

Emergency Meeting Minutes of the Town of Highlands Board of Commissioners Meeting of March 31, 2020, at the Highlands Community Building, 71 Poplar Street, Highlands, North Carolina

Town Board Present: Commissioner John Dotson, Commissioner Amy Patterson, Mayor Pro Tempore Donnie Calloway, Commissioner Brian Stiehler and Mayor Pat Taylor

Commissioner Marc Hehn, Town Attorney Jay Coward, Finance Director Rebecca Shuler and Town Clerk Gibby Shaheen via Zoom

Also Present: Town Manager Josh Ward, Public Works Director and Town Engineer Lamar Nix, Police Chief Bill Harrell, Fire Chief, Ryan Gearhart and MIS/GIS Director Matt Shuler

Media Present: Ryan Hanchett from the Highlander, Kim Lewicki from the Highlands Newspaper and Brian O’Shea of Plateau Daily News

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 5:00pm.

Mayor Taylor asked if Founder’s Park, restrooms and Main Street restrooms should close down.

Town Manager Josh Ward stated we should shut down the public restrooms, playgrounds, tennis courts, recycling, founders park and the dog park.

Commissioner Patterson suggested signage to encourage social distancing and close off the dugouts at the ballfield.

Mayor Taylor offered the idea of a curfew or a total road closure with the stay home order in place by the Governor. The checkpoints set up by the Police Department were handing out information sheets with the latest requirements.

Discussions of what could be done to decrease the risks of the spread of COVID-19 in Highlands. Including possibly closing the roads, stopping day trippers and allowing only essential workers into Town.

Town Manager Josh Ward brought up the fact that the Supplemental Proclamation had limited rentals to 90 days or less and thought the Board would like to amend the Supplemental Proclamation.



Supplemental Municipal Proclamation

WHEREAS, based on public health guidance from the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the Town of Highlands declared a Municipal State of Emergency on March 17, 2020, in an effort to promote social distancing to slow the spread of COVID-19.

WHEREAS, in just over the past week, the State of North Carolina, through the Governor, Roy Cooper, has issued Executive Order No. 116 titled “Declaration of a State

of Emergency to Coordinate Response and Proactive Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19; Executive Order No. 117 prohibiting mass gatherings and directing the statewide closure of K-12 public schools to limit the spread of COVID-19; Executive Order No. 118 “Limiting Operations of Restaurants and Bars and Broadening Unemployment Insurance Benefits in Response to COVID-19”; Executive Order No. 119 waiving restrictions on child care and elder care and providing DMV flexibilities; Executive Order No. 120 temporary closure of certain businesses in which members of the public may be in close contact with each other and extension of statewide closure of K-12 public schools in Response to COVID-19”.

WHEREAS, the emergency response orders in place in the State of North Carolina currently prohibits mass gatherings that bring together more than fifty (50) persons in a single room or single space at a time, such as an auditorium, stadium, arena, large conference room, meeting hall, theater or any other confined indoor or outdoor space. The prohibition does not extend to other defined spaces and establishments.

WHEREAS, the latest Executive Order is a critical step in minimizing close contact between members of the community. Close contact for COVID-19 is currently defined as contact within six feet for a duration of at least ten minutes. Social Distancing is a specific strategy, proven by data to severely lessen the impact of high consequence pathogens by minimizing the opportunity for close contact encounters.

WHEREAS, per federal guidelines and guidance from the California Department of Public Health, as well as state governments, including Wisconsin and Virginia, gatherings of ten people or more are prohibited.

WHEREAS, given its specific knowledge of the Town of Highlands and to further safeguard its residents and community via Social Distancing, the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Highlands have determined that an imminent hazard exists and has issued guidance recommending the temporary closure of business related to non-essential travel of non-resident individuals in the Town of Highlands to slow the spread of COVID-19.

NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Board of Commissioners of the Town of Highlands under Article 8 of Chapter 160A-174 and 166A-19.22 of the North Carolina General Statutes I hereby declare:

Section 1. All Terms and conditions of The Proclamation of a Municipal State of Emergency dated March 17, 2020, shall remain in force and effect.

