

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: March 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 March 2, 2022, more than 6 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 465 million cases reported worldwide. At least 5.2 million children have lost a parent or caretaker due to the virus.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 968,663 people have died from the virus and more than 79.5 million COVID-19 cases have been reported. According to November 2021 reports, one in 500 children in the U.S. has lost a parent or caregiver to COVID.

Discussion: Since the beginning of the pandemic in California, 87,194 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported; there is currently a daily average of 95 deaths a day, down from 174 two-weeks ago. According to data from March 18, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 6.5 (down from 15.4 on March 2, 42.3 on February 17 and from 127.6 on February 4).

General Decline in Cases vs. Rising Cases in the U.K.

Since January, the County, State, and Country has seen a steady decrease in COVID-19 cases. However, it is uncertain this trend will continue indefinitely. In some European Countries, including the United Kingdom, cases have again climbed in the past several weeks. The increase in cases, seen in the U.K. and Germany in particular, comes after weeks of solid decline from the Omicron peak and may be due to a lack of COVID-19 restrictions (which were ended in recent weeks) and due to a subvariant of Omicron, known as BA.2, which is overtaking the original Omicron in many parts of the world.

On Tuesday, March 15, ABC Bay Area news reported that "in the last two weeks, the U.K. and other parts of Europe are reporting a spike in COVID-19 cases due to an Omicron sub-variant, which is believed to be 30% more transmissible than the initial strain." The report went on to

explain that the past two years have shown that “what happens in Europe with COVID, tends to happen in the U.S. four to six weeks later”.

Local Case Numbers and Statistics in Santa Cruz County

On February 17, the total known case count was at 45,272 with 4,115 active cases.

On March 3, the total known case count was at 46,601 with 1,433 active cases.

Now on March 18, the total known case count is at 47,308 with 717 active cases, and an average case count per 100k of 13.8 in Santa Cruz County.

While it appears that Santa Cruz County experienced an intense Omicron surge like the rest of the Country, the County has peaked locally and has been seeing steadily decreasing cases, though not at as fast a rate of other places in the State.

Over the past two weeks, two County residents have been lost to COVID, bringing the total deaths due to COVID-19 count to 256.

Changes to State Mask Mandate

On February 28, the California Department of Public Health updated its guidance on facial coverings. There are no longer distinctions regarding vaccination status in the masking guidance.

Everyone is required to wear masks in:

- Public transit and in stations, terminals, and airports
- Healthcare settings
- Emergency shelters and cooling and heating centers
- State and local correctional facilities and detention centers
- Homeless shelters
- Long-term care settings and adult and senior care facilities

Masks are strongly recommended for everyone in:

- Indoor public settings (now including K-12 schools and daycare, since March 12)
- Retail
- Restaurants
- Theaters
- Family entertainment centers
- Meetings
- State and local government offices that serve the public

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.

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 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.

On the General Government section of the agenda this evening, Council will review options and provide feedback regarding conducting teleconferencing, in-person, or hybrid meeting types in the coming weeks/months.

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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