

**Mayor**  
Richard Beneville  
**Manager**  
Glenn Steckman  
**Clerk**  
Bryant Hammond



**Nome City Council**  
Jerald Brown  
Doug Johnson  
Mark Johnson  
Adam Martinson  
Jennifer Reader  
Meghan Sigvanna Topkok

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**NOME COMMON COUNCIL  
WORK SESSION & REGULAR MEETING AGENDA  
MONDAY MAY 11, 2020 @ 5:30 / 7:00 PM  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS IN CITY HALL  
COMMENTS TAKEN AT 443-6663**

WORK SESSION: 5:30 PM  
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**VERBAL**

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XI. CITIZENS' COMMENTS

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XIII. MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT

- A. Activity Report: April 28, - May 8, 2020,  
**VERBAL**

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

XV. ADJOURNMENT

**MINUTES  
NOME CITY COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 11, 2020**

The regular meeting of the Nome City Council was called to order at 7:02 PM by Presiding Council Member Jerald Brown in Council Chambers of City Hall, located at 102 Division Street.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Jerald Brown; Doug Johnson (telephonic); Mark Johnson; Adam Martinson (telephonic); Jennifer Reader; Meghan Topkok (telephonic);

Members Absent:

Also Present: Molly Kenick, Youth Representative (telephonic); Glenn Steckman, City Manager; Bryant Hammond, City Clerk; Joy Baker, Port Director (telephonic); John Handeland, Utility Manager

In the audience: Emily Hofstaedter (KNOM); Diana Haecker (Nome Nugget); Jessica Farley; Howard Farley; Charlie Lean; Jim West, Jr.; Ryan Martinson; Scott Kent

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Council Member Brown asked if there were any changes to the agenda.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. J to approve the agenda.

A motion was made by C. Brown and seconded by C. M. Johnson to add a moment of silence for Mayor Richard Beneville.

At the roll call:

Aye: M. Johnson; Martinson; Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion to amend **CARRIED.**

At the roll call:

Aye: D. Johnson; M. Johnson; Martinson; Reader; Topkok; Brown;

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion, as amended, **CARRIED.**

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR MAYOR BENEVILLE**

Presiding Council Member Brown asked that all those present observe a moment of silence for Mayor Richard Beneville, who passed earlier in the day.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. April 27, 2020 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. Martinson to approve the April 27, 2020 minutes.

Discussion:

- Clerk Hammond noted two typos pointed out by Council Member Topkok through email, adding the meaning would not be changed through administrative correction.

At the roll call:

Aye: M. Johnson; Martinson; Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Notice of April 29, 2020 of Utility Tariff Filings by Alaska Waste – Nome.

- Council Member Brown opined the filing makes sense based on fuel delivery frequency in Nome.
- Manager Steckman opined the filing would affect the road system more.

B. Memo of May 5, 2020 from Clerk Hammond to Nome Common Council re: Council Disposition of Untimely Filed Senior Exemption Forms.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. Johnson to authorize the Clerk to accept the application as if timely filed.

Discussion:

- Council Member Mark Johnson requested staff look into a less arduous means of verifying senior exemption eligibility.

At the roll call:

Aye: Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson; M. Johnson; Martinson

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

- C. Letter of May 8, 2020 from Dr. Gil Van Sciver to City of Nome re: Veterinary Services During Covid-19 Pandemic.
  - Manager Steckman explained the City was working with Animal House on the issue and had reached out to the State of Alaska for guidance.
- D. Map of Nome-Beltz High School Graduation Procession Route.
  - Superintendent Burgess explained the preparations for 2020 Graduation and where community members could find a map of the route.
- E. City of Nome FY2020 Budget Calendar.
  - Council Member Brown asked of the Board of Equalization would convene this year.
  - Clerk Hammond explained the assessors were working to resolve appeals, but there would likely be one or two that required the convening of the Board of Equalization.

