

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 13, 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 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 Capitola 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 January 2022, more than 5.4 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 291 million cases reported worldwide.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 55 million COVID-19 cases have been reported and more than 825,609 people have died from the virus.

Discussion: Since the beginning of the pandemic, 75,847 deaths have been reported in California; there is a daily average of 45 deaths a day due to COVID-19. According to data from December 30, 2021, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 46 (in contrast, the new case count per 100k was 9.2 according to data from December 1).

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 3, 2022, the total number of vaccinations administered in Santa Cruz County is

412,219. In the County, there are 211,378 (or 77.4%) people vaccinated with at least one dose, and 194,881 (71.3%) 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 estimates 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.

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 6, there are 24,017 total known cases of COVID-19.

Rather than the total number of all COVID-19 cases since March 2020, it is helpful to compare the currently active known case count to identify trends and/or a surge. On November 29 there were 517 known active cases in Santa Cruz County; as of January 6, that number had grown to 1,957. As of January 6, 2022, COVID-19 has claimed 230 people’s lives in the County.

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.

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.

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. Attachment 1: Proposed Resolution

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