

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: July 28, 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 July 21, 2022, more than 6.375 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 566 million cases reported worldwide, though this is an undercount of all those that have been infected with COVID-19.

In the United States, more than one million people have died from Covid since the beginning of the pandemic. More than 89 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 92,292 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported since the beginning of the pandemic. According to data from July 21, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 48.5 (on May 31 the average was 33.1). There is currently a daily average of 21

deaths a day, up from 11 a month ago. In California, at least 1 in 4 residents have been infected with COVID-19.

BA.5 Cases Rising

The New York Times reported on July 21, “The daily case average grew to more than 129,000 on Tuesday, and cases are rising in more than 40 states. Since cases have always been an undercount, it is likely that the true number of cases is far higher — particularly since test positivity rates are also increasing sharply nationwide”. The BA.5 variant is the most transmissible yet and is driving the increase in cases nationwide and locally.

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

According to data from June 16 the active case count in Santa Cruz County was 1,733; the active case count a month later, on July 21, is 1,932. The average case count per 100k is 52.4, slightly higher than the statewide average.

In our County the total death count due to COVID-19 is 267.

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.

During the June 9 meeting, Council directed staff to prepare for in-person meetings (with hybrid virtual options for the public) beginning on August 25. Details on how to attend that meeting, both in-person and virtually, will be included on the meeting agenda published Friday, August 19. Staff will also provide information regarding the return of in-person meeting attendance on social media and the city website. During the General Government portion of the meeting this evening, Council and staff will discuss the potential for a Hybrid Meeting Policy.

Fiscal Impact: Fiscal impacts are continually reviewed by Staff as business restrictions and consumer behaviors change in our community. City Council has maintained \$385,000 in a resiliency fund to help ensure the City has available resources should the pandemic result in further unforeseen impacts, which remains in the approved FY 2022-23 Budget.

Attachments:

1. Proposed Teleconferencing resolution

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