

The Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Panama City Beach, Florida, related to Staff Updates/Needs from Hurricane Michael, held on October 18, 2018.

ROLL

MAYOR MIKE THOMAS

COUNCILORS:

PAUL CASTO

PHIL CHESTER

GEOFF MCCONNELL

HECTOR SOLIS

CITY MANAGER:

MARIO GISBERT

CITY CLERK:

JO SMITH

CITY ATTORNEY:

AMY E. MYERS

Mayor Thomas called the Special Meeting to order at 9 A.M. with all Council members, City Manager, City Clerk and City Attorney present.

Councilman Chester gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Thomas invited Ms. Sandy Sims from Gulf Power to the podium for an update on the electrical situation. Ms. Sims spoke of the 7,000 power employees brought to the area who had restored electrical services to 80,000 customers out of the original 130,000 customers who lost power during the storm. She thanked the Council for being able to stage her 700 crewmen at Frank Brown Park. She spoke of the City being almost fully restored for those buildings that could accept power.

ITEM 1 CITY MANAGER. Mr. Gisbert commended the City employees who not only worked the 8-10-12 hour days here, they changed clothes and went across the bridge to help. He said as the City improved, our personnel were lent to the other communities. As food donations arrived, they were dispersed to the balance of the community. He explained the traffic burden, the crews staying here and then traveling across the bridge.

Councilman Casto asked about Verizon. Mr. Gisbert explained the spotty service and AT&T responding to the City's need with sixty new phones for communications. Ms. Proctor responded by bringing new phones to him at midnight Thursday night which allowed the Police Department to communicate. He said AT&T continually provided more phones as they became available. He explained that Thursday, the City had functioned with handwritten notes between Departments.

Councilman Casto asked about internet services. Mr. Gisbert said he had not been able to communicate with WOW or Comcast. The City was fortunate to have all three providers on site and was able to access the internet the next day. Mr. Gisbert said the City offered its office spaces to other communities. Councilman Solis said WOW was anticipating another two to three weeks for the beach due to many problems resplicing lines on the new poles. He said Comcast was doing a little better.

Councilman Chester asked if he had been able to reach the Springfield Mayor who was running City Hall from his car. Ms. Myers said she had heard from their City Attorney that they were set up and very appreciative for the City's Police Mobile Command Center sent because they had nothing.

ITEM 2 POLICE DEPARTMENT. Chief Whitman spoke of shared resources and he complimented his men and women and thanked Police Chaplain John Woodrow who counseled not only law enforcement but any employee who needed help. He reported on the 37 Mutual Aid officers from all over the State. He said they were enforcing the curfew to protect the neighborhoods and our City would have a large influx of people and he wanted to ensure their safety. Chief Whitman thanked the Fire Department for not only doing their normal 24-hour shift but then going out the next day to help the public or City workers. He continued that FHP was coming with their Command Center with the assignment to get traffic moving on Panama City Beach Parkway. He said that should help as both Front Beach and the Parkway were gridlocked.

Chief Whitman said, for the future, he would need a backup for the new digital communications system once the old analog system was replaced. He said AT&T had been dropping off phones nonstop and now the Department could receive calls and dispatch officers as well as helping the Sheriff throughout the County doing welfare

checks. He asked to increase his manpower by adding three full-time officers now and explained the time it took for training.

Councilman Casto asked about looters and Chief Whitman responded that there were some thefts but not the looting like in town. Chief Whitman said he had about 50 officers out at night, paired with Mutual Aid. He stated the community was safe.

Councilman McConnell said the City was housing and staging many of the First Responders who only added to the traffic congestion. Chief Whitman said the two shelters here would house over 1,000 people until they could find long-term housing. Councilman Solis offered a motion to hire the three new officers as he believed the Chief would be frugal but it was a lengthy process to hire an officer. Ms. Myers said the Council had a regular meeting next Thursday and it would be more appropriate to take long-term action at that meeting.

ITEM 3 FIRE DEPARTMENT. Mr. Gisbert explained that Chief Couch helped with the EOC and Deputy Chief Morgan coordinated his officers working the normal schedule then getting off duty and helping others for another day. Chief Couch said he split his crews to assist in Lynn Haven, Panama City and Springfield, and even over to Mexico Beach. He said his officers, once their 24-hour shift was over, were either going to another firehouse to stage or out cutting trees and clearing roads. Chief Couch said he planned to come to the Council soon to ask for more equipment and personnel already budgeted to fast track them.

