Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

Discussion

SUBJECT:

COVID-19 UPDATE (CITY COUNCIL)

I. SUMMARY

During this unprecedented pandemic, the City of Carson has had to adhere to Federal, State and County Executive orders, which have helped slow the spread of the virus but at the same time have shut down our local businesses and severely impacted our economy. Our residents and businesses were directed by the State to follow stay-at-home orders with the exception of employees who were determined to have an essential job or in order for residents to shop for essential needs. For the first time in its incorporated history, the City was not allowed to operate in any capacity outside of health measures dictated by the Federal, State and County governments. As the City is now looking to reopen its doors, the health & safety of our residents and the resurgence of the economy continues to be subject to the Executive Orders of Federal, State and County mandates.

The novel coronavirus currently designated COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province in China in December 2019. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern. On January 31, 2020, the United States Health and Human Services Secretary declared this global outbreak a public health emergency for the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced on February 25, 2020 that community spread of COVID-19 was likely to occur in the United States.

The State of California proclaimed a State of Emergency on March 4, 2020, and Los Angeles County declared a Local Health Emergency as well that same day. On March 12, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-25-20, declaring that state and local public health officials may, as they deem necessary in the interest of public health, issue guidance limiting or recommending limitations upon attendance at public assemblies, conferences, or other mass events, which could cause the cancellation of such gatherings through no fault or responsibility of the parties involved, thereby constituting a force majeure. On March 13, 2020, President Trump Declared a National State of Emergency.

On March 15, 2020, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) reported that, as of

that date, California had almost 500 confirmed cases of COVID-19, 11 of which had resulted in death. CDPH also reported that approximately 11,100 Californians who returned to the United States after travel were self-monitoring. On March 16, 2020, the World Health Organization reported that, as of that date, there were more than 180,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19, over 7,000 of which had resulted in death across 148 countries.

Due to the rapid spread of the disease and high level of deaths, the lack of scientific data on its transmission and the lack of a vaccine, on March 17, 2020, the City declared that a local emergency now exists throughout the City (Resolution 20-053). Under Government Code Section 8630, the City Council has authority to proclaim the existence of a local emergency.

Although the spread of the disease has continued and rates per capita have continued to grow, testing has become more widespread and the high level of compliance to safer-at-home directives and social distancing has reduced the peak and enabled medical facilities in the State and the County not to exceed capacity.

Balancing health concerns with the desire to return to some level of normalcy, the State and County are carefully moving into Phase 2, Recovery Phase. The County announced on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 that certain types of businesses and public space in Los Angeles County that were temporarily shuttered amid the coronavirus pandemic will be allowed to reopen with safety precautions on Friday, May 8, 2020. The first round of re-openings will include trails, railheads, golf courses, car dealership showrooms, and stores that sell toys, books, clothing, sporting good and music. Pro shops and dine-in restaurants at golf courses are to remain shuttered. The revised “safer-at-home” order only allows for curbside pickup at the businesses.

Everyone is still being asked to wear masks or face coverings when outside and to practice physical distancing. Anyone who is over 65 or has underlying health conditions is still expected to stay at home and not participate in those recreational activities.

On May 8, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that the state can begin to move into Phase 2 of modifying the stay-at-home order. Phase 2 allowed for gradual reopening of lower-risk workplaces with adaptations including bookstores, clothing stores, florists and sporting goods stores, with modifications.

On May, 11, 2020, the Carson Disaster Council took a number of actions in support of the Phase 2, Recovery Phase, the first of which was approving an Order for the partial use of closed city parks for walking, jogging and running.

To ease regulations on restaurants and stores as they adopt their operations to curbside service, the Disaster Council authorized curbside service subject only to ADA compliance and red curb restrictions during Carson’s Declaration of Emergency.

To help businesses advertise that they are re-opening, the Disaster Council authorized, for the period of Carson’s Declaration of Emergency, a waiver of the City’s sign provisions, allowing the placement of banners and other temporary signs on the property of the business, next to the business or in the shopping center in which the business is located,

subject to ADA requirements.

Recognizing that restaurants will need to expand their space to accommodate social distancing requirements, the Disaster Council authorized the Community Development Director to administratively approve applications for businesses to expand onto public sidewalks and into adjacent off-street parking during the period of the Carson Declaration of Emergency.

The number of positive COVID tests and hospitalizations following Phase 2, Recovery Phase will be closely monitored to see if the loosening of restrictions has resulted in a new peak in cases. Should that occur, consideration will be given to reinstating some or all of the earlier restrictions.

On May 26, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom announced an extended Phase 2 reflecting progressively designated sectors, businesses, establishments and activities that may reopen with certain modifications, based on health and safety needs at a pace designed to protect all.