### CITIZENS' COMMENTS

- 1) Howard Farley spoke in opposition of continued travel restrictions into the City of Nome. He contended that COVID-19 was not in fact a pandemic and the authority given to Manager Steckman by the Council was excessive. He declared the cancellation of Iditarod activities as unforgiveable.
- 2) Jessica Farley noted a downward trend in COVID-19 cases and opined the effect on Nome was a sore throat, three suicides and two closed businesses. She expressed frustration with the two week quarantine's effect on her business, noting the loss of \$25,000 in revenue when property tax bills would soon be issued. She contended the data projected in February was not coming to pass as expected and suggested the City ease restrictions.
- 3) Charlie Lean provided examples of how his family lived through previous epidemics, highlighting the severity of the situation. He suggested Mr. Farley thank the State of Alaska for saving his life and expressed gratitude the infection rate was as low as it was. He noted that he followed government direction, such as driving the speed limit and thanked the Common Council for their leadership.
- 4) Ryan Martinson noted that he was the owner / operator of several businesses in town and that he was present to ensure that Judy Martinson's letter was read and that she was able to call in for comments.
- 5) Francine Johnson (telephonic) thanked the Common Council for the protective measures put in place, opining that villages could be wiped out if the virus entered the Bering Strait Region. She contended that the priority should be family and protecting the residents of the region. She expressed respect for the difficult decision the Council had to make.
- 6) Scott Kent opined the City needed a more data-based approach, noting that the virus was not yet fully understood. Agreeing with points made by Ms. Farley, he stated the data supported opening Nome a little more aggressively than currently planned. He suggested that more testing and sharing information with the public on how to keep infection prevalence down would build community support in case of an uptick in cases requires further action.

- 7) Steve Smith (text message) opposed extension of the emergency ordinance and requested NEST be removed from the Rec Center. He expressed his condolences on the passing of Mayor Beneville.
- 8) Judy Martinson (telephonic) read a letter opposing the continuation of travel restrictions into Nome. She contended the shelter in place order was to ensure that local health facilities were not overwhelmed, explaining they were not. She called the town a skeleton of its former economic self and argued continued restrictions would irreversibly, negatively affect the private sector economy. She explained the CARES Act funding was not meeting the needs it professed to and warned that the City budget would also suffer at the drop in sales tax revenue. Ms. Martinson finished by requesting meetings be held in a larger venue to accommodate more citizens.
- 9) Barb Amarok (telephonic) expressed gratitude for the City's attention to details. She suggested the community be cautious and ready for a second wave of the virus which could be devastating in contributing to the loss of languages and culture. She asked the Council to keep up the good work.
- 10) Aaron Blankenship (telephonic) thanked the Council for their work through a trying time. He focused his comments on his students, saying there would be no easy way to get back to normal. He posed the possibility of a local outbreak due to easing of restrictions, and asked how another shelter in place order would affect students trying to return to school in the fall.
- 11) Ryan Martinson stated Judy Martinson couldn't follow the Facebook Live feed.
- 12) Jessica Farley called the meeting "not accessible."
- 13) Howard Farley wanted to see the Council Members on the phone in person so he could look them in the eye.
  - Council Member Brown had to explain protocol during meetings.
- 14) Melissa Ford (email) expressed her support for the quarantine and Glenn Steckman's guidance through a potentially devastating pandemic. As a business owner, she noted the financial difficulties placed on her and her contractors, but opined financial concerns were minor compared to the alternative. She thanked Manager Steckman for being proactive in protecting the citizens of Nome.
- 15) Carl Emmons (telephonic) called quarantines one heck of a tool for containing pandemics, but no good if not 100 percent. He noted that the people of Nome would lose respect for the process once those in charge breach it at will.
- 16) Chris Kolerak (telephonic) stated he didn't see the current virus as a pandemic, citing the one case so far in Nome. He opined businesses were going to fail and people were going to suffer not being able to go to Anchorage for shopping. He opined people should be able to go to the Rec Center and didn't see why a virus with a 98 percent recovery rate precluded his going to Anchorage.
- 17) Donald Johnson (telephonic) discussed issues he was experiencing in trying to travel to Anchorage for medical care, noting the quarantine requirements made it difficult to find an

escort. He requested a relaxation of quarantine requirements, perhaps through expanded testing and a shorter quarantine period.

