

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: April 14, 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 April 8, 2022, more than 6.1 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 496 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 981,112 people have died from the virus and more than 80 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, 89,240 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported; there is currently a daily average of 57 deaths a day, down from 95 two-weeks ago. According to data from April 4, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 5.2 (down from 6.5 on March 8). In California, at least 1 in 4 residents have been infected with COVID-19.

Omicron BA.2 & Surge in Cases

The Omicron variant of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID) is comprised of several lineages and sub-lineages. The three most common lineages of Omicron currently are BA.1, BA.1.1, and BA.2. The Omicron variant spreads more easily than the earlier variants of the virus, including the Delta variant. It is Omicron BA.2 that seems to be causing a steady rise in cases once again, first seen in the U.K. and now reflected in the U.S. primarily on the east coast in more than a dozen states.

According to reports from NBC News on April 6, the BA.2 subvariant is now 72 percent of new COVID cases in the United States.

According to a New York Times April 7 report, where cases are rising, like in New York City where the positivity rate is above 6 percent in some neighborhoods, Omicron BA.2 “has yet to produce a rise in hospitalizations, and deaths remain low.”

On April 8, the New York Times reported that cases are spiking in New York City and Washington, DC, where cases have doubled and risen to 60 percent (respectively) in recent weeks. The report states that “Across the United States, caseloads have stopped falling, and have started to rise in states including Alaska, Vermont, Colorado, Rhode Island and New York. Experts have been warning that another surge was coming since the recent surge in Europe, where past virus waves have been a harbinger of what was to come in the United States”.

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

Masks

The California Department of Public Health updated its guidance on facial coverings in February.

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.

Local Case Numbers and Statistics in Santa Cruz County

On March 3, the total known case count was at 46,601 with 1,433 active cases. Now according to data from April 6, in Santa Cruz County the total known case count is 47,914 with 431 active

cases, and an average case count per 100k of 9.1, a slight rise from 7.3 which reported earlier this week (two weeks ago the average case count per 100k was 13.8).

In our County the total death count due to COVID-19 is 259.

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.

After feedback provided by Council during the March 24, 2022, meeting, staff is in the process of acquiring, installing, and testing the necessary equipment to allow for "hybrid" Council meetings (with both virtual and in-person attendance). Depending on changes in the pandemic, Council and staff will discuss conducting meetings in this manner beginning in summer. When Council does return for hybrid meetings, the public will be notified in advance that in-person attendance is welcome with information on the published meeting agenda as well as on the City website.

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

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager