

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: February 24, 2022

From: City Manager Department

Subject: Receive Update on Pandemic Response and Consider Adopting Proposed Resolution Allowing for the Continuation of Teleconferencing

Recommended Action: 1) Make the determination that all hazards related to the worldwide spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) as detailed in Resolution No. 4168 adopted by the City Council on March 12, 2020, still exist and there is a need to continue action; and 2) Adopt the proposed resolution authorizing the City Council (along with the Planning Commission and all advisory bodies) to continue to conduct teleconferencing meetings.

Background: In December 2019, an outbreak of a respiratory illness linked to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was first identified. In March 2020, the State of California, the County of Santa Cruz, and the City of Capitola each declared a state of emergency due to the virus. Also in March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

State and local health officers issued health orders to stop the spread of COVID-19; in Santa Cruz County this included March, April, and May 2020 Shelter-In-Place orders that were more restrictive than statewide guidance. Since then, the County Health Officer has incorporated all Orders of the State Public Health Officer, which set baseline statewide restrictions on travel and business activities.

As of February 17, 2022, more than 5.8 million people worldwide have died of COVID-19. This is likely an undercount of all those that have died from the virus. There have been 417 million cases reported worldwide. Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 927,115 people have died from the virus and more than 78 million COVID-19 cases have been reported.

Discussion: Since the beginning of the pandemic, 82,589 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported in California; there is currently a daily average of 169 deaths a day, up from 104 per day two-weeks ago. According to data from February 17, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 42.3 (down from 127.6 on February 4).

Boosters

You are eligible for a booster shot if:

- 1) You got a Pfizer or Moderna vaccine at least 6 months ago
- 2) If you got a Johnson & Johnson vaccine at least 2 months ago

Booster shots can be a different vaccine brand than you received before, as long as you completed your original vaccine series (one dose of Johnson & Johnson or two doses of Pfizer or Moderna). As of January 21, 2022, the total number of vaccinations administered in Santa Cruz County is 509,779. In the County, there are 215,269 (or 78.8%) people vaccinated with at least one dose, and 197,954 (72.5%) are fully vaccinated.

Omicron Variant & Surge

On November 26, the WHO designated a new variant, B.1.1.529 as a Variant of Concern (VOC) and named it Omicron. On November 30, the United States designated Omicron as a variant of concern.

On December 1, California reported the first omicron case in the United States; Minnesota quickly followed reporting a case the next day. As of January 4, the CDC estimated that 95% of the new infections are the Omicron variant, just over four weeks after it was first reported. Case numbers rose at a faster rate than at any other time in the pandemic, due to the Omicron variant.

As of February 17, the New York Times reported that, while “new coronavirus cases have declined more than 80 percent from their peak in mid-January. Still, daily case reports remain well above 100,000 per day”.

Local Case Numbers and Statistics in Santa Cruz County

As of January 21, there were 30,383 total known cases of COVID-19 and 6,191 active cases. On February 17, the total known case count is at 45,272 with 4,115 active cases.

While it appears that Santa Cruz County experienced an intense Omicron surge like the rest of the Country, the County seems to have peaked locally and is beginning a “bumpy” path to fewer active cases.

Over the past two weeks, ten County residents have been lost to COVID, bringing the total deaths due to COVID-19 count to 249.

Testing in the County

The Santa Cruz County Health Department has partnered with the County Office of Education to move a south county testing site to the County Fairgrounds, making it available to all community members. The Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds testing site is located at 2601 E Lake Ave, Watsonville, CA 95076 and is open Monday-Friday, 10am to 5 pm and Saturday, 9am to 3 pm. Registration is required at <https://sccoe.link/inspire.sc>.

The County Health Services Agency released guidance on January 14 that encourages people with COVID-19 symptoms or who have had known exposure to COVID to “presume they are positive and isolate in accordance with the California Department of Public Health guidelines” if they are not able to get tested immediately.

Changes to Local/State Mask Mandates

On November 19, the Santa Cruz County Health Officer issued a new Order requiring the use of face coverings indoors, regardless of vaccination status. The new Order went into effect on November 21, 2021. Due to rising cases statewide, California Department of Public Health mandated that everyone in California wear a mask in indoor public spaces and workplaces from December 15, 2021, to January 15, 2022. On January 5, this mandate was extended by another month due to the Omicron surge and thus set to expire on February 15, 2022. As that date approached, the State Department of Public Health clarified that the order would indeed expire, and universal indoor masking would no longer be mandated, beginning February 16.

On February 9, 2022, twelve Bay Area health officers including in Santa Cruz County announced that their universal mask requirements would be lifted, in alignment with the State, on February 16. There is no longer a universal indoor mask Order in place in Santa Cruz County, however indoor masking is still required by the State for everyone, regardless of vaccination status, in public transportation, health care settings, congregate settings like correctional facilities, long term care facilities, and in k-12 schools and childcare settings.

The U.S. Government is giving out free N95 masks to those that need them. Each person is eligible for three masks, and masks will be available at community health centers, pharmacies, and other stores. Locally, Walgreens and CVS will be a distribution point in the next few weeks. Walmart will begin distributing by mid-February.

At-home tests are now more readily available at many drug stores. Four free rapid antigen at-home tests are also available for all residents, provided by the federal government. Shipments are limited per household, and you can sign up for your free delivery through the United States Postal Service with this link: <https://special.usps.com/testkits>. Tests are generally delivered within a week-and-a-half of ordering.

City Hall Operations

City Hall has been open to the public since June 2020 in one configuration or another, dependent upon applicable health guidance and local COVID-19 case levels. Now that the Omicron surge is seemingly on a decline, Staff has returned to the COVID-default setup, with the lobby open to one masked member of the public at a time.

Continuing Virtual/Teleconferencing Meetings

The Governor signed Assembly Bill 361 on September 16, 2021. The Bill allows cities to continue virtual meetings (much as Capitola City Council Meetings function now) as long as the state is under a proclaimed state of emergency; through 2024 when the bill will sunset. The Bill requires legislative bodies to comply with the requirements set forth in Government Code section 54953(e)(2) to ensure the public can safely participate and observe local government meetings. One of the requirements is for Council to adopt findings every thirty days.

Attached is a resolution that makes the following findings:

- 1) Find that current conditions authorize teleconference public meetings, based on the Governor's state of emergency regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic
- 2) Authorize legislative bodies to conduct teleconference meetings, allowing Capitola City Council, Planning Commission, and other advisory bodies to continue to meet using Zoom.

Fiscal Impact: Fiscal impacts are continually reviewed by Staff as business restrictions and consumer behaviors change in our community. In addition, the City Council has set aside \$600,000 to help ensure the City has available resources should the pandemic result in further unforeseen impacts, which remains in the approved FY 2021/22 Budget.

Attachments:

1. Proposed Teleconferencing resolution

Report Prepared By: Chloé Woodmansee, City Clerk

Reviewed/Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager