

EMERGENCY MEETING: SUNDAY, MARCH 15, 2020, 5:00 P.M.:

Location: Commissioners Meeting Room, Basement, New Addition.

Members Present: Commissioner Erb, Commissioner Burke, Commissioner Webster (By Phone), Chief Clerk Hemminger and Solicitor Karn.

Others Present: Kay Stephens and Pat Wakmunski (Altoona Mirror), James Ott (Sheriff), A. C. Stickel (Controller), Robin Patton (Prothonotary), Elizabeth Doyle (President Judge), Mark Taylor (Director of Public Safety), Sarah Metts (6 News), Katherine Swigart (Human Resources), Janice Meadows (Court Administration), Jody Gill (WTAJ)

CALL TO ORDER:

Commissioner Erb called the meeting to order.

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION:

Commissioner Erb called for a moment of silent reflection.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG:

Commissioner Erb requested that all present stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No comments noted

COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS:

No comments noted

Commissioner Bruce Erb called on Solicitor Karn to give a brief description of the validity and background on holding an emergency meeting.

Solicitor Karn explained that within-in the Sunshine Act there is the ability for the Board of Commissioners to call an emergency meeting in matters of crisis. In an effort of transparency the Board has extended an invitation to the meeting to the media and vows to place a recording of the meeting on the website at blairco.org for the public to listen to.

Commissioner Erb asked Blair County Director of Public Safety Mark Taylor to comment on the current COVID-19 Virus situation.

Mr. Taylor stated that 14 Pennsylvania Counties have been effected by the virus with 63 confirmed cases at this time. The County is monitoring the spread, listening in and reading situational reports locally and nationally and following through with preliminary emergency steps. The World Health Organization has declared a pandemic. The local schools have put into place pandemic plans for remote learning and social-distancing. Mr. Taylor stated that he is working with UPMC, Altoona's largest hospital, to solidify virus testing facilities and future vaccine plans when one is developed.

The County has put together a COVID-19 taskforce to coordinate efforts to mitigate the spread of the deadly virus.

Commissioner Erb asked President Judge Elizabeth Doyle to comment on the Blair County Court requested Judicial Order.

President Judge Doyle stated that the safety of the public is the Court's #1 priority. She encourages the public that if they have important Court related business to please come to the Court house but practice excellent hygiene and maintain social-distancing. If any of the public feels ill please contact Court Administration to make arrangements to have your matter rescheduled. At this time, trials will go on however, she has made a request to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to enable some matters to be cancelled. President Judge Doyle indicated that she has not received the signed order back, yet.

Commissioner Erb asked for commissioner comments on the current emergency situation.

Commissioner Burke stated that the situation is changing rapidly, almost hourly, and the Commissioners have been in constant communication with the courts for a unified effort on minimizing large gatherings. She stated that the County is in a unique position as we are performing an essential service, one that the public relies on.

Commissioner Webster stated that she has been in contact with Mr. Taylor, her liaison office, and he is following all the suggestions from Pennsylvania Emergency Management

Agency (PEMA). Commissioner Webster believes the Declaration to come before the Board this evening is a necessary and responsible step at this point.

Commissioner Erb stated that this has been a team effort for a 24/7 emergency response. Everyone must take common sense measures to make it through this crisis. This will have a significant cost to County government and Declaring a Declaration of Emergency Disaster will give the County the opportunity to be reimbursed for expenses related to COVID-19.

Commissioner Erb asked Chief Clerk Nicole Hemminger to read the following Declaration of Disaster.

RESOLUTION 122-2020
A Resolution Declaring a Disaster Emergency

WHEREAS, as evidenced by the President of the United States' National Emergency Declaration and the Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Emergency Disaster Declaration, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic has caused or threatens to cause injury, damage, and suffering to the persons and institutions of Blair County; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners believes action is necessary to support area healthcare institutions, emergency responders, and to be better prepared to manage the evolving Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic as declared by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC); and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 Pandemic has endangered the health, safety and welfare of the residents of Blair County, and threatens to create problems greater in scope than Blair County may be able to resolve without the flexibility to take certain actions at certain times; and

WHEREAS, emergency management measures are required to reduce the severity of this disaster and to protect the health, safety and welfare of affected residents in Blair County.

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Board of Commissioners for the County of Blair, pursuant to the provisions of Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, Section 7501 *et seq.*, as amended (Emergency Management Services Code) (35 PA C.S., Section 7501), do hereby proclaim pursuant to Section 7501(b) the existence of a disaster emergency in Blair County with respect to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners direct the Blair County Emergency Management Coordinator to coordinate the activities of the emergency response, to take all appropriate action needed to alleviate the effects of this disaster, to aid in the restoration of essential public services, and to take any other emergency response action deemed necessary to respond to this emergency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pursuant to Section 7501(d) that the Board of Commissioners authorize officials of Blair County to act as necessary to meet the current demands of this emergency all without regard to those time-consuming procedures and formalities normally prescribed by law (excepting mandatory constitutional requirements), including but not limited to the following: the expenditure of public funds; the adjustment of County facility operation hours and the manner of operation of offices and departments; employment of temporary workers; rental of equipment; purchase of supplies and materials; the entering into such contracts and agreements for the performance of public work as may be required to meet the emergency; and collective bargaining related to the need for changes in labor contracts necessitated solely by this declared emergency.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that during this emergency, the Board of Commissioners may utilize when necessary the use of Emergency Meetings under the Pennsylvania Open Meetings Law (65 Pa.C.S.A. §701 *et seq.*) and will endeavor to provide news media one hours' notice of the same, will record the meeting, and make such recording available on its website following the meeting, endeavoring to do so within twelve (12) hours of the end of such meeting.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this declaration of disaster emergency shall remain in effect until rescinded by a resolution of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Blair.

DULY, adopted by the Commissioners of the County of Blair, Pennsylvania, this 15th day of March, 2020.

ATTEST:

Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk

Bruce R. Erb, Chairman

Amy E. Webster, Secretary

Motion by Commissioner Burke, seconded by Commissioner Webster and unanimously approved to adopt Resolution 122-2020.

Commissioner Erb stated that the County's Continuity of Operations and effect on public, commerce and Elected Official's offices will be challenged as long as this virus is present. Employees and the public must remain vigilant to control the spread. Commissioner want everyone to know that the health and safety of our employees will be a priority.

ADJOURN:

Meeting Adjourned,

Nicole M. Hemminger, Chief Clerk