

Surry County Board of Commissioners
Special Meeting of April 29, 2020

The Surry County Board of Commissioners met at 11:00 a.m., April 29, 2020. The meeting was held in Room 102, Historic Courthouse, Dobson, N.C., virtually via Zoom and conference call and broadcast via YouTube on the County website.

Board members present in-person for the meeting were Chairman Larry Johnson and Vice-Chairman Mark Marion. Commissioner Eddie Harris was present via conference call. Commissioners Van Tucker and Bill Goins were present via Zoom.

Others present in-person for the meeting, at various times, were:
Chris Knopf, County Manager
Sandy Snow, Assistant County Manager
Nathan Walls, Assistant to the County Manager

Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order, delivered the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Johnson requested the Board review and approve the agenda. Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Commissioner Marion, the Board voted unanimously to approve the April 29, 2020 agenda.

Chairman Johnson asked for feedback from the Board about the proposed proclamation, which asked Governor Roy Cooper to reopen businesses in Surry County that are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic executive order.

Commissioner Harris provided a message of hope to citizens, saying Surry County will continue working with state officials, businesses, local leaders, including public health officials, as we move forward to beat the pandemic.

Commissioner Tucker shared his appreciation for Chairman Johnson's actions with the proclamation and said COVID-19 is dangerous and devastating but said the Stay-At-Home order in North Carolina has also been devastating.

Commissioner Goins said he appreciated the chance to speak and the work of Samantha Ange and the Health & Nutrition Center staff. He said we need to get businesses reopened.

Commissioner Marion said he thinks it is imperative that we open businesses back up because the numbers in Surry County don't reflect the need to have so many businesses closed. He said business owners are hurting and he wants the Governor to know that we are capable of handling things in Surry County.

Chairman Johnson said that he is very pleased that the Board stands united in this effort. He said he feels like this special meeting will accomplish what's been on everyone's minds. He asked for Chris Knopf, County Manager, to read the current version of the proclamation, which follows:

**PROCLAMATION REQUESTING GOVERNOR ROY COOPER TO
ALLOW BUSINESSES TO REOPEN IN SURRY COUNTY**

WHEREAS, Surry County, like many rural counties in North Carolina, has a low number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases and has not experienced the same effect from the pandemic that has transpired in the State's urban counties; and

WHEREAS, we will stay focused and vigilant to work with our local and state health officials to monitor COVID-19, to adhere to restrictions and guidelines and to adjust to impacts from COVID-19 as needed, as COVID-19 numbers may or may not increase; and

WHEREAS, the current stay at home order and closure of businesses through May 8 will create a significant hardship on Surry County residents; and

WHEREAS, as a rural county, we depend heavily on our small businesses because they make up a significant portion of our business community; and

WHEREAS, if the current business closure order continues, Surry County's economic situation will continue to decline; and

WHEREAS, closed businesses and unemployed residents will take longer to economically recover based on the length of the stay at home order; and

WHEREAS, due to our rural population of approximately 73,000 citizens, it is achievable for our residents to practice social distancing to prevent further community transmission more so than urban counties; and

WHEREAS, our citizens have listened and responded by practicing these protective measures and following the Governor's Executive Orders, as well as NC DHHS and CDC guidelines.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Surry County Board of Commissioners requests that Governor Roy Cooper allow Surry County and other rural counties in the state to reopen businesses in a safe and responsible manner, taking into account social distancing and mass gathering restrictions, exercise of proper hygiene, increased COVID-19 testing capability and extensive contact tracing measures to prevent the continued spread of COVID-19.

Chairman Johnson asked the Board for comments.

Commissioner Harris said he supports the proclamation, saying it is fair and balanced, utilizes public health experts' knowledge and considers citizens needs. He said that, going forward, we need to continue considering COVID-19 prevention measures.

Commissioner Tucker said he supports the proclamation, that COVID-19 is dangerous and has its effects but stated several reasons why we need to get the County reopened.

Commissioners Goins and Marion, as well as Chairman Johnson, said they support the proclamation.

Upon motion of Commissioner Marion, seconded by Commissioner Goins, the Board voted unanimously to adopt the proclamation asking Governor Roy Cooper to reopen businesses in Surry County that closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic executive order.

Upon motion of Commissioner Goins, seconded by Chairman Johnson, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn. The meeting ended at 11:19 a.m.

**Nathan Walls
Clerk to the Board**