

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 27, 2022

From: City Manager Department

Subject: Receive Update on Pandemic Response

Recommended Action: Make the determination that all hazards related to the worldwide spread of 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.

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 January 18, 2022, more than 5.5 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 331 million cases reported worldwide.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 852,048 people have died from the virus and more than 66 million COVID-19 cases have been reported.

Discussion: Since the beginning of the pandemic, 77,306 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported in California; there is currently a daily average of 42 deaths a day. According to data from January 18, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 270.6 (in contrast, the new case count per 100k was 46 according to data from December 30).

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

As stated by the World Health Organization (WHO), “all viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, change over time. Most changes have little to no impact on the virus’ properties. However, some changes may affect the virus’s properties, such as how easily it spreads, the associated disease severity, or the performance of vaccines, therapeutic medicines, diagnostic tools, or other public health and social measures”. On November 26, the WHO designated a new variant, B.1.1.529 as a Variant of Concern (VOC) and named it Omicron. The WHO has reported that “preliminary evidence suggests an increased risk of reinfection with this variant, as compared to other VOCs.

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 are currently rising at a faster rate than at any other time in the pandemic, however hospitalizations remain below last winter’s peaks.

As of January 18, the New York Times reported that, while “most of the Country continues to see explosive case growth...infection levels seem to have peaked in some of the places that were hit first by Omicron. Puerto Rico, Cleveland, Chicago, New York City and Washington, D.C. are among the places beginning to see improvement”.

Local Case Numbers and Statistics in Santa Cruz County

As of November 29, there were 20,864 total known COVID-19 cases in Santa Cruz County. As of January 21, there were 30,383 total known cases of COVID-19.

On November 29 there were 517 known active cases in Santa Cruz County; as of January 6, that number had grown to 1,957. Now on January 21, the active case count is 6,191; evidence that Santa Cruz County has experienced an intense Omicron surge as has the rest of the County. As of January 21, 2022, COVID-19 has claimed 237 people’s lives in the County.

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/inspiresc>.

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.

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 is effective at midnight November 21, 2021, and states that masks must be worn in private settings when non-household members are present. Health Officer Newell stated that “a potential winter surge appears to be a significant threat to the health and safety of our community”. The Order will remain in effect until it is rescinded, superseded, or amended in writing by the Health Officers, considering hospitalizations, variants of concern, and case and vaccination rates.

Due to rising cases, 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.

If major changes occur between the date of agenda publication and the City Council meeting, further updates on the regional and local coronavirus response will be provided in a verbal report at the meeting.

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.

City Hall operations have been updated slightly to account for this winter's Omicron surge. Staff is now staggering their time in shared office spaces. The lobby has been rearranged, with a plexi-glass in-person service window installed at the front door. This keeps the lobby and City Hall facilities relatively closed off to non-staff members, while still allowing for in-person service. This recreates how City Hall functioned during last winter's Delta surge. Members of the public are helped one-at-a-time at the window, and masks are required by everyone to enter City Hall.

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.

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