. He spoke of strategically opening Florida in the three phases, making gradual steps. He favored opening the beaches and parks to get the people out. He reminded that short-term rentals were still banned and encouraged the people to stay home if they were at risk.

Councilman Chester said if someone did not feel safe, do not get out and stay home. He said the TDC was not promoting travel. He said he had visited the beach and encouraged the people to spread out, as it was the right thing to do.

Councilman McConnell spoke of taking precautions and did not advocate absoluteness at either end. He said he had visited the beach with a lot of out of state tags and there was good social distancing. He said he favored opening the beaches all the time. He asked Ms. Myers about the commerce options on the sandy beach. Ms. Myers said the beach commerce had never been prohibited. Councilman McConnell said he thought the short-term ban was appropriate. He encouraged the people if sick, please do not come to the beach and be respectful of our residents.

Councilman Jarman thanked everyone who had called, emailed and texted him with their comments. He favored opening the beaches unrestricted. He said with proper group sizes and social distancing, he hoped not to see a resurgence.

Mayor Sheldon said he had spoken with numerous experts with other opinions. He thanked Chief Whitman and Chief Couch for keeping our citizens safe. He said we had created an issue with limiting the hours. He urged the people to follow the rules, take care, stay apart, and enjoy the open beaches. He asked to make the time effective 12:01 A.M. to be consistent with the County. Discussion ensued concerning the times.

Councilman McConnell made the motion to approve Emergency Ordinance 1521-E with the time as 12:01 A.M. Second was by Councilman Casto and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote recorded as follows:

Councilman Jarman	Aye
Councilman Casto	Aye
Councilman Chester	Aye
Councilman McConnell	Aye
Mayor Sheldon	Aye

ITEM 2 OTHER ACTION NECESSARY TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE AGAINST THE SPREAD AND EFFECTS OF THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19). Mr. O'Rourke said that the end of the pier would be closed and increased marking would be placed. He said we would wait to see the congregation this weekend.

Ms. Myers said the May 14th meeting would be a virtual meeting.

Ms. Ward said she had received messages why hotels and motels were open but not short-term rentals. Ms. Myers said hotels and motels were considered essential services and treated differently.

Councilman McConnell said the City had no authority over the ban on the short-terms rentals or bars because of the Governor's Orders.


With nothing further, the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 A.M.

READ AND APPROVED this 13th of August, 2020.

IN THE EVENT OF A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FOREGOING MINUTES AND A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THESE MINUTES, THE FOREGOING MINUTES SHALL CONTROL.



Mayor

ATTEST:


Interim City Clerk