

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: February 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 February 4, 2022, more than 5.7 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 388 million cases reported worldwide. Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 896,183 people have died from the virus and more than 75 million COVID-19 cases have been reported.

Discussion: Since the beginning of the pandemic, 80,022 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported in California; there is currently a daily average of 104 deaths a day, up from 42 per day two-weeks ago. According to data from February 4, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 127.6 (down from 270.6 on January 18).

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 January 21, there were 30,383 total known cases of COVID-19 and 6,191 active cases. On February 4, the total known case count is at 42,141 with 10,143 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 less active cases.

As of February 4, 2022, COVID-19 has claimed 239 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.

Masks & COVID-19 Tests

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.

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 will be a distribution point in the next few weeks. Walmart will begin distributing by mid-February.

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. 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 plexiglass 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.

Continuing Virtual/Teleconferencing 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.

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

Report Prepared By: Chloé Woodmansee, City Clerk

Reviewed/Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager