

MINUTES

County Council Meeting

Special Meeting

Thursday, July 2, 2020

Spartanburg County Council met on Thursday, July 2, 2020, in County Council Chambers of the County Administration Building. The following were in attendance: Honorable Manning Lynch, Chairman; Honorables Michael Brown, Jack Mabry, David Britt, and Bob Walker, Council Members; along with Cole Alverson, County Administrator; Earl Alexander, Deputy County Administrator; John Harris, County Attorney; and Ginny Dupont, County Attorney. Honorable Roger Nutt, Council Member, joined remotely. Honorable Whitney Farr, Council Member, was absent. In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, notice of this meeting was provided in advance to the local news media and other interested parties.

Meeting was live streamed via YouTube. Links and instructions for how to access this meeting via computer or mobile device were made available on the County's webpage and provided to the local media.

- I. Chairman Lynch called the meeting to order and stated that 2020 continues to be a year like none we have ever seen.
- II. Chairman Lynch opened by letting everyone know Roger Nutt was unable to attend the meeting in person due to being quarantined in advance of a medical procedure. Mr. Nutt joined the meeting remotely.

Council considered a Resolution to encourage citizens to wear face coverings in pharmacies and grocery stores in the County and other matters related thereto.

Mr. Mabry stated that wearing a mask is something strange to everyone. It is difficult to do. We have started to see the numbers going up. With all the testing, the numbers are going to go up. Mr. Mabry stated that it is a mask, a small piece of cloth, to possibly protect you. If someone came in his office coughing and sneezing, and he had a mask on the desk to pick up, he would pick it up and not take whatever home to his family. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. This is just an ounce of prevention. Mr. Mabry's wife is in the medical field. There are people with

pros and cons on the medical side. Until you find something definitive, mandating might be a little bit different, but doing a Resolution could possibly be the key.

Mr. Brown stated that he has worn a mask for the last several months. He could only speak directly to his constituency, and based upon what we know to be true in this Country, definitely in this State, and even with the numbers you see in this community, clearly when certain communities catch a cold, his community, black and brown community, have caught the essence of the pandemic. Mr. Brown stated that it may be symbolic to some, but it is substantive clearly for a number of people that he represents to wear the mask and to promote any opportunity that they can. Council understands that you cannot legislate morality, and you cannot force people to do things that some would want Council to do and others would require Council to do, but this is a step, obviously as a collective, to move this County in the direction in which Council feels it should go. There is a great call for business to come back online. It is unfortunate that it could be debated in regards to certain things that you try to put in place for safeguards for those who conduct business, for those who know they have to be viable and maintain what they do for their families and for the future. Council wants to help all people and to be able to operate in the best way that we can. They hope every measure we take personally, as a collective in this community, will ensure that we are safe and doing the right things. This is something we have never seen before, and Council just wants to make sure that at least as the Elected Officials of this County, they are making an effort to show that they want to do something on the behalf of all people. This is a Resolution and not an Ordinance. Mr. Brown stated that he appreciates people understanding that it goes well beyond partisanship or politics. It is just an effort to try to do what Council feels can help this community.

Mr. Britt stated that if you look back to where our County was 25 years ago, it was a much different place then than it is now. Because of business and industry, it has been transformed. We have made a statement to the world that we know how to build the best product here, but more importantly, we know how to build relationships and trust. For this reason, we have had over \$18 billion invested in the County. We have had over 80,000 new jobs created here. Today, this is being challenged and in jeopardy. Mr. Britt works in industry, and he is fortunate right now to co-chair, along with Kaye Woodward, a business taskforce, Bringing Back the Burg to Spartanburg. It is from Landrum to Woodruff and from Cowpens to Greer and all the industry and business included in there. Small, medium, and large businesses are all being impacted. Today, we have 14.3% of our citizens unemployed compared to 2% in February. Two weeks ago, Councilman Britt and Chairman Lynch talked about how they were hoping and praying this COVID-19 would be going

down versus going up. They talked about the impact on business and industry. The Chairman has been very involved with bringing back the business and the business taskforce. It is in jeopardy now, but the golden goose is business and industry. It goes from the hair cutting salon to the largest employer, BMW. In the last two weeks, Tindall, Mr. Britt's employer, has had a tremendous number of people testing positive COVID-19. It impacts everybody. A lot of people are stating that if it does hit employers and businesses, people can take unemployment. However, the extra \$600 runs out July 31, 2020. Business is in jeopardy. Mr. Britt stated that using the masks, washing your hands, and doing social distancing means something. If you asked Mr. Britt if he could save one life in Spartanburg for the rest of his life, he would do whatever is necessary. If it means wearing a mask, washing hands, and doing social distancing, he is going to do it, whether he is an Elected Official or not. He does believe in the people of Spartanburg. Council is doing a Resolution. The people of Spartanburg have stepped up and changed us. We are One Spartanburg. We are a different place than anywhere else. Countries all over the world want to be like Spartanburg, and people all over the world want to work and live here. Mr. Britt stated that he has faith in the citizens that they will step up and do what we have to do, because if we do not and this thing continues to spike, we are going to see schools not starting, businesses closing down, and industries closing down. BMW has already closed for a month. This is going to impact families. This is the reason Mr. Britt supports the Resolution. He was excited to say that when they hold a Press Conference following the meeting, they are going to have every Countywide Elected Official standing on the stage with them from Sheriff Wright to Coroner Rusty Clevenger, Sharon West, Amy Cox, Judge Caldwell, Lindsey Brady, and Barry Barnette or Murray Glenn from the Solicitor's Office. The mask is not comfortable, but Mr. Britt is willing to wear it to go into a grocery store or pharmacy for 30 minutes. The medical professionals are wearing the masks 10 to 12 hours per day. The law enforcement professionals have to wear them now when they make calls. The fireman and first responders have to wear them. Mr. Britt stated that he is going to wear his mask as much as he can to make a statement. He thinks it is the right thing to do.

