

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

Virtual/electronic meeting

3:00 p.m.

The Charlottesville City Council met in a virtual work session on Wednesday, May 13, 2020, with the following Councilors present: Mayor Nikuyah Walker, Vice Mayor Sena Magill, Ms. Heather Hill, Mr. Michael Payne and Mr. Lloyd Snook.

Ms. Walker called the work session to order at 3:03 p.m. and turned the meeting over to City Manager Tarron Richardson.

Dr. Richardson gave an overview of the City Council request for information from Board and Commission chairpersons regarding the urgency of meeting to conduct business during the COVID-19 State of Emergency Declaration.

City Attorney John Blair shared his legal analysis of statutory requirements for certain boards and commissions to meet, and reviewed legislative amendments proposed by Governor Northam. Mr. Blair advised of the statutory requirement for the Board of Equalization to meet. He also advised that while the Planning Commission statutorily shall meet every two months, City Council took action on March 25th, passing a resolution extending certain deadlines for items that would normally be reviewed by the Planning Commission. Mr. Blair noted that Boards and Commissions in order to meet virtually would require staff resources and consideration of certain logistical matters in order to meet desired outcomes related to public participation and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. Some items for consideration with virtual meetings would be: access, equity, urgency, workforce safety, staff capacity, and technology capacity.

Ms. Walker opened the floor for public comment. No one indicated a desire to speak.

Council discussed individual boards and their responses regarding urgency of meetings.

Director of Communications, Brian Wheeler, shared information about various broadcast and meeting options, including hybrid meeting options for partial in-person meetings in compliance with distancing requirements.

Mr. Blair noted that public body subcommittees would also have to abide by requirements of the Freedom of Information Act, and make meetings available to the public. Specifically for the Board of Equalization, Mr. Blair advised that Council could not mandate that the hearings be televised, but could make a recommendation for virtual meetings. He also confirmed that City Council could not dictate agenda items for boards and commissions.

Staff liaisons to boards and commissions and other staff answered Council questions.

Ms. Walker again opened the floor for public comment. The following speakers participated:

- Ms. Ashley Davies, City resident and Chair of Charlottesville Area Development Round Table (CADRe), spoke in support of moving forward with Planning Commission meetings.
- Mr. Phil d'Oronzio spoke in support of the use of Zoom meetings.
- Mr. Rory Stolzenberg spoke about the use of technology for meeting transparency.

Mr. Blair shared information about the First Amendment as related to managing bad actors during virtual meetings, and a level of training that would be involved for meeting moderators.

Mr. Wheeler advised of the need to be aware of not overlapping meetings. He also advised that the phone participation option for City of Charlottesville Zoom meetings does require registration in order to identify callers.

Council agreed that meetings that have traditionally been broadcast and livestreamed would continue: BAR (Board of Architectural Review), CRHA (Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority), Planning Commission and City Council, following their normal schedules.

Ms. Walker asked that the Communications Department work out logistics for additional board meetings: Board of Equalization, CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) Task Force, Housing Advisory Committee, Ridge Street Task Force, Electoral Board, and Retirement Commission.

Council asked staff to reach out to board chairs and bring back additional information for discussion at the May 18, 2020, City Council meeting, verifying technical feasibility of holding virtual public meetings.

Ms. Walker opened the floor for public comment. No one indicated a desire to speak.

Director of Information Technology, Sunny Hwang, mentioned a request to provide accessibility accommodations for a particular board, and advised that staff would be researching associated costs and ways to accommodate should other boards receive requests.

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council