

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: May 12, 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 May 3, 2022, more than 6.2 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 515 million cases reported worldwide. At least 5.2 million children have lost a parent or caretaker due to the virus.

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”.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in the United States more than 992,033 people have died from the virus and more than 81.2 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, 89,694 deaths due to COVID-19 have been reported; there is currently a daily average of 13 deaths a day, down from 57 two-weeks ago. According to data from May 3, 2022, the average new COVID-19 case count per 100k was 12.4 (up from 10.6 on May 2 and 6.9 on April 22). In California, at least 1 in 4 residents have been infected with COVID-19.

Rising 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.

The New York Times reported on May 3 that in the United States “cases are increasing in all but four states and territories, and in more than a dozen, the daily case average is twice as high

today as it was two weeks ago. Despite this rapid growth, the virus's true spread is believed to be even greater, since many infections go uncounted in official case reports”.

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 April 20, the active case count in Santa Cruz County was 727. Now according to data from May 4, the active case count is 1,054. The average case count per 100k is 23.9. This number has risen from where it was on April 17 at 16.3 per 100k.

In our County the total death count due to COVID-19 is 261.

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