Also on May 26, 2020 the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health released its list of reopening's, which are detailed in the Background section below under Recovery.

II. RECOMMENDATION

DISCUSS and PROVIDE direction.

III. ALTERNATIVES

None.

IV. BACKGROUND

On March 17, 2020, the City Council unanimously voted (5-0) to declare a local emergency in response to COVID-19. The declaration of a local emergency enables the City to be more efficient and effective in its response to the outbreak, puts in place a framework that supports the continuity of essential public safety services, seeks and utilizes mutual aid, and ensures the City has all available tools at its disposal to keep the community safe. The declaration also allows the City to seek reimbursement of funds from the State and Federal government.

In addition to the declaration of a local emergency, the City Council established the Carson Disaster Council (CMC Section 3702), which immediately began meeting twice a week. Actions taken by the Disaster Council to enable the City to expeditiously address needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic are reported on the City's website at ci.carson.ca.us.

The members of the Carson Disaster Council are as follows:

- **Mayor**, Albert Robles - Chairman;
- **City Manager**, Sharon Landers - Director of Emergency Preparedness & Vice Chairman;
- **Assistant City Manager**, John Raymond - Assistant Director of Emergency Preparedness; and
- **LA Sheriff's Captain**, Jason Skeen - Disaster Council Representative.

All City facilities were closed to the public, events and programs were canceled, and City employees were either directed not to report to work or to remain in a working capacity based on roles and functions that best supports the City's Emergency Plan. The employees who were directed to continue working were those needed to fulfill public safety, infrastructure maintenance, certain public services, and internal support. The City also implemented an emergency telecommute policy for employees reporting to work who qualify.

To provide additional COVID-19 updates to our community, with the concurrence of the City Council, the Mayor has scheduled Special City Council Meetings on all Tuesdays where there is not a regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

Discussed below are the many initiatives and programs initiated by the Disaster Council and the City Council since the Declaration of Emergency.

#CoverCarson

At its meeting of April 2, 2020, the Disaster Council issued an order mandating that anyone who is outside while in Carson or within certain businesses wear a facemask. This requirement was ratified by a unanimous vote of the City Council (5-0) on April 7, 2020 (Resolution No. 20-067).

To publicize the City's mandate, using social media, a campaign and slogan to wear facemasks has been initiated #CoverCarson. Please note that in no way is this requirement intended to supersede the safer at home measures that are still in effect.

This mandate adds a new layer of protection to current safety protocols based upon updated reports that facemasks provide a crucial layer of protection to the healthy and may help reduce the possibility that infected individuals would unwittingly spread of the virus into the air.

To ensure that residents who haven't been able to make or purchase a mask can get one, the City purchased 10,000 cloth masks that it is distributing at high traffic essential businesses and through our deputies and Code Enforcement Officers.

Free COVID Testing in Carson

At a Special City Council Meeting held on April 21, 2020, the City Council approved a collaboration with US Health Fairs (Private Non-Profit) to provide a free Drive-Thru testing center located at the Juanita Millender-McDonald Community Center beginning on April, 27, 2020 at 9:00am.

This endeavor, funded through the Private Non-Profit, may be the first in Southern California and the second City worldwide, to provide free testing to all residents even if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms. This collaboration follows the press conference held by the Carson City Council one week prior, on April 20, 2020, announcing that the Los Angeles County Public Health Department opened a free testing center at Harbor General Hospital, which is in an unincorporated area immediately adjacent to Carson.

The ability to provide free testing to Carson residents has been of paramount interest for the City. LA County is only able to provide 350 test kits per day. US Health Fairs has offered to provide up to 1000 a day at a test site here in the City of Carson. Please visit <https://ushealthfairs.org/carson-testing/> or call (310) 952-1719 for more information.

As of the preparation of this report on June 11, 2020, Los Angeles County Public Health Department has reported 500 confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the City of Carson, with 67,064 cases within Los Angeles County (which includes cases reported by the Long Beach and Pasadena Health Departments). One should assume that this underreports the actual spread of the virus since those who do not display symptoms or are otherwise mildly impacted have not been tested.

Subsidized LYFT

To assist Carson residents with transportation to essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has recently partnered with Lyft to provide subsidized rides through June 30, 2020. By entering the promotional code “LyftCarson” into the Lyft app, participants get 50% off the cost of their ride up to a maximum City subsidy of $10. Each participant receives twenty (20) rides per month. The promotional code will only apply the discount for rides that start AND end within the boundaries of the City. Flyers and instructions are being distributed and additional information is available on the City’s website. Funding comes from two sources: Proposition C and Air Quality Management District (AQMD). Ridership data will be reviewed by Staff to determine the effectiveness of the partnership and any opportunities for improvement. Please visit <https://www.lyft.com/terms> and enter promo code: **LyftCarson** for the subsidy.

