

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Randy Ognio, Chairman
Charles W. Oddo, Vice Chairman
Edward Gibbons
Eric K. Maxwell
Charles D. Rousseau



FAYETTE COUNTY, GEORGIA

Steve Rapson, County Administrator
Dennis A. Davenport, County Attorney
Tameca P. White, County Clerk
Marlena Edwards, Deputy County Clerk

140 Stonewall Avenue West
Public Meeting Room
Fayetteville, GA 30214

Minutes Emergency Special Called

March 16, 2020
9:00 a.m.

Welcome to the meeting of your Fayette County Board of Commissioners. Your participation in County government is appreciated. All regularly scheduled Board meetings are open to the public and are held on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

Call to Order

Chairman Randy Ognio called the March 16, 2020 Board of Commissioners Emergency Special Called meeting to order at 9:00 p.m. A quorum of the Board was present.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance by Commissioner Edwards Gibbons

Commissioner Edwards Gibbons offered the Invocation and led the Board and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Acceptance of Agenda

Vice Chairman Oddo moved to accept the agenda as written. Chairman Ognio seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

OFFICIAL SESSION:

1. **Consideration of staff's recommendation to close county offices to the public in an abundance of caution due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).**

PUBLIC NOTICE

Special Called Meeting for Fayette County Board of Commissioners

Please be informed that the Fayette County Board of Commissioners will hold a Special Called Meeting on Monday, March 16, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. to discuss closing county offices to the public in an abundance of caution due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

This meeting will take place in the Public Meeting Room, located at the Fayette County Administrative Complex, 140 Stonewall Avenue West, Suite 100, Fayetteville, Georgia 30214.

The public is invited to attend.

Tameca P. White, County Clerk
Fayette County Board of Commissioners
March 15, 2020

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County Administrator Steve Rapson stated that as most are aware concerns of the spread of COVID-19 had increased; public schools had closed along with surrounding cities and counties. Mr. Rapson stated that the goal for Fayette County was to take a measured approach and recommended closing the Fayette County Offices to public access. Mr. Rapson stated that County staff would still report to work answering phone requests, responding to emails, and process citizen request via online applications. Mr. Rapson specified that the County would be closed to the public included: the Stonewall Administrative Complex, the library, and recreational facilities. Mr. Rapson stated for clarification that there were other offices and agencies, such as the Board of Elections Office and the Tax Commissioner's Office, who utilize the Stonewall Administrative Complex, but were governed separately and would have to take separate action regarding operational changes. Mr. Rapson stated that the recommendation was to close access to the public from March 16- 20 2020, or extend it through March 27, 2020, if approved the recommendation would be to cancel the March 26, 2020 Board of Commissioners Meeting.

Chairman Ognio stated for clarification that these recommendation did not apply to the bodies and offices that are governed separately, nor for the Constitutional Officers within Fayette County.

Mr. Rapson stated that he had spoken to Judge Edwards regarding operational changes for the courts. Mr. Rapson stated that Judge Edwards advised that the courts were working from home and tele-conferencing as enacted by the State Chief Justice, but were awaiting final guidance regarding closures. Mr. Rapson stated that he had also spoken with the Chairman of the Elections Board and currently no decisions had been made regarding the process for handling early voting, but the Special Election had been postponed until May. Mr. Rapson stated in regard to those offices the public would have access, as well as to the County Health Department.

Chairman Ognio asked what the timeframe of the closure would be. He stated that at the end of that timeframe he would be comfortable giving the County Administrator the authority to extend it, if necessary.

Mr. Rapson stated that if recommendations were approved to close public access to county offices through March 27th, he would recommend having a special called meeting on March 26th to discuss a possible extension, if necessary.

Vice-Chairman Oddo asked if a special called meeting was conducted on the 26th would it be open to the public.

Mr. Rapson stated yes it would be open for the public to attend.

Chairman Ognio stated that he was in favor of giving the County Administrator the authority to make the decisions, when necessary. Chairman Ognio stated that the purpose of the closure was to encourage social distancing, he asked "why host a meeting that the public is invited to attend, were we're telling them that they really shouldn't attend." Chairman Ognio did acknowledge that Tax Commissioner Kristie King was present at meeting, and advised that she would be making her announcement regarding the tax Commissioners Office later.

Commissioner Maxwell stated for reiteration from his understanding based on the discussion the Boards would be giving the County Administrator full the authority to make decisions, giving him the ability to close offices, if necessary.

Commissioner Rousseau suggested modifying the authority given to the County Administrator to only be related to operational decisions as opposed to also allowing policy changes.

Mrs. Rapson stated that he wasn't sure how he could be allowed to make some of the operational decision and it not affect a policy, various changes and decision would be closely linked.

Commissioner Gibbons stated that he has been involved in crisis action and management in the past and knew well the difference between assistance and micromanagement. Commissioner Gibbons stated that he felt in this instance the Board should utilize the assistance the County Administrator provided.

Vice-Chairman Oddo stated that at any time the Board had concerns, they could always arrange a special called meeting.

Mr. Rapson stated that he would continue to communicate and keep the Board informed and up-to-date with all issues, changes, decisions, and/or concerns as they arise. Mr. Rapson stated the he would need a form of latitude to make various decisions as circumstances present themselves as this was a fluid situation.

Chairman Ognio moved to approve staff's recommendation to close county offices to the public immediately through March 27, 2020 in an abundance of caution due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19); and to give County Administrator authorization to make all decision as necessary, with the exception of other bodies or constitutional bodies in the County. Commissioner Gibbons seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

Tax Commissioner Kristie King advised that there were various functions and procedures that are performed by her office that would require in-person interactions, so she would not at this time be closing to the public. Mrs. King continued stating that the safety of the citizens and her staff was a big concern. Mrs. King stated that she would be going half-staff with a rotating schedule. Mrs. King stating that she would be adding some logistical procedures for those that enter the office to maintain recommended social distancing protocol.

ADJOURNMENT:

Chairman Ognio moved to adjourn the March 16, 2020 Emergency Special Called Meeting. Vice Chairman Oddo seconded. The motion passed 4-0. Commissioner Gibbons was absent

The March 16, 2020 Emergency Special Called meeting adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Marlena Edwards, Deputy County Clerk

Randy C. Ognio, Chairman

The foregoing minutes were duly approved at an official meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Fayette County, Georgia, held on the 9th day of April 2020. Referenced attachments are available upon request at the County Clerk's Office.

Marlena Edwards, Deputy County Clerk