



Room 403
210 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard
Madison, WI 53703

Satya Rhodes-Conway, Mayor



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Shiva Bidar, Council President
Barbara Harrington-McKinney, Vice-President

To: Madison Common Council
From: Council President Bidar and Mayor Rhodes-Conway
March 15, 2020

Colleagues –

Governor Evers declared a public health emergency on Thursday (3/12/2020).

At the 3/17/2020 council meeting, an ordinance amendment will be considered that provides for the cancellation of all city board, commission, and committee meetings in the event of an officially declared emergency or if the Public Health Director determines it is necessary for the prevention or suppression of disease to limit public gatherings.

This legislation also provides the Mayor and Council President the authority to reinstate any committee meetings deemed necessary to provide essential functions and support to the operations of the City.

If this ordinance is enacted, all committee meetings other than those we designate, will officially be cancelled.

First, let us be clear that the Common Council will keep meeting as scheduled. The only question is if we will meet in person or remotely. The March 17th Council meeting will be held in person, but the room capacity will be limited to 50 people. We have already prepared an overflow room.

You will receive ample notice of, and instruction on, any remote meeting technology. We will at all times comply with open meeting law and provide opportunity for public comment and viewing of our meetings. We believe that it is critical for the Council to continue as scheduled because the Council is the final and official actor on the vast majority of the business done by our boards, commissions and committees. It is possible that some items may be acted on by the council without recommendations from our boards, commissions and committees, while other items may be delayed.

At this point, we anticipate that, at minimum, the following bodies will continue to meet and we will be evaluating on an ongoing basis whether the meetings will take place in person or remotely:

- Common Council Executive Committee
- Finance Committee
- Alcohol License Review Committee
- Plan Commission
- Police & Fire Commission
- Board of Public Works

We also expect that the 3/19 Downtown Coordinating Committee and the 3/30 Transportation Policy and Planning Board will meet as scheduled so as not to delay time sensitive funding applications.

Any in-person meetings will need to follow best practices on social distancing. Staff will be receiving guidance on this.

We are aware of the important role our boards, commissions and committees serve and will be reviewing this weekly, or more often if needed, to ensure that those that have a critical need to meet will be allowed to do so. We have asked staff to identify critical items that need to be acted on by boards, commissions, committees and the Council so we can prioritize those items and the bodies that need to act on them. We will communicate regularly so that chairs, members, and staff have sufficient time to prepare and notice necessary meetings. All public posting and notification requirements remain the same, and postings will indicate how the public can participate remotely in meetings.

We want to acknowledge that many of the items we consider are normally taken to public information meetings or neighborhood meetings before they come to Council. At this point, it is not prudent to hold such meetings. To the extent possible, we will delay those items until the meetings can be held, and will consult with you about items that impact your districts. We may be able to hold some meetings electronically or solicit input from constituents by email, and in some cases, we may need to move forward without a public meeting.

Please keep in mind that as this situation develops, there will be an increasing need to hold all meetings remotely. Please also keep in mind, that while our IT department is working diligently, we do have limited capacity. We are balancing the need to limit exposure to the COVID-19 virus, the need to train staff and committee members on remote meeting technology, the need to maintain transparency and follow open meetings law, the IT department's need to work on other critical functions related to COVID-19, and the need to continue the city's business as much as possible. We ask that you remain patient and understanding as we all work through this together.