- 18) Annette Piscoya (telephonic) spoke against a 14 day quarantine requirement, explaining she works on the North Slope and was the only one in a group of 12 that to quarantine upon getting home. She noted that she was an adult and could follow personal protective measures such as wearing a mask herself.
- 19) Katie Kruschek (email) contended the City of Nome did not have the authority to enact stricter regulations than the State of Alaska, citing Health Mandate 12. She characterized the phone calls City Staff were performing as intrusive and an increased workload for an already overtaxed staff. She noted hygiene and facemasks as the most important tools in containing the spread of COVID-19 and said the goal should be education. She finished by suggesting Manager Steckman undergo additional training in public speaking as he comes across as condescending and uneducated.
- 20) Sue Steinacher (email) explained she didn't mind giving the City Manager additional powers and asked that Nome's travel restrictions last longer. She was happy someone could make the difficult decision and suggested remaining cautious about opening up to the outside.
- 21) Victor Olson opposed extension of the emergency ordinance.
- 22) Michelle Bonham supporting lifting the travel restrictions, arguing Nome avoided an outbreak.
- 23) Carlee and Nathaniel Hobbs (email) cited a deep concern for COVID-19 and thanked the Council for giving the community time to prepare. They encouraged opening intra-state travel while keeping out of state travel restrictions in place. They explained they were trying to make this a healthy time by getting outdoors to hike and encouraged others to do so as well.
- 24) Alyssa Heers asked the Council to consider stopping the travel ban. She explained she was having trouble getting her daughter to required medical care and suggested people still concerned with the virus can stay home and wear a face mask.
- 25) Michael Burnett (email) expressed his condolences on the passing of Mayor Beneville. He expressed his support for ending the travel ban intra-state, noting the difficulty of the decision. He asked that the Council weigh the physical and mental health of the community in making their decision.
- 26) Sary Martinson (email) spoke in support of lifting the travel ban, stating the initial concerns were understandable; though present circumstances appear good enough to open back up. She noted that people could still protect themselves while those less worried can go about their business.
- 27) Deanna Stang expressed confusion over the City of Nome guidelines and clarified State of Alaska guidelines for social distancing. She argued the phone calls the City was placing to ensure quarantine plans were being following were government overreach and stressed the approach should be voluntary compliance. She noted citizens concerned over possible quarantine breaches should notify [investigations@alaska.gov](mailto:investigations@alaska.gov). Ms. Stang reiterated Dr.

Zink's recommendations, calling for a tightening of personal and environmental hygiene as well tightening the City of Nome's messaging to ensure clarity for the citizens.

