

CITY OF FORT STOCKTON, TEXAS
 MINUTES OF: SPECIAL JOINT CITY COUNCIL & COUNTY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
 DATE OF MEETING: JUNE 29, 2020
 TIME OF MEETING: 6:00 P.M.
 PLACE OF MEETING: PECOS COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MOVED
 SECONDED
 VOTED AYE
 VOTED NAY

ROLL CALL WAS ANSWERED BY COUNCIL MEMBERS & COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
 PRESENT: RUBEN FALCON, JAMES WARNOCK, MIKE URETA JR., PAUL CASIAS,
 JOE SHUSTER, TOM CHAPMAN, ROBERT GONZALES, MIKEY JACK PERRY &
 SANTIAGO CANTU JR.
 PRESENT VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE: PAM PALILEO

MAYOR: JOE CHRIS ALEXANDER
 CITY MANAGER: FRANK RODRIGUEZ III
 CITY SECRETARY: MARINA A. CANTU
 CITY ATTORNEY: PUJA BOINPALLY

FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS:

1. Invocation

SECOND ORDER OF BUSINESS:

2. City Council to Convene in Joint Special Session.

Mayor Alexander called the Special Joint Meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. after declaring a quorum present.

THIRD ORDER OF BUSINESS:

3. Public Comments on Agenda Items

County Judge Shuster explained the process for Public Comments on Agenda Items.

FOURTH ORDER OF BUSINESS:

4. Discuss/Act upon Increasing 100-person Limit for Outdoor gatherings pursuant to Texas Governor Abbott's Order of June 26, 2020, with Certain Exceptions.

County Judge Shuster explained that the first thing they needed to discuss was the minimum standards for outdoor gatherings as outlined by the State.

He informed everyone that there were several inquiries on how the COVID pandemic would affect the 4th of July festivities.

Mayor Alexander advised everyone that the City opted not to fund any 4th of July events, keeping the best interest of the community in mind. Events such as these bring in numerous visitors. In order to prevent the spread of COVID in the community, they chose not to partake in any festivities.

The Downtown Association was planning on hosting an event for the 4th of July; however, they had to cancel as they would not have the funding or the food trucks.

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Food Trucks are not being allowed because there is no way to enforce social distancing at large events.

He did advise everyone that the fireworks were already paid for.

Council Member Falcon informed everyone the Annual Reunion Festival was cancelled for this year.

Mayor Alexander advised everyone that the active cases were from people visiting from outside locations. He voiced concern that these events were meant to draw people into the community.

Mayor Pro-Tem stated the reality is the number of COVID cases are increasing. People should stay home, limit groups to 10 or less, and wear masks. He stated elected officials are responsible for the well being of the community...it is their duty to protect our community.

County Judge Shuster agreed the number of COVID cases in Pecos County were on the rise. He attributed the recent active cases to individuals visiting family in different communities and other states. He stated there were 9 new cases today: 7 local cases, 2 out of town cases, all belonging to Pecos County.

He voiced concern that he did not want to see the cases in Pecos County get out of hand due to poor decisions.

Mayor Alexander asked how many cases the neighboring counties had.

County Judge Shuster responded Brewster County had 86 cases. Pecos County had 51 cases: 42 plus the recent 9, which does not include the numbers from the Fort Stockton Unit (N-5).

Council Member Falcon inquired how many active cases Pecos County had.

Pecos County Emergency Management Coordinator Jessie Dominguez responded that there were 13 active cases in Pecos County.

Council Member Falcon advised everyone last week San Antonio began turning down sick individuals, as their hospitals were full. He stated it was only a matter of time before Odessa & Midland started turning away sick individuals. They

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receive patients from Pecos County but also surrounding communities such as Andrews, Big Spring, Stanton, Monahans & Pecos.

He attributed the cancellation of the Reunion Festival to health concerns. There is no way that local businesses could survive another setback.

County Judge Shuster agreed with Council Member Falcon. Some local businesses were completely shut down for a couple of months without any cash flow.

They received stimulus checks from the government; however, it was not enough to offset what they lost.

He would like businesses in the county to remain open.

He acknowledged that some businesses had shut down nationwide because they did not have the financial safety net to keep them afloat during the shutdown.

Council Member Falcon stated the parade also needed to be taken into consideration.

County Judge Shuster commented that the candy alone was an issue. There is no way to determine who touched the candy and if they were infected, which could rapidly spread the virus through cross contamination.

Council Member Falcon voiced the City and County should focus their energy on the School District. How is the school going to be held this year? Quality of life events such as the Reunion Festival and 4th of July should be cancelled.

County Commissioner Santiago Cantu inquired if venues would continue to be rented out.

County Judge Shuster replied that venues are restricted to 50% capacity as of last week when Governor Abbott passed his last order.

He voiced concern that social distancing becomes an issue when it comes to events/social gatherings. Social distancing is also an issue when it comes to bars, which is why Governor Abbott shut them down.

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He responded that renting venues is a judgement call that would be left up to each County Commissioner.

He recommended that the venues not be rented out because there is no way to enforce social distancing at functions. That would be the safest option.

County Attorney Frank Lacy commented that regardless if the City consented to gatherings, the County owns the park and could prevent the gatherings.

