

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: March 10, 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 5.9 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 438 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 950,785 people have died from the virus and more than 78.9 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, 84,928 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported in California; there is currently a daily average of 174 deaths a day, up from 169 per day two-weeks ago. According to date from March 2, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 15.4 (down from 42.3 on February 17 and 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 March 2, 2022, there are 219,944 (or 79.97%) people vaccinated with at least one dose, and 202,822 (73.75%) are fully vaccinated.

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.

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, five County residents have been lost to COVID, bringing the total deaths due to COVID-19 count to 254.

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
- Indoors in K-12 schools and childcare (through March 11)
- 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 (including K-12 schools and daycare beginning 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.

Because COVID-19 case numbers are consistently decreasing, there is a renewed interest in holding City Council meetings in person at the Capitola Council Chambers. More information regarding this potential transition will be provided in an agenda item for the March 24, 2022, City Council meeting.

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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