- 28) Andy Piscoya (telephonic) noted that people from Teller were already coming in and using cash to purchase groceries at local stores. He emphasized the number of contacts in a cash shopping transaction.
- 29) Mackenzie Oles (email) suggested the restrictions go in the trash can, as tourism decline is already evident over the previous month without a new case. She suggested the community get back to work.
- 30) Carol Hobbs (email) thanked the Council for their leadership, calling Nome different than the rest of the country and arguing that Nome never had a curve to flatten. She explained that people in Nome were putting off necessary medical procedures because they couldn't afford the quarantine time, two on-two off work schedules were no longer accommodated, and college students would soon be running into trouble coming home. She suggested keeping the out-of-state restrictions in place if need be, but supported a no vote on extending the emergency ordinance.
- 31) Josiah Talhoffer (telephonic) expressed concern with more lockdowns as the social pushback will undermine the good intentions.
- 32) Tom Gray expressed appreciation for what the Council had done and saying Alaska had done well. He explained the restrictions hit his business hard as his primary income is based on bringing people into the country and acting as a high priced baby sitter. However, he opined his families health was more important than income. He characterized Americans as a social people, saying the virus would come eventually and asked what the City's plan B was. He went over his testing plan, were able to resume business. Mr. Gray asked the City of Nome to consider assisting small business with some of its relief funds.
- 33) Mark Peterson, Medical Director at NSHC, explained the hospital expected another wave and that he understood the fine balance between keeping the virus out of the region and opening business back up. He noted that Alaska was the best positioned state in the country and that he was eager to open back up, however there still was potential to get overwhelmed. He explained the 14 day quarantine for out of state travelers was state mandate and out of the City's control. Dr. Peterson characterized coming to Nome as low risk, but not zero risk. He explained the hospital testing capabilities and different testing strategies for mitigating risk and agreed in principle to reopening, but in a cautious stepwise fashion.
- 34) Trinh Johnson (telephonic) requested the 14 quarantine be lifted. She recognized City staff were getting input from Doctors on travel restrictions. Ms. Johnson argued the restrictions were hurting business and those, like herself, that see doctors in Anchorage, rather than at Norton Sound. She expressed concern over people demonizing people who get infected and explained she was not getting the answers she needed to her questions.
- 35) Kyle Lee (telephonic) express concern over the way the quarantines have affected town. He characterized the COVID-19 pandemic as nothing like the diphtheria epidemic in the 1920s. He said continued quarantine will be devastating to town and suggested that people who were worried should shelter in place. He said he couldn't visit family in Nome and that constitutional infringements were unacceptable.



- 36) Elizabeth Duncan spoke in opposition to the extension and suggested using the Ravn Hangar as a testing area and set up a testing tent on the dock at the port. She noted that continued negative results breeds complacency.
- 37) Miranda Musich (email) wrote in opposition to the extension saying it was no longer appropriate, adding that if an outbreak occurs, restrictions can be placed back in effect.
- 38) Stan Piscoya (telephonic) asked the council to vote no on the extension.
- 39) Rolland Trowbridge (email) explained that he supported commerce, but requested testing and continued travel restrictions.
- 40) Jana Hoggan (email) noted the time has passed for precaution as the pandemic wasn't as bad as expected. She suggested there was no need to extend the emergency ordinance.
- 41) Colleen Deighton (email) stated that the Governor's step down plan was sufficient and there was no need for more restrictive City policies.
- 42) Doug Doherty (email) expressed concern with the City Manager being given additional authority. He stated the Manager was a likeable guy, but he didn't have long experience in Nome and the decisions should come from the six member elected body.
- 43) Jim West, Jr. explained that one of his businesses was affected by the closures, but that he also understands the health concerns. He explained that he supports the City Manager and sees that he bases any decisions he makes on the input of his peers. He suggested slowly opening businesses was a good thing and clarified that there wasn't a travel ban; rather travelers need to obtain a permit and self-quarantine. He noted an improved understanding of the virus and the development of better procedures the community has in place, but still expressed concern at opening up completely. He discussed colleagues having had the virus and the serious health risks it still posed and reiterated that one person is not making all the decisions for the community.
- 44) Rachel Kiyutelluk (telephonic) expressed her condolences on the passing of Mayor Beneville. She noted difficulties in getting her honor roll student daughter to come home from Shishmaref and asked why getting a permit was so hard.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

- A. O-20-05-01 EMERGENCY ORDINANCE – An Extension of the Local Emergency Authorizing the City Manager to Take Necessary Actions to Reduce the Impact and Spread of Covid-19 Throughout the City of Nome, **PUBLIC HEARING/FINAL PASSAGE.**

For the purpose of holding a public hearing, the Council recessed at 11:07 PM.

No additional comments were given at the hearing.

The Council reconvened at 11:14 PM.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. Topkok to adopt O-20-05-01.

