

Seneca makes emergency preparations

BY NORM CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Seneca City Council unanimously approved a 60-day ordinance giving Mayor Dan Alexander and city administrator Scott Moulder authority to set orders to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak — including setting curfews and putting other emergency measures in place.

The ordinance was approved at a special called meeting

SEE SENECA, PAGE A5

FROM PAGE A1

Tuesday afternoon on only one reading, which Moulder said was allowed with at least a two-thirds vote of council. Council was spread out during the meeting for social distancing, and everyone entering City Hall had to have their temperatures taken. The ordinance allowed Alexander to declare a state of emergency in Seneca that expires automatically on the 61st day following enactment unless council ends it sooner, according to the ordinance.

It allows Moulder, in consultation with the mayor, to issue orders and directives related to the city's response to the coronavirus and could not be used for orders unrelated to the pandemic.

"It gives us a little more

No new virus cases reported in Oconee, Pickens

SENECA — The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control announced Tuesday at least one case of COVID-19 has been reported in more than three-quarters of the state's 46 counties.

Officials are now investigating 44 addi-

SEE CASES, PAGE A3

flexibility to respond," Moulder told council before the vote. "It does not mean I can do that with everything all day long. It has to be directly associated with this particular event. It does free up a lot of restrictions by which we are managed on a daily basis."

Moulder said the council wouldn't have to meet during the state of emergency, and the next scheduled meeting on March 31 is already canceled. He said the ordinance doesn't include a plan for online or teleconference meetings.

"If we have one, we'll do a setup just like this (meeting) and practice social distancing onsite," he said.

While the ordinance allows for a city curfew, Moulder said after the meeting officials are not considering one for now.

"We have discussed it from

an overall standpoint, but we're not discussing it as in projecting or proposing one at this point," he said. "In the event the state starts talking about a voluntary (curfew), we may look at something."

The ordinance also allows for the suspending of the city's procurement ordinance "to allow for the immediate procurement of necessary supplies, services and construction due to the threat to public health, welfare and safety." It also allows suspension or limitation of non-emergency activities and public assemblies. The city has already canceled city-sponsored events and recreation activities until the end of the month. Moulder said a final decision about the first Jazz on the Alley events next month has not yet been made.

It also allows Seneca to suspend the city accommodations and hospitality taxes "as applicable," make provisions for the availability of temporary housing for city employees if necessary and utilize "all available" city resources "reasonably necessary to cope with a disaster emergency."

The mayor and administrator are also authorized to implement duties and functions assigned in the city of Seneca and Oconee County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan. The county plan, approved by county council in 2018, was adopted by city council Tuesday. Moulder said adoption of the plan makes the city eligible for reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is a "planning document to prepare for times like this."