



## TOWN OF STEPHENS CITY, VIRGINIA

*Established 1758*

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### STEPHENS CITY PRESS RELEASE - SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 2020

#### A. State of Emergency

1. On Thursday, March 12, 2020, the Governor of the Commonwealth declared a State of Emergency for the Commonwealth in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. On Friday, March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a federal State of Emergency for the United States and its territories in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Pursuant to §44-146.21.A of the *Code of Virginia*, 1950, as amended, and in response to the immediate threat posed to the citizens, visitors, and employees of the Town of Stephens City by the COVID-19 viral pandemic, Stephens City Town Council declares a State of Emergency effective immediately.

#### B. Town Office Closure to the Public

1. Town Council has authorized the emergency closure of all Town administrative offices to the public effective Monday, March 16, 2020 at 12:00 pm for a period of no less than two (2) weeks, with said offices to remain closed to the public until further notice. The offices will be reopened to the public at a date and time so determined by the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Town Manager based on guidance from health advisory bodies and local, state, and federal governments.
2. Payments for water and sewer bills, taxes, town decals, and other fees may be submitted online, mail, telephone, or through the night drop box at the Town Hall at 1033 Locust Street, Stephens City.
3. Town staff will remain available during the regularly scheduled office hours of the Stephens City Town Office by telephone and email to conduct town business and ensure the operation of all regular governmental duties.

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### C. Use of Public and Common Space

1. Town Council has suspended all public events and use of common spaces for at least four (4) weeks and until a date and time determined by the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Town Manager.
2. Town Council has suspended the issuance of Yard Sale Permits for at least four (4) weeks and until a date and time determined by the Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Town Manager.

### D. Public Meetings

1. It is safe to assume the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) never contemplated a scenario wherein governing bodies were *not* encouraged to meet.
2. The Virginia Municipal League (VML) received a guidance opinion from the FOIA Advisory Council regarding how to use subdivision A3 of the *Code of Virginia* §2.2-3708.2
3. Town Council, in accordance with §2.2-3708.2 of the *Code of Virginia*, 1950, as amended, will conduct all meetings of Council and its committees remotely during the pendency of the State of Emergency.
4. Town Staff shall make all necessary arrangements and accommodations to facilitate the attendance and participation of the citizenry in these public meetings.

#### *Statutory Reference:*

#### **§2.2-3708.2. Meetings held through electronic communication means.**

#### *A. The following provisions apply to all public bodies:*

*3. Any public body may meet by electronic communication means without a quorum of the public body physically assembled at one location when the Governor has declared a state of emergency in accordance with §44-146.17, provided that (i) the catastrophic nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe to assemble a quorum in a single location and (ii) the purpose of the meeting is to address the emergency. The public body convening a meeting in accordance with this subdivision shall:*

*a. Give public notice using the best available method given the nature of the emergency, which notice shall be given contemporaneously with the notice provided to members of the public body conducting the meeting;*

*b. Make arrangements for public access to such meeting; and*

*c. Otherwise comply with the provisions of this section.*

*The nature of the emergency, the fact that the meeting was held by electronic communication means, and the type of electronic communication means by which the meeting was held shall be stated in the minutes.*