Deputy Chief Morgan said out of our 35 Firefighters, 15 were in temporary housing since most lived in Lynn Haven. He said his Firefighters worked a 72-hour shift during the hurricane, without knowing if wives and children were safe at home. As soon as the storm passed, his officers joined with the Police to clear hazards within the City and make welfare checks. Once the City was cleared the next day, they moved to Thomas Drive and worked with the County. Then to Lynn Haven for two days to clear homes and perform rescues. However, at no time was the City unprotected as a well-staffed engine and rescue company remained on duty. He said the firefighters were now back to the 24/48 schedule and the shift going off duty would work in a support manner, working to account for City employees. D.C. Morgan said his officers went as far as Youngstown and Fountain to check on City employees and give them support to get them back to work. He said as of this morning, they had been able to make over 100 homes safer by tarping roofs and clearing trees for access. He continued that many of his firefighters were going over to Springfield to assist on their rigs on their 3rd day because Springfield had no help.

Mr. Gisbert said on Thursday, when there was no water, it was determined that buildings which should not have been occupied were able to remain open to a certain height because they could be reached via a pump truck. With only a limited amount of water, the Department contacted Walton County and they brought over three pump trucks to assist the City. D.C. Morgan said many intrastate resources had arrived to help, from Jacksonville to Pinellas County.

Councilman Solis thanked Captain Terry Parris for working with the EOC on the logistics and orders for other Departments that had been decimated. Mayor Thomas asked if the City had enough water pressure now to protect the City. Chief Couch said yes, the entire stretch of the island.

ITEM 4 UTILITIES DEPARTMENT. Mr. Shortt said the system was running and everything that could be served was operating. The City bought all water from Bay County, and the County had major damage and had lost their ability to send water to the City. On the east end, on the McElvey side, there were major water breaks at the Navy Base and the Treasure Island Marina boat barn. He said the City lost a lot of water there and ran out at the east end of the island earlier than the west end. He said it was not that the City had damage to the system but rather that the County could not send us water to send to our customers. He reminded that there was a Boil Water Notice now and the County was working diligently to get their system cleared. He hoped that would be cleared by the weekend so the water would flow to the City. However, that did not clear Panama City Beach. Our system would then be tested to release the Boil Water Notice to our customers he hoped by mid next week.

On the Wastewater side, Mr. Shortt asked the residents not to use their sprinklers because the County only had one functional water pumping station. He said if the City's crews saw sprinklers operating, they were instructed to shut them off until the capacity was improved. They did not have communications with some of the lift stations on the east end but all had line power thanks to Gulf Power. He said some pumps were damaged, but in the big picture, the City was whole on the sewer side.

On the distribution side, the system was stressed due to the falling trees. He said there would be a higher instance of water breaks because of trees falling, exposing the pipes or removing their support. Mr. Shortt said the system was running at full pressure anywhere the pipes were intact. He explained the challenges in finding the water leaks due to the vast amount of yard debris.

Mr. Shortt said help from Pensacola was staged at the Wastewater Plant to help Lynn Haven. Panama City was meeting now and will report their needs, and then he can determine what resources the City could spare to help.

Mr. Shortt said he was very proud of his employees who worked very hard to get the system up and running. He said the Department was low on staff due to the starting pay issue, missing about ten people. He asked the Council to look into that issue in order to help hire the needed employees.

Councilman Casto asked if McElvey and West Bay were functional. Mr. Shortt explained how Bay County worked to get a clean pipeline from their plant to our plant. He said the reservoirs were full at this time and trying to minimize demand on the system because the County still had issues with a reliable supply to the island. In the two locations, the City had 25,000,000 gallons. Councilman Chester asked if the water line across the bridge had been damaged. Mr. Shortt said not to his knowledge. Councilman McConnell reported how Mr. Shortt had personally went to the EOC to work with the County to reroute the water to get to West Bay, planning a viable route to get water to the island. Mr. Shortt explained the difficulties in processing the water and not having the testing in place to be able to comfortably release the Boil Water Notice. Mayor Thomas said the testing facility that the City and County used had been destroyed. Mr. Shortt said the City was couriering our testing samples every day to Niceville. He said costs would rise because of the transportation required to get the testing done. Mr. Shortt confirmed that the Reclaimed Water was turned off, all going to the wetland.

