

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: May 26, 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.

Currently (and since February 2022), there are no State required COVID-19 restrictions, other than minimal masking requirements in certain settings. COVID-19 public safety economic restrictions were mostly removed in June 2021 when the state met the criteria to fully reopen the economy and moved beyond the Blueprint for a Safer Economy.

The State released the SMARTER Plan on February 17, 2022, which focuses on Shots, Masks, Ventilation, Tests, Isolation, and Treatment as the keys to prepare for future COVID-19 surges or variants.

As of May 20, 2022, more than 6.27 million people worldwide have died of COVID-19. One million of those deaths have been in the United States. This is likely an undercount of all those that have died from the virus. There have been 523.9 million cases reported worldwide, though this is an undercount of all those that have been infected with COVID-19. At least 5.2 million children have lost a parent or caretaker due to the virus.

In the United States, more than one million people have died from Covid since the beginning of the pandemic. Per Nation Public Radio reports, “so many people died from COVID-19, that a disease that didn’t exist three years ago became the third leading cause of death in [America], after heart disease and cancer”. More than 82 million COVID-19 cases have been reported in the U.S. On May 5, 2022, The World Health Organization said that “nearly 15 million more people died during the pandemic than would have in normal times”.

According to reports from NBC News, “two years into the pandemic, the number of children who have lost a parent or other in-home caregiver to Covid across the United States is estimated to exceed 200,000.”

Discussion: In California 90,382 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported since the beginning of the pandemic. There is currently a daily average of 10 deaths a day, down from 13 two-weeks ago. According to data from May 19, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 23.2 (up from 20.9 just two days earlier, and from 18.5 on Monday, and 12.4 on May 6). In California, at least 1 in 4 residents have been infected with COVID-19.

Spring Surge

The New York Times reported on May 20 that “the United States is currently averaging more than 100,000 known cases per day for the first time since February. Cases are rising in nearly every state, and since many cases go uncounted in official reports, the true toll is likely even higher than these figures suggest”. In the Northeast and Midwest, “daily case reports are higher today that they were at the peak of last summer’s Delta surge”.

Boosters

On March 29, 2022, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) announced a recommendation that certain individuals (outlined below) receive an additional mRNA booster (a Moderna or Pfizer shot). Those recommended for an additional booster are:

- 1) Immunocompromised individuals
- 2) People over the age of 50 who received an initial booster dose at least 4 months ago
- 3) Adults who received a primary vaccine and booster dose of Johnson & Johnson’s Janssen COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months ago

California Statewide Mask Guidelines

Masks are required in:

- Healthcare settings
- Emergency shelters
- Jails and prisons
- Homeless shelters
- Long-term care

Masks are strongly recommended in:

- Public transit, stations, terminals, and airports
- Indoor public settings
- K-12 schools
- 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 are currently distribution points.

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.

Local Case Numbers and Statistics in Santa Cruz County

On April 20, the active case count in Santa Cruz County was 727. Now according to data from May 18, the active case count is at 1,734 and the average case count per 100k is 41. As a reminder, the case count per 100k in Santa Cruz County is twice that of the state’s average.

In our County the total death count due to COVID-19 is 262.

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. Staff has returned to the COVID-default setup, with the lobby open to one member of the public at a time.

Virtual/Teleconferencing Meetings & In-Person 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.

After feedback provided by Council during the March 24, 2022, meeting, staff is prepared to discuss conducting hybrid Council meetings (with both virtual and in-person attendance) beginning in summer. Staff researched, determined, and ordered the necessary equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings, and all but one item has been received; the last remaining piece is anticipated by the vendor. Staff hopes that all equipment will be delivered in time for installation to begin at City Hall sometime in June.

When Council does return for hybrid meetings, the public will be notified in advance that in-person attendance is welcome with information on the published meeting agenda as well as on the City website.

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

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