Section 2. No gatherings of ten persons or more shall take place in the Town of Highlands, during the term of this Declaration of Municipal State of Emergency. Restaurants and retail stores are allowed to provide curbside pickup or delivery only. For the avoidance of doubt consistent with Executive Orders 117, 118 and 120, grocery stores, pharmacies, convenience stores and gas stations, to the extent they sell or distribute prepared food, are exempt from the provisions of this Proclamation. Also, a gathering of persons does not “include normal operations at airports, bus and train stations, medical facilities, shopping malls and centers. It also does not include office environments, factories and child care centers.” [Libraries are omitted from this listing of exemptions to the Executive Orders because Macon County Libraries are currently closed]. Further, food banks and hardware operations in which the public are not generally in close contact with other patrons are exempt from this Proclamation.

Section 3. Pursuant to Executive Order 120, all bingo parlors, bowling alleys, ice skating rinks, indoor exercise facilities (e.g. gyms, yoga studios and martial arts facilities), health clubs, indoor pools, live performance venues, movie theaters, roller skating rinks, spas, sweepstakes lounges, video game arcades personal care and grooming businesses, including but not limited to the following: barber shops, beauty salons, hair salons, manicure/pedicure providers, massage parlors, nail salons, tattoo parlors shall close for business.

Section 4. All Lodging Facilities for example, hotels, motels, resorts, inns, guest houses, bed and breakfasts, campgrounds, RV Parks, vacation cabins, home

rentals and any and all rentals or leases by Air-BNB, Homeaway, VRBO and other rental programs, shall be closed in the Town of Highlands, EXCEPT exemptions as hereinafter set forth.

- a. **Work-Related Exemptions:** This closure does not apply if a lease or extended overnight accommodation is due to work in the Town of Highlands for business, medical, construction, emergency services or other related services. In this situation, the employee staying at the lodging facility should have their employer provide their work-related identification badge or a letter from the employer stating the purpose of the work to be performed in the Town of Highlands and the expected duration of the stay.
- b. **Homeless Shelter:** This closure does not apply to lodging facilities housing authorized individuals through HERE in the Town of Highlands or as needed to house the homeless in an emergency related to the COVID-19 Response.
- c. **Emergency Facility:** This closure does not apply to a lodging facility if used as an emergency facility to assist with the COVID-19 Response.

Section 5. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, travel to the Town of Highlands is strongly discouraged. Anyone traveling to the Town of Highlands to reside overnight from an outside area shall be required to self-quarantine for fourteen days upon arrival. The fourteen-day self-quarantine includes any other occupants of the household.

Section 6. This supplemental proclamation shall become effective immediately, and shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded.

Any person who violates any provision of the Proclamation of a Municipal State of Emergency dated March 17, 2020, or this Supplemental Municipal Proclamation shall be guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor in accordance with Chapter 166A-19.31 and 14-288.20A of the North Carolina General Statutes.

Amended and Proclaimed this the 31st day of March, 2020 at 5:00pm.

Patrick Taylor, Mayor

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of The Town of Highlands, North Carolina to be affixed this 31st day of March, 2020.

Gilberta B. Shaheen, Town Clerk

COMMISSIONER PATTERSON MADE A MOTION TO AMEND THE SUPPLEMENTAL MUNICIPAL PROCLAMATION TO INCLUDE RENTALS WITH NO DURATION, WHICH WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER STIEHLER AND THE VOTE WAS UNANIMOUS.

ADJOURNMENT

AS THERE WERE NO FURTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, COMMISSIONER PATTERSON MOVED TO ADJOURN WHICH WAS SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DOTSON AND UPON A UNANIMOUS VOTE, THE TOWN BOARD ADJOURNED AT 7:13PM.

Patrick Taylor
Mayor

Gilberta B. Shaheen
Town Clerk