ITEM 5 PLANNING & BUILDING DEPARTMENT. Mr. Leonard said Staff had visited construction sites giving pre-storm notices which seemed to help and most job sites did a good job in preparations. Some permitting was starting but more would flow as soon as the insurance money was received. He said Staff had been identifying unsafe conditions and marking those appropriately. He said they had also identified the situations with non-conforming status that may have lost its protection so that when the owners applied for permits, Staff would ensure that they corrected whatever non-conformity had existed.

Mr. Leonard said Walton County Planning contacted him to offer assistance and he put them in touch with Bay County to assist. He said they were also receiving more Code Enforcement complaints now that fences were down. He said at this time, he had no special requests. Mr. Gisbert asked if a permit was required to rebuild a fence. Mr. Leonard replied that no permit was required if the fence was rebuilt in place but would be required if it was a new fence. They were also doing after-the-fact roofing permit. If the Gulf Power technician determined that the condition was safe and would accept power, Staff would later do an after-the-fact electrical permit.

ITEM 6 PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT. Ms. Jenkins said the Street and Stormwater Departments were working long hours clearing roads and within the City limits, all roads were cleared. Sidewalks remained to be cleaned and Staff was taking an inventory of signs. Councilman McConnell asked when the ROWs would be cleared. Ms. Jenkins said workers would get to those as quickly as possible because they were concentrating first on the main roads and feeder roads going into neighborhoods. Councilman Chester thanked Mr. Corky Denham for all his work in Colony Club, clearing numerous trees an hour after the storm passed. He added that Mr. Denham lost his own home but was out working for the City.

Mayor Thomas asked about the potential delay for the CRA. Ms. Jenkins said Staff had already contacted the contractor and they planned to come back as soon as Monday. Mr. Gisbert said he had contacted the contractor last night, and he confirmed that crews would be onsite Monday. He also reported on the large haulers contracted with the County who were picking up debris in the ROW and every public street even within gated communities in the County. He mentioned contracting out some of the debris removal and hoped it could be accomplished by an Interlocal Agreement with the County.

ITEM 7 PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT Mr. Ponek said the City and County Piers were open. Aaron Bessant Park was open and safe although some trees were still down, and Frank Brown Park was safe. The Lyndell Senior Center had issues

but expected to be open Monday and planned to put the Boys & Girls Club there temporarily. He said the Aquatics Center, Conservation Park and Frank Brown Park were closed and the trails within the Park were closed. Gayle's Trails were open. Adult softball was postponed until after Thanksgiving. He said the soccer program was canceled and he would work on issuing refunds. Basketball would be started as soon as possible after November.

For Special Events, Mr. Ponek distributed a calendar of upcoming events. ThunderBeach was the next event and was supposed to set up Monday in Frank Brown Park but the Park would not be available. Mayor Thomas said he had already spoken with Mr. Sanders and that some of the events already knew they could not come.

Richard Sanders, Panama City Beach Convention and Visitors Bureau, said the Ironman Florida had been relocated to Haines City and would be a fundraiser for our area. He said the Ironman remained committed to a \$50,000 donation to our area from their Foundation. For Thunder Beach, they announced that their event was postponed and Emerald Coast Cruizin' was postponed until Spring. Regarding Home for the Holidays, no decision had been made. Mr. Sanders said they were in contact with all the events, explaining the situation and making decisions as to what would be best for the event and this community. Councilman Solis said Home for the Holidays would be something good for the community and Mayor Thomas said absolutely. Mr. Sanders said he would let his Staff know that the City supported having that event.

Councilman McConnell asked about the Boys & Girls Club and looking to expand some of their services. Mr. Arthur Cullen said they had 3,000 youth in the community with 500 daily attendance, and over 100 of those kids were from Panama City Beach. He said they would relocate to Lyndell Center on Monday, the first branch open for the Boys & Girls Club. He said at this time, they would only be able to serve Boys & Girls Club members. He said if they had sufficient staff, they would open up to other members of the community. Mr. Cullen said if they had enough need, and once Frank Brown Park was open, they might be able to utilize both facilities. He said two facilities in Panama City had been heavily damaged and the Millville branch totally devastated so they may be looking at bringing kids here in buses.