Discussion:

- Council Members Martinson and Doug Johnson stated that Manager Steckman had done a great job; though they did not support an extension.
- Council Member Reader agreed, saying at first the response was overwhelming but perhaps it was time to lift the ban.
- Council Member Mark Johnson agreed, opining that people were suffering under the restrictions and perhaps it was better to follow the state guidelines.
- Council Member Topkok expressed gratitude for Manager Steckman and the staff at City Hall. She expressed anxiety over the next 60 – 90 days, arguing it was proper to extend the authority to the City Manager.
- Council Member Brown contending it was a mistake for the City of Nome do vote down the ordinance in its entirety. He suggested Council Member amend parts they took issue with. He agreed with Council Member Topkok that the virus could hit Nome like a ton of bricks of restrictions were scrapped altogether.
- Council Member Mark Johnson expressed optimism at NSHC's increasing testing capacity and took issue with the travel permit system, contending testing and education would suffice.
- Manager Steckman explained that City Hall staff were exhausted from the permit system and agreed that a stepdown of restrictions was desirable; however, he summarized concerns over the porosity of the Governor's mandates and concerns expressed by the Port Commission. He summarized the City's current efforts, the effect of the restrictions on sales tax revenue and concerns expressed by Bering Strait Regional communities.
- Council Member Brown took issue with using a 98 percent survival rate as reasoning to scrap restrictions. He asked if people were ok with two percent of their community dying.
- Council Member Mark Johnson took issue with Council Member Brown's reasoning, saying he didn't see it that way.
- Council Member Reader repeated the perception that the City Manager was making decisions in a vacuum.
- Council Member Mark Johnson emphasized the building inspector's efforts to work with local businesses to ensure they met state mandate requirements upon reopening and suggested the City be more proactive in getting such information out to the public.
- Council Member Topkok took issue with the perception that the Council was abdicating is authority, explaining the emergency ordinance delegated authority for the purposes of quick action in protecting the public. She reminded the Council of the 10,000 people in the region that Nome serves as a gateway too and that many were descendants of survivors of a major pandemic.
- Council Member Reader expressed frustration with being called stupid, when the six Council Members come to the table to help the community. She suggested using Dr. Peterson's test on the first and seventh days' recommendation and opined that the public would be more comfortable with the Council more involved.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. Brown to amend O-20-05-01 by changing the ending effective date to May 31, 2020.

At the roll:

Aye: Brown; Reader; Topkok

Nay: D. Johnson; M. Johnson; Martinson  
Abstain:

The motion to amend **FAILED**.

Discussion

- Council Member Doug Johnson suggested not enacting more restrictions than the state.
- Council Member Jerald Brown noted that if the ordinance did not pass, the City of Nome would have no authority after a few more days.

A motion was made by C. M. Johnson and C. Brown to amend O-20-05-01 by changing the ending effective date to May 20, 2020.

At the roll call:

Aye: M. Johnson; Reader; Topkok; Brown  
Nay: D. Johnson; Martinson  
Abstain:

The motion to amend **CARRIED**.

Returning to the main motion

At the roll call:

Aye: Topkok; Brown; M. Johnson; Reader  
Nay: D. Johnson; Martinson  
Abstain:

The motion, as amended, **CARRIED**.

- B. O-20-05-02 An Ordinance of the Nome City Council, Nome, Alaska Providing for a Temporary Sales Tax Exception for the Two Percent Seasonal Sales Tax for the Months of June, July and August of 2020.

A motion was made by C. M. Johnson and seconded by C. Martinson to advance O-20-05-02.

At the roll call:

Aye: M. Johnson; Martinson; Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson  
Nay:  
Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

- C. R-20-05-01 A Resolution Approving the Renewal Application for a Correctional Facility Permit within the City of Nome by Geo Care, Inc., **PUBLIC HEARING/FINAL PASSAGE**.

For the purpose holding a public hearing, the Council recessed at 11:28 PM.

The Council reconvened at 11:29 PM.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. Johnson to adopt R-20-05-01.

At the roll call:

Aye: Martinson; Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson; M. Johnson

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

- D. R-20-05-02 A Resolution Authorizing the City of Nome to Apply for and Participate in the USDOT BUILD Discretionary Grant Program for the Funding of the Snake River Moorage and Vessel Haulout Facility Project.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. Johnson to adopt R-20-05-02.

