

The McAlester City Council met in a Special session on Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at 5:00 P.M. after proper notice and agenda was posted, March 30, 2020 at 3:23 P.M.

Call to Order

Mayor Browne called the meeting to order.

Roll Call

Council Roll Call was as follows:

Present in Person: Weldon Smith, James Brown, & Maureen Harrison
Present via Teleconference: Cully Stevens, Steve Cox, Zach Prichard & John Browne
Absent: None
Presiding: John Browne, Mayor

Staff Present in Person: Peter Stasiak, City Manager & Cora Middleton, City Clerk
Staff Present via Teleconference: William J. Ervin, City Attorney

Councilwoman Harrison gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Scheduled Business

1. Discussion and possible action, to adopt a proclamation expressing McAlester's commitment to the creation and importance of the Pittsburg County Mutual Aid Council.

Executive Summary

Possible adoption of a Proclamation expressing McAlester's commitment to the creation and importance of the Pittsburg County Mutual Aid Council.

Mayor Browne read the proposed proclamation.

Councilman Prichard addressed the Council explaining his thoughts on this proclamation.

There was discussion concerning funding, how this could tie into the Pittsburg County Emergency Management office activities, possible changes to the language in the proposed proclamation, the possibility of communities outside of Pittsburg County joining the group, and what other entities would need to approve the proposed council if the City approved the creation of the council.

Kevin Enloe, Director Pittsburg County Emergency Management addressed the Council reviewing everything that was already in place with the County, what his office procedures were, and how many times a day he was involved in update calls.

After a brief discussion concerning how this council would be more for the sharing of information and not handling the crisis itself, this council being a conduit to help communities interact with the Emergency Management Office and how this could be a duplication of what was already being done, Vice-Mayor Stevens moved to approve the proposed Proclamation creating the Pittsburg County Mutual Aid Council.

Councilman Prichard asked if the suggested changes to the language in the proclamation were included in the motion.

There was another brief discussion regarding the suggested changes, who would make those changes to the proclamation, and clarification of the changes, Vice-Mayor Stevens restated his motion to approve the proclamation and changing "we establish" in the last paragraph to "we intend to establish" and appointing Councilman Prichard to represent the City of McAlester. The

motion was seconded by Councilman Cox. There was no further discussion, and the vote was taken as follows

AYE: Councilmembers Stevens, Cox, Smith, Brown, Harrison, Prichard & Mayor Browne
NAY: None

Mayor Browne declared the motion carried.

2. Discussion of a program to provide food and other necessities to individuals at elevated risk of developing serious cases of COVID-19.

Executive Summary
Discussion.

Councilman Prichard addressed the Council explaining that the idea was doing something to lessen the impact of the virus. He stated that if the City could do something to encourage the elderly no to leave their homes. He then reviewed his thoughts on where the City could possibly find the funding.

Mayor Bowne asked Attorney Ervin what funds could be used for this type if program.

Attorney Ervin commented that Economic Development funds could be used to protect existing businesses but could not be used to provide for the elderly. He stated that use of Tourism funds did not appear to be proper and as the Ordinance regulating the Emergency Fund currently existed, those funds could not be used.

There was discussion, concerning if this program could be used solely for restaurants, how funds would normally be made available, how the Emergency Fund Ordinance could be used, the Charter requirements regulating the Emergency Fund, and if the funds for Nutrition came from Tourism.

Mayor Browne called roll at 5:55 P.M.

There was further discussion regarding the amount of Federal funding that the Nutrition program received, the number of meals per day that the Nutrition program furnished , the proposed number of meals to be furnished, who prepared the meals for the Nutrition program, how an individual could sign up to receive meals, who furnished the food for the Nutrition program, enhancing the current program instead of creating a new program, and the limitations of the current program.

Attorney Ervin commented that Economic Development funds were not cleared for feeding the elderly and the Nutrition program received Federal funds. He reminded the Council to be careful with the use of Federal Funds.

There was discussion concerning the language on the Ordinance that created the Economic Development funds, where the information could be found, the proposed program , the City not having qualified staff to implement the proposed program, what the actual goal of the proposed program was, there already being a plan in place to address the at risk population of the City. Not taking money from the General Fund when how the pandemic would affect the City, if the Choctaw Nation was involved in delivering meals, the amount currently in the Emergency Fund, how it as funded, how much the City was currently needing to cut from the budget through June 30, 2020, the difficulty in funding the five (5) core services, he Hospital's "Meals on Wheels" program being merged into the City's meal services, the Federal Government's aid package, and the cause of the City's budget shortfalls.

There was no action taken on this item.

3. Discussion of a program to provide financial assistance to organizations negatively impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19.

Executive Summary
Discussion.

Councilman Prichard addressed the Council stating that even with the number of Federal and State programs, the City needed to do something for local small businesses.

There was discussion concerning the use of both Economic Development and Tourism funds for this proposed program, what the Federal government was planning to help the economy, how long this pandemic could affect the economy, when citizens could expect to start receiving the stimulus checks, how a program provided by the City would operate, the City being able to respond more quickly than the Federal or State governments, how much was in the Economic Development fund that could be used for this type of program, and commitments already made for some of the Economic Development funds.

Alyssa Latty, Director McAlester Main Street addressed the Council reviewing the opportunities available for the area's small businesses, and the application process.

There was discussion regarding how long the application process would take, what type of businesses would be able to apply, what the City's core business was, what the next fiscal year's budget could look like and how not assisting the small businesses might affect the City in the future.

There was no action taken on this item.

4. Discussion of possible Charter amendments to ensure continued functioning of City government during times of incapacitation of City Council members.

Executive Summary
Discussion.

Councilman Prichard addressed the Council commenting that there was no provision in the Charter that would allow the City Council to continue to operate should a quorum of members not exist. He stated that he felt it would be wise for the Council to amend the Charter to address that situation should it occur.

Councilman Smith stated that the Charter, in Section 206.5.C, addressed the replacement of members including the Mayor.

Councilman Prichard commented that the Council would not be able to fill those positions in a timely manner and may not be able to find someone willing to run for the vacated seats.

Mayor Browne asked the City Attorney to address this item.

Attorney Ervin commented that he believed that Councilman Prichard was expressing concern that in times of incapacitation the provisions in the Charter did not react quickly enough. He stated that changes to the Charter had to go before the voters. He added that the Charter could not plan for every situation. He further stated that Title 11 in the Oklahoma Statutes provided for less than a quorum to approve the payment of bills and other things.

Councilwoman Harrison inquired about if any of this was pursuant to the "Open Meeting Act" or if it came from the Charter.

Attorney Ervin commented that all was contained in the City Charter.

No action was taken on this item.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, Councilman Brown moved for the meeting to be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Councilman Smith.

Before the vote, Mayor Browne thanked Councilman Prichard for the work he had put into these items and urged everyone to stay home unless they had to leave for work or necessities and to think of the people that were having to work in the grocery stores.

There was no discussion, and the vote was taken as follows:

AYE: Councilmembers Brown, Smith, Cox, Harrison, Prichard, Stevens & Mayor Browne
NAY: None

Mayor Browne declared the motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 P.M.

ATTEST:

John Browne, Mayor

Cora Middleton, City Clerk