

MINUTES OF AN EMERGENCY CORNWALL BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY, APRIL 2, AT 11 A.M.
IN THE CORNWALL BOROUGH GARAGE

Present: Council President John Karinch, Marie Tribioli, Steve Tribioli, Ron Ricard, Al Brandt, Thomas Burton, Mayor Mark Thomas and Manager Cody Rhoads

An emergency meeting related to the COVID-19 pandemic was called to order by Council President John Karinch at 11 a.m.

DECLARATION OF DISASTER EMERGENCY

Marie Tribioli made the motion, seconded by Steve Tribioli, to sign the Declaration of Disaster Emergency for the Borough of Cornwall. Motion passed.

POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

A discussion was held to determine how to best respond to a member of the police department testing positive for COVID-19.

The infected officer last worked on Friday, March 27, was tested over the weekend and received a positive result on Wednesday, April 1.

Ron Ricard talked about the possibility of each officer taking a cruiser home and responding only to emergencies from there. That setup would continue until each officer had been effectively symptom-free for two weeks.

Marie Tribioli mentioned that guidance from the CDC and state says that everyone that was in contact with the officer should be quarantined for 14 days. She feels the department should follow that guidance and quarantine for two weeks. She did not have a problem with them answering phone calls but did not want them responding to calls. She said that this is the only way to keep the officers and community safe.

Steve Tribioli cited the police department's call log for the past few months. He felt that with the amount of calls they receive per day; it makes sense to quarantine for two weeks. The coverage can be handled by the mutual aid agreement and state police coverage. He was concerned for well-being of the community, especially the older population who is more susceptible to contracting the virus. He said that in his career as a police officer he's been shot at, but he finds this pandemic to be scarier because so much is unknown about the virus.

Tom Burton agreed with Steve's sentiment. He was also disappointed that there was not a plan in place to address this possibility in the borough. He felt he was rebuffed when he asked about such a plan in recent months.

Mayor Thomas said the police department should remain open. The guidance he has received from the Lebanon EMA said they should not close. He said he has talked to a lot of smart people

and none of them suggested quarantining. South Lebanon is in the same situation as two of their officers had contact with our officer and they just quarantined the two officers, not the whole department. He said there weren't many unknowns about the virus so the officers can take the proper precautions to prevent themselves from contracting the virus or spreading it.

John Karinch felt the department could stay open and operate smartly. He spoke with State Rep. Frank Ryan and Mr. Ryan said we are not required to quarantine the department. He also said the Lebanon EMA did not tell Chief Harris they had to quarantine. If the officers handle most of the calls via phone as they have been trying to do then he felt they could continue working,

Al Brandt said he could see the side of quarantining all the officers but wanted to play devil's advocate. He wondered what will happen if they quarantine and then the department reopens, someone could be exposed right away then the whole cycle starts over again. He felt like it would be a never-ending process and therefore the quarantine might not be worthwhile.

Steve Tribioli understood that sentiment but felt that since we know an officer tested positive, the borough should take the proper steps to ensure we are doing everything we can to prevent the spread.

Everyone agreed that the officers and secretary would receive their full pay if they were quarantined.

Cody Rhoads informed council that Akita Pest Control was scheduled to do a deep cleaning of the police station and sanitize the vehicles later that afternoon. He also said that Solicitor Cleary's interpretation was that quarantining the department would fall under day-to-day operations, which would be at the Mayor's discretion.

Marie Tribioli wondered if it was possible to furlough the employees with pay to ensure council's directive would be followed.

Steve Tribioli felt that quarantining was the right move and if the Mayor disagreed, he'd be the one to have to prove it in court to overturn council's decision based on the case law.

Marie Tribioli made a motion, seconded by Steve Tribioli, to quarantine the department for 14 days and rely on state police coverage and the mutual aid agreement to cover the borough. Ron Ricard "yay", Tom Burton "yay", John Karinch "nay", Al Brandt "nay". Motion passed 4-2.

After further discussion, it was determined that since the officer who tested positive last worked on Friday and it was already Thursday, one week of quarantine would be enough. Marie Tribioli amended her motion, seconded by Steve Tribioli, to quarantine the department for seven days. Ron Ricard "yay", Tom Burton "yay", John Karinch "nay", Al Brandt "nay". Motion passed 4-2.

Mayor Thomas wanted it on record that he disagreed with the motion and wanted the department to stay open.

Ron Ricard made the motion, seconded by Steve Tribioli, to adjourn the meeting at 11:47 a.m.
Motion passed.

Cody Rhoads
Secretary