Mr. Nutt stated that he appreciates the comments. Business is very important. He wanted to point out the reason people are unemployed now, for the most part, is because government came in and shut people down. Maybe rightfully so, or at least that is what is thought, that the best thing to do is to just shut everybody down and tell everybody they could not work. Mr. Nutt stated that he is looking at a situation now where he would recommend that people do whatever they need to do to make sure they are safe and their family is safe, and to do their best to make sure they do not go out and intentionally spread disease to everybody in the country. Mr. Nutt would encourage them to do whatever is necessary. If it

is wearing a mask, there is a lot of evidence out there that shows that the masks work. There is some contrary evidence that it does harm, but for the most part, everybody agrees that the mask works to help curve the spread of the virus. It is probably a great idea. If you feel that you need to wear a mask to help your fellow citizens, Mr. Nutt encourages you to do so. But when government steps in and makes decisions and says this is what we recommend, and this is what we would like for you to do, it is different and that is what government has been doing. This is a year like no other. It is bizarre what we have going through for the last six months. It is unbelievable. Nobody would have ever guessed it. Today, especially with the heightened sense of overreach and the loss of freedoms and everything else, when government comes out and says we would highly recommend you wear a mask that is different than if Roger Nutt says you probably need to wear a mask if you are concerned. Mr. Nutt thought it was great that there was going to be a stage of all the Elected Officials getting together to say it is a good idea for you to wear masks. Mr. Nutt stated it probably is a good idea, and he is all for it. He is just not a fan of the government coming out on every situation and making a resolution and all these other things that officials do instead of just personally encouraging everybody and also showing a personal responsibility of doing it yourself like Mr. Britt. Mr. Britt is going to be an example. He is going to be out and make a statement. Mr. Nutt thinks that is fantastic. Unfortunately, because of Council Rules, Mr. Nutt could not vote remotely.

Mr. Walker stated that he agreed with some of the things Mr. Nutt had to share. He spent some time looking at the Resolution. He does not know how many people in the County or in Chambers understands what is in the Resolution. He stated they are told that it is a Resolution, so it does not have the affect of anything that would be enforceable. It is just Council encouraging people to go do certain things. Mr. Walker stated that he encourages people to do things that they feel like is best for them, their family, or this community. He is not in favor of government leading and trying to tell people what they should or should not do. He stated the Resolution is worded in such a degree that he has been told this really is a bunch of words on a piece of paper that really does not give the authority to do anything, which sounds good, but he questioned why they were doing it. If Council is really serious about certain businesses, why are they picking on certain businesses versus every business? Mr. Walker is a business owner. As a business owner, he feels like the government needs to stay out of what businesses try to do. When he opens his business every morning, he has the right to have a sign on the door that states that they request you have a mask on whenever you come in. Mr. Walker does not think a Resolution is needed. He thinks Council needs to continue to allow businesses to operate. He has read and saw on the news that some of the masks are great and some are not so great. A mask is not referred to in the Resolution. Face coverings are referred to in

the Resolution. He understands a t-shirt pulled over your nose or mouth qualifies for a face covering. As an Elected Official, Mr. Walker does not think it is his responsibility to try to do what they were trying to do. Mr. Walker stated that regretfully, he was not in support of the Resolution even though it means nothing as far as enforcement.

Mr. Lynch added this was obviously not an Ordinance. It was a Resolution. He thought this was an act of the leadership of our County standing up and asking our citizens, and letting them know that Council thinks it is important, to enact some personal responsibility that includes social distancing, washing your hands, and wearing a mask when you are in a grocery store or pharmacy. Mr. Lynch stated that his personal position would be to ask citizens to take that one step further and wear a mask any time they are in a crowded location where they feel like social distancing was not going to be able to be maintained. Council was not invoking the heavy hand of government. They were just simply asking their good citizens to do the right thing here. We have the issues, as Mr. Britt and Mr. Brown pointed out, and Council asked citizens to do the right thing here to protect your neighbors. Mr. Lynch further stated that we can and we will overcome this with the help of our good citizens of Spartanburg County.

Motion made by Mr. Britt to adopt the Resolution to encourage citizens to wear face coverings in pharmacies and grocery stores in the County and other matters related thereto. Motion seconded by Mr. Brown and carried. Mr. Brown, Mr. Britt, and Mr. Mabry voted in favor. Mr. Walker opposed. Mr. Nutt could not vote remotely.


Meeting adjourned.

Spartanburg County Council

By:


A. Manning Lynch, Chairman

Attest:


Deborah C. Ziegler
Clerk to Council