County Judge Shuster responded that was an option; however, the purpose of the meeting was to do things in a united effort.

City Attorney Puja Boinpally stated that there is no way to enforce social distancing at events as those being discussed. She voiced concern that the numbers are already climbing, and the County hasn't even begun its second wave of the virus.

County Judge Shuster stated Pecos County has been lucky that there have only been 3 hospitalizations, 2 from Fort Stockton and 1 from out of town.

He mentioned the state was reaching out to see how many refugees Fort Stockton could host in case of an evacuation. Hurricane season is between August and September.

Pecos County Memorial Hospital has 3 ventilators and Iraan has approximately 1 or 2 ventilators.

The State is looking for areas outside of Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, Houston & San Antonio areas.

They are looking for areas for communities that can house refugees from a hurricane for 6 weeks or longer in the middle of the COVID pandemic.

The State was inquiring how many cots could be placed in the HPE building, the 1st Baptist Church, gymnasium, Civic Center, etc.

Should many refugees be brought here it would outsource our community.

It's hard enough when we have a freeze and the interstate is closed for 1-2 days.

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Council Member Falcon recalled during Hurricane Katrina the state housed refugees in Fort Stockton; however, they didn't stay long because the City does not have public housing. Therefore, they moved to Monahans & Pecos.

Regardless of the time spent in Fort Stockton if they are infected there is a possibility of them spreading the virus in our community.

County Judge Shuster advised everyone that the State was avoiding sending refugees to Austin, Fort Worth, Dallas, Houston & San Antonio as they are already full. Therefore, they are looking at outsourcing them to rural communities.

The rural communities will step-up if need be; however, they can only accept what they are equipped to handle.

Water Carnival Representative Lisa Granado stated they had planned to limit the seating. The Comanche Swimming Pool holds approximately 1500 people and they were only planning on selling between 400-450 tickets. They were also going to provide extra security to enforce social distancing.

County Judge Shuster inquired how many participants the Water Carnival had this year.

Water Carnival Representative Granado replied there were 180 participants this year.

Mayor Alexander asked if Water Carnival Practice had already begun.

County Judge Shuster inquired if the props were already set-up.

Water Carnival Representative Granado responded that they are built but have not been set-up.

Mayor Alexander advised everyone that the Intergovernmental Recreation had cancelled their t-ball, baseball & softball season this year, because there is no way to enforce social distancing with sports.

County Commissioner Cantu clarified masks are recommended, not mandatory at this time.

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He **inquired** how many kids are there per act.

Water Carnival Representative Granado replied the **smallest** act consisted of 7 children, while the largest act consisted of 30 children.

She stated they could request masks be worn.

County Judge Shuster stated neither the City nor County have ordinances mandating masks be worn so at this point the recommendation could be made, but not enforced.

He advised the City of Odessa recently turned down the mask ordinance for their community.

Brewster County has mandated masks be worn.

Council Member Falcon emphasized the fact that businesses could not withstand another shutdown.

County Attorney Lacy stated another thing that needs to be taken into consideration is that the Water Carnival will occur prior to school starting. The decision to hold the Water Carnival could impact school starting.

Council Member Casias voiced that the Water Carnival should not be held as they bring in a lot of visitors from out of town, which should be taken into consideration in order to protect the communities of Pecos County.

County Commissioner Tom Chapman agreed that the health of the community must come first.

Council Member Warnock recalled the School District recently had to shutdown sports conditioning due to possible exposure to COVID.

He also mentioned another situation in a different area that occurred when a birthday party was held for a family of 18 and all contracted COVID, one resulted in death.

Mayor Alexander recommended the Firework Display be cancelled.

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County Judge Shuster recommended cancelling the Firework Display but allowing locals to pop fireworks at the Rooney Park.

County Attorney Lacy shared their concerns that the Firework Display would attract visitors.

County Commissioner Cantu stated people generally watch the fireworks, then leave.

Council Member Palileo stated the Firework Display be postponed.

Mayor Alexander suggested the Firework Display could be postponed to a later date.

Council Member Falcon reiterated the importance of preventing visitors from coming into the community. If someone goes into a business and is infected, the business would automatically have to shut down and everyone exposed would have to get tested. The business would then have the stigma associated with the virus.

Council Member Casias inquired what the Certain Exceptions were for the outdoor gatherings exceeding 100 people.

County Judge Shuster explained extra measures such as taking temperatures, requiring hand sanitizers be placed every so many feet, and having extra security to police social distancing could be required.

County Commissioner Cantu stated masks could be required.

County Judge Shuster stated masks could be required; however, it would be very hot.

Mayor Pro-Tem Ureta stated if the City chose to go with Governor Abbott's Order then no action is needed, only if exceptions are going to be made.

Firework Technician Kevin DeHaven voiced concern about the Firework Display, as he stated there is no way to enforce social distancing.

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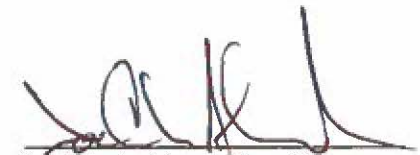
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There being no further business, the Special Joint Meeting was adjourned @ 7:07 p.m.


Joe Chris Alexander, Mayor

ATTEST:


Marina A. Cantu, City Secretary