

**EMERGENCY
CULLMAN COUNTY COMMISSION MEETING
May 1, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

Chairman Walker called the Commission Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

CALL OF ROLL TO ESTABLISH QUORUM

Meleigh Hitt, Administrative Assistant, called the roll; present were Chairman Kenneth Walker, Commissioner Kerry Watson, Commissioner Garry Marchman, and Emily Johnston, County Attorney. Barry Willingham, Revenue Commissioner, gave the invocation. Commissioner Garry Marchman led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC /UPDATES

No public comments were made.

NEW BUSINESS

Discuss the reopening of the Cullman County Courthouse and County Offices

Chairman Kenneth Walker stated, "I would like to say I have spoken with Barry Willingham, Revenue Commissioner, and his office is prepared. He has met with his employees, and they know what to do. He has 6-foot distancing signs on his walls and floors, and he will have a hall monitor. I have also spoken with Judge Brown in Probate, and she also has 6-foot distancing signs up and has had glass put in at the counters. I spoke with Judge Nicholas, there will be no court hearings until June 1st, and I have spoken with State driver's license downstairs, they will be opening, but there will be a minimum of what they will be able to do daily. Also, one thing to consider, they will be able to take out of county citizens. With all that being considered, I would like to open it up for discussion".

Commissioner Watson stated "I think we need to look at it all and make sure we take care of everybody in the Courthouse and Citizens too, but I think we are at a point where we are prepared if we need to reopen and handle the people coming in with the things we got in place. We have signs placed and more signs coming in showing distancing. That's my opinion, but I want to make sure that we look at all the safety for the employees and citizens".

Chairman Walker said "Really if we decide to open though the only thing that would be open would be the Revenue Office, Probate Office, and State Driver's License because Judge Brown cannot open her driver's license right now because the protection guard has a few parts that are on back order. I spoke with security outside, and so has Barry Willingham and State Driver's License and security is okay with it".

Commissioner Marchman stated, "I know Judge Brown is not in here right now, but I know we have all talked back and forth just a little bit, but with security outside, I know if its limited access, do we have a good plan in place to do that? Because it is going to be about serving the public and protecting ourselves. What I mean by that, is your office going to provide someone out there to limit the people that come in that goes to your office?"

Barry Willingham, Revenue Commissioner, "I plan on having someone right outside our door and limit no more than six people into our area."

Commissioner Marchman, "Would it not be better to put them at the front door though to limit access to the Courthouse period?"

Barry Willingham, "We could. We would just have to get some walkie-talkies to communicate. I know parks have some walkie-talkies that we may can get from them. We could do that before they come in the Courthouse. My people, as long as weather permits, we could even set a desk up outside to check their paperwork and make sure they have everything before they even come in the building. Even communicate with our people to know how many are in there, but my plan is, we have 12 windows, and we are going to alternate windows and wipe the other windows as customers leave so that when odd and even numbers rotate, we will have plenty of spacing and not have more than six people in the area. I have more employees than that on the other side, but we are checking temperatures and making sure no one feels bad."

Commissioner Marchman, "By saying all that I was not trying to get into an individual department or how they function. I just wanted to make sure we all coordinate together on what we can do."

Barry Willingham, "I even had the thought we could take their phone numbers and mobile carrier and send them an email or email through text letting them know they are available to come into the building."

Chairman Walker, "That is what State Driver's License is going to do. Also, you have to look at if you can only have six, Probate can only have three and driver's license can only have eight, that is only 17 that can be in the building at a time because that's the only offices that will be open. Since Probate's Driver's License is close, Probate can only have three at the counter."

Commissioner Marchman, "In order for them to do that, it will be extra work on security. I know they have extra personnel right now that Courts are not working, but if they open up, it will be hard."

Jacob Gable (Courthouse Security with the Sheriff's Department) stated, "Not knowing where everyone is going will be hard. Revenue is one of the busiest places there is typically with 20 people standing in the hallway. We can question everyone about where they are going, but if we do not know how many are in that office, then there would be people standing in the hallways."

Commissioner Watson, "Phyllis brought up a card system."

Phyllis Little, EMA Director, stated, "One county in North Alabama was talking on our conference call yesterday about using a hall pass type system. Each department that will be open has a certain color card, and if you can only have six in line, then they would give out six cards, and no one else can go to that department until one of those cards is turned in."

Commissioner Watson, "That may help security, I think. Right now, with Court shut down, this will give us a good test run to see things that need to be changed that would benefit everybody."

Lisa McSwain, Circuit Clerk, "So no one will be able to come to the 3rd floor still?"

Chairman Walker, "You're closed, aren't you?"

Lisa McSwain, "Well, if the Courthouse is open, I mean, we can still utilize our dropbox. It works great for people coming in to make payment."

Commissioner Marchman, "If that is working the way you're doing it, I would keep the dropbox."

Barry Willingham, "Is there any way that we can start this today?"

Commissioner Marchman, "Well, Probate does not have all their glass protectant."

Kathy Swann, Probate Chief Clerk, stated, "The glass will not be delivered to the company putting it in until Tuesday. Driver's License totally cannot open, and we have one section at the counters open. So until we get that, I do not think it is safe to go ahead and open. I just feel we need to be organized and ready when we open."

Chairman Walker, "We have a Commission Meeting May 12th I would make a suggestion to decide during our Commission Meeting."

Commissioner Marchman, "Well, that would be 11 days that would give some flexibility to do some more planning and talk with everybody again."

Barry Willingham, "If you all do that, I am going to put a tent out in the parking lot. I am going to do a drive-thru. We are 5,000 transactions behind."

Commissioner Marchman, "It would not be a good idea to open the Courthouse and open Revenue but not Probate until they are complete."

Chairman Walker, "I think we need to wait and open them together. The biggest thing that concerns me is the out of county people coming in here. We cannot stop them from coming for a driver's license."

Jacob Gable, "We have a lot of out of county that come for license."

Chairman Walker, "Also, when we decide to open up, I have talked with Dr. Thomas since he does our drug screenings, but I talked with him about having a nurse up here to take temperatures at the door. I think it would be best to have someone like that rather than an employee turning people away. There would be a cost to it but they would be here for 2 weeks which would be 10 days. I thought we could discuss that in our May 12th meeting."

Commissioner Watson, "So what is the recommendation?"

Commissioner Marchman, "That is just 11 days. I know Barry is behind and wants to open right now, and I understand that."

Commissioner Watson, "Barry, would it help if we set you up a tent?"

Barry Willingham "I already have everything lined up. We are still doing about 300-500 transactions a day, even being closed."

Commissioner Marchman made a motion to make a decision regarding reopening the Courthouse in the May 12, 2020, Commission Meeting. Commissioner Watson seconded. Upon a unanimous voice vote, the motion carried.

WORK SESSION

The Commission will hold a Work Session on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 8:30 a.m. in the commission conference room.

NEXT REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2020

Chairman Walker announced the next commission meeting would be Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. in the commission meeting room.

ADJOURN THE MEETING

Commissioner Watson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Marchman seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:17 a.m.

/S/
Kenneth Walker,
Chairman

/S/
Kerry Watson,
Associate Commissioner

/S/
Garry Watson,
Associate Commissioner