There was an emergency meeting of the Bloomfield Town Council held at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 16, 2020 in Conference Room #5, Bloomfield Town Hall, 800 Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield, CT.

Present were: Mayor Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, Deputy Mayor David Mann, Councilors Rickford Kirton, Kevin Gough, Joseph Merritt, Patrick DeLorenzo, Stephanie Calhoun and C.F. Politis

Also present were: Robert E. Smith, Town Manager, Chief Paul Hammick – Bloomfield Police Department and Keri Rowley, Finance Director

Absent was: Councilor Danielle Wong

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m.

**Consideration and recommendation concerning Declaration of Health and Civil Emergency**

Chief Hammick of the Bloomfield Police Department gave a brief update regarding Emergency Operations Plan that was activated on Friday, March 13, 2020.

Chief Hammick also explained the various Governor Executive Orders, briefing held with all first responders in town as well as the current data of individuals within the State infected, which will continue to rise as time progresses. He stressed the importance of all precautionary measures, social distancing and recommended procedures of handling internal processes in how the Town will conduct business moving forward.

There was a meeting held with all department heads to discuss and evaluate adequate social distancing, addressing anxiety concerns and providing support during this time.

Governor Ned Lamont joined the other tri state area Governors to prohibit social gatherings of 50 or more. It is important to note that taking all the necessary precautions to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus highly encouraged.

Chief Hammick discussed contingency plans being implemented in other surrounding communities that have enacted the Declaration of Health and Civil Emergency. There has been daily constant communication responding with the pandemic plan on the framework to contain, mitigate and control the spread of COVID-19 Virus.
It was moved by Councilor Kirton, seconded by Councilor DeLorenzo and voted unanimously to issue a Declaration of Health Civil Preparedness Emergency in response to COVID-19.

In addition, Town Manager Robert E. Smith will announce that effective at 12 PM, Tuesday, March 17, 2020 all town buildings, including the Bloomfield Town Hall (through Friday, March 20, 2020) will be closed to the public. Staff will continue to report to work at this time.

Councilor Kirton inquired about communications to local businesses regarding concerns and closures. It was noted that the Health District will inform all restaurants/bars, gyms, etc. Social media has been utilized to communicate with other major corporations in Town. The Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce might be a great resource to contact other businesses.

Mayor DeBeatham-Brown sent official messaging to the Incident Commander for review. Once approved for public distribution, this message regarding important information with COVID-19. This information will be shared with various print and electronic media platforms.

Deputy Mayor Mann inquiring about any discussions regarding a State of Emergency Lockdown to “shelter in place” involving potential curfews within a community. Chief Hammick stated that the Town will be consistent in following state government directives as well as monitoring surrounding communities.

It was noted that Governor Lamont signed an Executive Order to have all restaurants, bars, movie theatres, gyms, etc. to close to prevent social gatherings. Hopefully, this action will curtail curfew setting.

Councilor Gough asked about the limits of a Declaration of Health and Civil Emergency.

Mr. Robert E. Smith, Town Manager explained the following:
- Dealing with specific town-wide issues that may arise.
- Opens the door to submit claims and record costs for possible Federal reimbursements
- Regional networks of communities to share resources similar to mutual aid

Councilor DeLorenzo asked if there were any additional duties with this declaration is the Town Manager authorize to do, e.g. expending funds without Council approval.

Mayor DeBeatham-Brown noted that the Town will continue to stay consistent with the Town Charter regarding the expending funds. This declaration gives the Town Manager authorization to prevent the breakdown of essential services needed for the Town.

In addition, within the Emergency Operations Plan, the Policy Group comprised of the Mayor DeBeatham-Brown, Deputy Mayor Mann, Robert E. Smith, Town Manager, Police Chief Hammick, Lieutenant Benvenuto and Aimee Krauss, Director of Health. This group has been assigned to make the high levels decisions regarding this public health crisis.
Ms. Rowley will check the balances of both Council and Town Manager contingency accounts. It was noted that there may be an approximate $170,000 available.

**Consider and Take Possible Action Concerning Temporary Financial Matters**

Mayor DeBeatham-Brown inquired about the possible closure of town buildings and ensuring that employees are paid during this time.

Mr. Smith indicated that the current policy for Town employees is to use accrued leave, which is consistent with FMLA regulations if absent from work. This decision was recommended by the Town’s Labor legal counsel.

Councilor Gough noted that at some point in the near future to submit to Council a written plan to assist with documenting steps to apply for State/Federal reimbursement when required to do so.

**Mayor DeBeatham-Brown suggested to table this agenda item until a decision has been made through further discussions within the Emergency Operations Policy Group.**

**Consider and Take Possible Action Concerning Town Budget Meeting, scheduling and Town Meeting (See Governor’s Proclamation allowing, with conditions, 30 extra days for budget-related matters)**

Mayor DeBeatham-Brown made a suggestion to utilize the time that Council has now before this pandemic gets worse before better.

Councilor Gough and DeLorenzo made a suggestion to hear all budget presentation in one day, possibly a weekend day?

Mayor DeBeatham-Brown want to ensure that the Town is doing its due diligence to provide live streaming of meetings for public engagement. She also stressed the importance of following the overall budget process.

Councilor Merritt recommended that new Council members should be briefed on each department. He also commented on the major drivers for potential budget increases.

Councilor Politis stated that he is not in agreement with the need to conduct more budget meetings. Councilor Gough is also in agreement and recommended a 10 day or 2 week budget review to limit the amount of departmental presentations.

Chief Hammick and Mr. Smith mentioned the virtual meeting use of Cisco WebEx. Cisco WebEx is the leading enterprise solution for video conferencing, online meetings, screen share, and webinars.
Councilor Kirton commented on the Governor’s order to extend the municipal budget process for 30 days. He noted the importance of public engagement and involvement with the budget process.

Councilor Kirton recommended that Councilors should thorough review the total FY 2020/2021 Budget, make comments, ask questions, and receive feedback. He noted that the Town should explore creative and new ways to get feedback from the public.

Mrs. Keri Rowley, Finance Director will provide some budget scenarios in comparisons with mill rates, home values, potential tax increases, etc.

**It was moved by Councilor Politis, seconded by Councilor Gough and voted unanimously to cancel the following FY 2020-2021 Budget Meetings (March 17th, March 19th and March 24th). Council will also provide a list of budget questions pertaining to town departments, if any. Town Administration will examine various electronic and web based media outlets for public engagement during this budget process.**

Councilor DeLorenzo made a friendly amendment to also include the cancellation of the Town Council Meeting scheduled on Monday, March 23, 2020, Council Subcommittees and all Boards and Commission meetings for the month of March 2020.

The original motion and seconder agreed with the friendly amendment.

Councilor Kirton also asked about cleaning and disinfecting town buildings while temporarily closed. Mr. Smith stated that the Facilities department will ramp up cleaning services and schedules throughout Town.

**Adjournment**

At 7:05 p.m., it was moved by Councilor DeLorenzo, seconded by Councilor Gough to adjourn the meeting.