Mayor Thomas said every kid on the Beach should have the first opportunity to be serviced by the Club. Mr. Cullen confirmed that was the Club's plan. Councilman Chester said his church had the box lunches so just let him know how many were needed. Mr. Cullen said right now, they were averaging between 100-120 kids per day, and many of those parents living on the beach would be able to send lunches.

Councilman Casto asked about the weekends, once the trucks were gone, if the fields could be used for softball and soccer. Mr. Gisbert had asked Gulf Power if the Park could be used in the period between the trucks leaving and coming back to the beach, and the liability would be too great. Once the Park was available, he agreed that everything would be done for the locals. Mayor Thomas said approximately 70% of the children using Frank Brown Park lived outside of the corporate City limits so it was imperative for the entire community to get the Park open as soon as possible.

ITEM 7B CURFEW. Mayor Thomas said a curfew was very valuable but the beach was not hurt that bad. Chief Whitman had said the curfew was needed because of the people walking around the neighborhoods and that would increase. The Mayor said he would like the times shortened due to the City being a support group for the rest of Bay County. He said he did not believe it would jeopardize anyone's safety to move the curfew back to 11 P.M. and have the alcohol sales within City limits mirror the curfew. Mayor Thomas said that people needed the respite, like the Home for the Holidays, for some form of normalcy. He said every day was an improvement.

Councilman Solis said moving the curfew back would hurt Gulf Power tremendously because of the additional traffic. Those power crews needed the extra hours to move when the traffic was not there. He said he would default to the Chiefs for security and safety. Councilman Casto said Panama City Beach was the only City standing in the County and agreed with Mayor Thomas that doors were open and he was concerned people would go to Walton County for their supplies. He said the crews needed a place to eat and supported moving the curfew to 11 P.M.

Chief Whitman said he was concerned about the 1,000 people coming into the shelters and the alcohol. He said he had been in conversations with the County on their moving the curfew and alcohol ban times. He said his concern was the residents and the community as well as the visitors. He said the curfew worked great and he would like to keep the curfew as now until he could speak with Sheriff Ford. Mayor Thomas suggested if problems at the shelters, then shut them down at a certain time because they were not on Front Beach Road nor in the business districts. Chief Whitman said the shelters were

locked during the curfew but during the rest of the day, the people were free to go. Mayor Thomas said the Sheriff had a significant problem across the bridge but they were not enforcing the ban and curfew at the west end of the beach or Thomas Drive. He said the City limits was the only one following the rules now. Chief Whitman said he had the force to handle the curfew. Councilman Solis said he would support Chief Whitman on his recommendations for security. Councilman Casto asked about a compromise moving the hours back to 10 P.M. Chief Whitman said the 9 P.M. was working, allowing the Gulf Power trucks to use the roads. Mayor Thomas mentioned that most of the trucks at night were not Gulf Power and did not have a support team feeding them, so they had no place to eat when they got off work.

Chief Couch said their situation was different. He supported Chief Whitman in his decision but if the curfew was moved to 11 P.M., his engines would have to run with lights and sirens due to the congestion. The Mayor questioned what good a 9 P.M. curfew did with the current traffic congestion and right now, there were no more rooms so we could not physically have more people on the beach. He said when the curfew was not in effect, the traffic was not as congested.

Councilman McConnell asked about the Beach ER. Chief Couch said with minor injuries they were treated, but if major, they were flown out. Both hospitals were closed. Chief Couch reported nine EMS trucks scattered across the County but they were not responding to 911 calls.

Councilman Casto asked Mr. Gisbert about revenue and would the City be able to fund the needs if not open. Mr. Gisbert replied that Staff was working on the costs for the past week. He said October and November would not be known until November and December. He said the beach had more people now than ever during October and probably the same in November. Mayor Thomas said financially, the City was in great shape. It had been a very good year and the City had a surplus. However, some people do not have a backup and they needed to go to work. Councilman McConnell said the City would eventually get FEMA reimbursement for the labor costs.