Discussion:

- Council Member Brown clarified matching requirements.

At the roll call:

Aye: Reader; Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson; M. Johnson; Martinson

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

- E. R-20-05-03 A Resolution Authorizing the City of Nome to Enter into a Cost-Share Agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for the Completion of the Nome Harbor Section 107 CAP Feasibility Study.

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. Johnson to adopt R-20-05-03.

At the roll call:

Aye: Topkok; Brown; D. Johnson; M. Johnson; Martinson; Reader

Nay:

Abstain:

The motion **CARRIED**.

### **UTILITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

- A. Activity Report: April 28, - May 8, 2020.

- Utility Manager Handeland present a verbal report touching on the Bering Street update, generator overhauls, line crew pole work, the NSHC building project and fluoride injection.

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

- A. Activity Report: April 28, - May 8, 2020.
  - Manager Steckman highlighted upcoming drainage work and spoke very highly of Mayor Beneville, saying he was one of the most dedicated Mayors he had ever worked with. He explained the City was working with the family on funeral arrangements.
- B. Commendation Letter of May 4, 2020 for Officer Vincent Nguyen re: Outstanding Response Level During COVID-19 Pandemic.
- C. October 3, 2019 Nome Public Safety Advisory Commission Regular Meeting Minutes.
- D. January 23, 2020 Nome Public Safety Advisory Commission Special Meeting Minutes.

### **CITIZENS' COMMENTS**

- 1) John Handeland expressed sadness at the passing of Mayor Beneville, noting he enjoyed getting to know Richard better over the past few months. Richard was planning on running again and was excited to see the Port expansion finished. He called Nome fortunate to have had Richard as a resident and as a Mayor. Mr. Handeland noted that Manager Steckman was doing a great job with the Emergency Operations Center and made some suggestions on emergency ordinance revisions.
- 2) Carol Gales supported continuing restrictions as not much had changed in her mind.

### **COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS**

- 1) Council Member Doug Johnson thanked Glenn for all his hard work. He noted that he and Richard were on different ends of the political spectrum, but he had come to learn that Richard had the best interests of the community at heart. He will be missed.
- 2) Council Member Mark Johnson said considered Richard a friend and that he will be missed. He said Nome had thus far been blessed with on one case of COVID-19.
- 3) Council Member Martinson thanked Glenn for doing a great job, noting his vote against the emergency ordinance was not a reflection of that. He said they were all going to miss Richard as they all grew up with him. He expressed gratitude for Richard's support of the arts, saying he was part of the chain that allowed his daughter to perform at the Sydney Opera House.
- 4) Council Member Reader expressed her condolences to Richard's family and friends, noting the Anchorage Mayor recognized his passing. She noted he was always a good ambassador for Nome and said we should all have a little more Richard in us. She thanked the community for their input and asked everyone to be kind to each other.

- 5) Council Member Topkok expressed her deepest condolences to Richard's friends and family, noting his pride in working to improve public safety in Nome and leading the charge. She thanked Manager Steckman for showing leadership through a tough winter.
- 6) Council Member Brown echoed the rest of the Council's comments on Richard, noting he did a lot for Nome way before he was Mayor and continued after he became Mayor.
- 7) Youth Representative Kenick noted that her family would greatly miss Richard and that she wouldn't be sitting in her present position were it not for him.

**MAYOR'S COMMENTS AND REPORT**

A. Activity Report: April 28, - May 8, 2020.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

N/A

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion was made by C. Reader and seconded by C. M. Johnson that the meeting be adjourned.

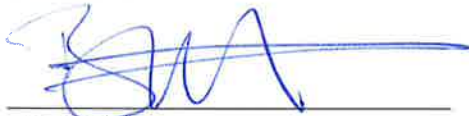
Hearing no objections, the Nome Common Council adjourned at 12:27 AM

**APPROVED and SIGNED** this 26<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020.



**JERALD BROWN**  
Acting Mayor

**ATTEST:**



**BRYANT HAMMOND**  
City Clerk