

Muscatine County Board of Supervisors
Thursday, March 19, 2020 – Special Session

The Muscatine County Board of Supervisors met in special session at 9:00 A.M. with Holliday, Sauer, Sorensen, Mather and Saucedo present. Chairperson Sorensen presiding.

On a motion by Saucedo, second by Sauer, the agenda was approved as presented. Ayes: All.

Discussion was held regarding policies/procedures related to COVID-19. Administrative Services Director Nancy Schreiber presented a draft policy for Board consideration. Sorensen stated the draft policy would close the Administration Building and Muscatine County Courthouse, as well as other outlying County offices, including Community Services, Secondary Roads and Zoning to the Public effective March 19, 2020 at 4:30 P.M. Sorensen stated the policy would have Muscatine County employees continue to report to work and provide County services available online, by phone, or through mail or email or by appointment for urgent needs. Sorensen stated contact information for all County departments would be posted on doors as well as the website. Sorensen stated before being allowed to access a building for an urgent need, a citizen would be asked screening questions about their health.

Discussion was held regarding how to hold Board of Supervisor meetings. Schreiber stated there are two options: the Board can continue to meet in the Board room or use a program like Go To Meeting. Mather stated comments from the public could be done through written means like mail or email. County Attorney Alan Ostergren stated that would work as a public comment period is not required anyway. Sorensen asked the Board if it would make sense for the short term to have public comments limited to email or mail and read into the minutes. Mather stated anyone who had direct business with the Board could come in after being screened, but the rest would still have electronic access. Bill Riley stated Go To Meeting could be muted for people to be able to listen in to the meeting and then unmute if the person needs to make a comment. Sorensen stated the City of Muscatine is going to do electronic meetings.

Mather expressed concern about the ability for citizens to get license plates. County Treasurer Amy Zybarth stated the 30-day grace period has been extended to a 60-day grace period. Saucedo asked about social distancing for staff, cleaning by custodial staff and hand sanitizer for offices. Budget Administrator Sherry Seright stated General Services is not responsible for social distancing in the various offices, but they are sanitizing once a day. Seright stated employees provide their own tissues and hand sanitizer, but if an employee is sick, General Services will typically go into the department and deep clean the office. Schreiber reported legislation was signed last night to reimburse employers for employees on sick leave due COVID-19. Sorensen stated most counties are work as usual unless sick. Schreiber stated department heads should be left with the flexibility to determine non-essential employees and allowing them to take vacation, sick leave, etc. Information Services Director Bill Riley stated there is limited access to laptops, webcams and microphones, but the County does have 25 remote access licenses. In response to a question from Saucedo, Ostergren stated they are still enforcing laws, but are careful about how they use jail resources to protect the public and the jail at the same time.

Schreiber asked for direction regarding Board of Supervisor meetings. Board consensus was to still hold the meetings in the Board room, but broadcast them live on You Tube and only allow public to communicate by phone or email unless they have an item on the agenda. Mather requested a standing agenda item on every meeting until further notice on whether to continue, alter or discontinue the COVID-19 policy. Mather stated he wants the COVID-19 policy placed on the County website and would also like to see the policy run in an ad on the radio and in the newspaper.

Riley stated he will look into pricing of a Go To or Zoom meeting in case the County needs it in the future. Zoning Administrator Eric Furnas asked about holding Zoning Board meetings. Sorensen stated since there are none until April, Furnas can determine whether to hold the meetings or look into alternatives for holding the meetings.

On a motion by Mather, second by Saucedo, the Board approved the COVID-19 policy as presented with screening questions. Ayes: All.

Saucedo asked about big projects like the construction of the new maintenance facility. Sorensen stated the Board will be dealing with Mike Nolan electronically. Sorensen stated the general contractor has taken steps to limit the number of subcontractors on premises and providing sanitizing systems throughout the facility.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 A.M.

ATTEST:

Leslie A. Soule, County Auditor

Jeff Sorensen, Chairperson
Board of Supervisors