Councilman Casto made the motion to move the curfew to 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. and authorize the City Manager and Police Chief at any time to return to the original time. Mayor Thomas said he would want the City Manager to notify the Council to have a Special Meeting to make any changes. Mr. Jack Bishop supported the move the start time earlier than 7 A.M. Mayor Thomas did not disagree as this was one cause of the traffic congestion but if the County did not change the early time, it would not do any good if only the City changed. **Second was by Councilman Chester.** Councilman McConnell asked if the alcohol ban should be separate, and Councilman Solis suggested yes. Ms. Myers suggested the alcohol ban by a separate action. She read the Emergency Resolution 19-10E by title. **The motion passed by unanimous roll call vote recorded as follows:**

Councilman Chester	Aye
Councilman McConnell	Aye
Councilman Solis	Aye
Councilman Casto	Aye
Mayor Thomas	Aye

Regarding the alcohol ban, the Mayor asked Councilman Casto if he recommended the ban coincide with the curfew hours. Councilman Casto replied affirmatively. **Councilman Casto made the motion for the alcohol ban to coincide with the curfew hours 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. with a Special Meeting called if the Police Chief felt the need.** Mayor Thomas passed the gavel to the Vice-Mayor and **seconded the motion.** The Vice-Mayor asked for comments.

Councilman McConnell said his concern was public safety. He reminded that there were no hospitals at this time and the beach only had 37 Mutual Aid Officers to help the Police Department. He said he thought the issue should be revisited next week. He said it was too soon. Councilman Solis agreed with Councilman McConnell and deferred to Chief Whitman. Vice-Mayor Chester asked for Chief Couch to respond about the hospital situation. Chief Couch said he thought it would be months before the hospitals were opened. Discussion ensued drinking and the need for hospitals. Ms. Myers advised that public comment could be held if a motion was being entertained. The Vice-Mayor called for public comments from the audience.

Mr. Jack Bishop said it was time to enforce the laws already on the books. It was their responsibility as a license holder to enforce the law and not serve the drunks.

Ms. Lorraine Ramos, 222 Summer Breeze. Ms. Ramos said her first concern was to protect the children. She spoke of traumatized children at the shelters.

With no further comments, the motion passed by majority roll call vote recorded as follows:

Councilman Chester	Aye
Councilman McConnell	Nay
Councilman Solis	Nay
Councilman Casto	Aye
Mayor Thomas	Aye

Ms. Myers stated that she had drafted a Resolution 19-11E to memorialize their action. She read Resolution 19-11E by title. By general consent, the Council accepted the Resolution as written.

ITEM 8 COUNCIL DIRECTIVES/UPDATES. Councilman Solis thanked the people who might be watching the meeting from other areas for the outpouring of support for the beach. He thanked AT&T for their assistance and the local churches who fed thousands as well as tarping roofs. He spoke of the local restaurants who were feeding people for free. Councilman Chester said any donations could go to Woodstock Church, Destiny Church or the Lighthouse. He said food had been taken to Fountain and Bayou George. Mayor Thomas complimented the County Staff as the water situation was bad but could have been so much worse. He recognized Mr. Joe Biggs from ThunderBeach, and the Mayor said he was sorry the event had been canceled but that the City appreciated all that the organizers did for the City.

Mr. Gisbert said one Department, the Admin Department, had been outstanding in this emergency. Ms. Carrie Jagers answered calls when phones were down which meant a lot for someone to reach a person. He said Ms. Debbie Ward, PIO, was getting out information as soon as received because the City had the capabilities. He was thankful for the Staff who was here Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, keeping the place going. The City attorneys were here Saturday and Sunday.

DELEGATIONS

Mayor Thomas opened the Delegations portion of the meeting at 11:48 A.M.

1 Ms Corrinna Dalton. Ms. Dalton said she was a nurse for Coastal Internal Medicine, Dr. Zabih, whose office was at Lyndell and who was accepting patients for no copays. He had volunteer RNs at his office, a limited amount of meds and was offering free medical services.

2 Mr. Frank Sewell. Mr. Sewell asked if the County Commission would in turn mirror the new City curfew time.

With nothing further, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 A.M.

READ AND APPROVED this 13th of December, 2018.

IN THE EVENT OF A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE FOREGOING MINUTES AND A VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THESE MINUTES, THE FOREGOING MINUTES SHALL CONTROL.



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk