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***** Press Release *****

State of Emergency

Jersey City Municipal Council to Hold City's 1st Virtual Meeting this Wednesday to Maintain Critical Government Operations while Adhering to Social Distancing Measures

Jersey City – Mayor Steven M. Fulop and the Municipal Council announce the city will hold its first Municipal Council meeting virtually through the use of technology to keep government operational and conscientiously abide by emergency guidelines restricting large groups from convening during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Jersey City declared a State of Emergency March 16, 2020 but has maintained essential government functions to provide needed services to the community through minimal on-site staffing and remote work from home. Likewise, the legislative branch of government within will also continue to do its job via the internet.

“Simply put, there are bills to pay, licenses to issue, and services to be delivered as the responsibilities of government must continue even while we are facing a crisis unlike any we have faced in this country in modern times,” **Mayor Fulop** said. “Technologically the future is now, and we have to embrace it in order to become more efficient and keep government moving in the right direction.”

The city is utilizing, Microsoft Teams, an electronic platform that allows 10,000 people to view the remote meeting as attendees, with anyone from the Jersey City team present as a meeting participant. The platform also allows for standard public comment through a chat function and also through an integrated real-time call in system. The email JCVCN@cnj.org has been set up for community members to send their name and phone number in advance to be considered for public speaking. City officials will then call them to participate in public comment. To view the virtual proceeding live through Microsoft Team, please visit www.jerseycitynj.gov/vcm.

“We’ve been constantly seeking ways to leverage technology to better serve the residents of the city,” said **Brian Platt, Business Administrator** who formerly spearheaded the city’s Innovation Division. “The Innovation team was and still is a strong platform for developing bold solutions for our biggest challenges, and having this team has helped us make many improvements to our operations citywide and the transition to this new virtual meeting platform much smoother for our staff.”

“We are committed to continuing our duty as a City Council by keeping our critical government functions moving forward amid this crisis,” said **Council President Joyce Watterman**. “We need to do whatever we can to keep our community afloat and also maintain as much normalcy as is possible. These virtual meetings will do exactly that, and I’m encouraged that our leadership has supported our efforts.”

Multiple sessions have been held with the City Council members to familiarize them with the software and its interface prior to going live for the first virtual City Council meeting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 25th.

“Microsoft is the backend of Teams, so there is no worry about the public hitting our servers all at the same time and our systems crashing,” said **Jersey City IT Director Bernadette Kucharczuk**. “We have held multiple tests of the system to understand all of the functions and features available and are hopeful that this will be a good pilot example for cities across the state and the entire country.”

All city offices remain open following an appointment-only system. Walk-ins are not permitted.

All media inquiries should be directed to Kimberly Scalcione, Press Secretary to Mayor Steven M. Fulop at KScalcione@jcnj.org or 201-376-0699. ////