Food Programs for Seniors

Immediately following the Declaration of Emergency, the City Administration mobilized a Grab ‘n Go lunch program for seniors. Several weeks ago, we kicked off the Carson Essentials To-Go Program, a grocery delivery program in partnership with Norms. This program has received funding by the Watson Land Company, the Carson Company and the Carson Community Foundations.

In addition, the City, in partnership with the Lighthouse, YMCA Meals on Wheels, and the ERB Foundation, is providing meals and food kits to seniors and homebound residents.

<http://ci.carson.ca.us/CoronaVirus.aspx>

Small Business Programs

City Council allocated $75,000 for a contract with California Community Economic Development Association (non-profit) to provide assistance to Carson businesses applying for loans via the CARES Act and other state or federal loan programs including the City's own Carson Loan Program funded with $500,000. Please visit **carson.cceda.com** or call (213) 348-7504

Other Actions by the City

In addition to those initiatives listing above, the City has taken many other proactive actions to protect and provide service to the community:

- Activating the City's EOC at a level 3 to coordinate the City's response to COVID -19 with local, state and federal agencies.
- Tracking expenditures for FEMA and Cal OES Cost Recovery. Funding for most of the City's initiatives have been from the City's General Funds. We will apply for reimbursement to the extent allowable from FEMA and Cal OES for costs associated with combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. FEMA may reimburse the City for up to 75 percent of the costs associated with pandemic effort.
- Created an informational website (<http://covid19.carson.ca.us/>), which is updated daily.
- City Council adopted resolution 20-070 to publicize the passage of the statewide protections to the City's residents against the risk of eviction from their homes during the COVID-19 state of emergency
- City Council adopted resolution 20-2006U to enact prohibitions against price-gauging during and for 60 days after the declared state emergency
- The Carson COVID-19 Task Force continues to connect with vulnerable residents through the Resource Hotline Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
- On April 6, 2020, the Disaster Council issued an emergency moratorium prohibiting rent increases at all Carson mobile home parks during the declared local emergency period related to COVID-19.
- City staff continues to explore grant opportunities and funding from the state and federal governments as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On June 1, 2020, the Disaster Council approved an order deferring Transitional Occupancy Tax (TOT) payments for 90-days retroactive to February through April 2020, removing all penalties and late fees.

Recovery

City of Carson businesses were closed due to State and Los Angeles (LA) County mandates and it is important to note that rules for reopening are subject to State and LA County guidelines as well. LA County continues to direct the safety protocols and timing for the reopening of businesses in our community. The City of Carson has continued to do its part by following the County's orders step by step for safety and compliance procedures.

Our Carson businesses and residents are required to follow the County's directions for moving to the next opening phase.

The County, and consequently Carson, is now in advanced stages of Phase 2, where retail, related logistics and manufacturing, office workplaces, limited personal services, outdoor museums, childcare, and essential businesses can open with modifications. The state is issuing guidance to help these workplaces reopen safely. On May 26, 2020, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health released its list of reopening's:

Recreation/Entertainment/Learning

OPEN

• Parks (Playgrounds are closed.) • Public Trails (Walking and Hiking) • Beaches (For Active Recreation) • Pools in Multi-Unit Residential Facilities (e.g., Apartments, Condominiums, and Homeowner's Associations) • Golf Courses • Pickleball and Tennis Courts • Horse Riding/Equestrian • Bike Parks • Community Gardens • Model Airplane Areas • Shooting and Archery Ranges • Vehicle-Based Parades • Drive-in Movie Theaters and Drive-in Restaurants • Libraries (For Curbside Pick-up Only) • Outdoor Museums, Open Air Galleries, Botanical Gardens, and other Outdoor Exhibition Space

CLOSED

• Beach Piers • Recreation and Community Centers • Basketball and Volleyball Courts • Baseball and Soccer Fields • Youth Sports Leagues • Gyms/Fitness Centers, including in Multi-unit Housing • Public Pools • Indoor Museums, Galleries, and Zoos • Bars and Nightclubs that Don't Serve Food • Arcades, Bowling Alleys, Movie Theaters, Live Performance Theaters, Concert Halls and Venues, Stadiums, Arenas, Gaming Facilities, Theme Parks, and Festivals

Shopping/Restaurants/Personal Care

ALL RETAIL (Including those located in indoor and outdoor retail shopping centers may now open for business at 50% capacity)

OPEN

• Grocery Stores, Certified Farmers' Markets, Farm and Produce Stands, Supermarkets, Food Banks, Convenience Stores, Wholesale Clubs, and Pharmacies • Pet Food Stores, Animal Daycare and Boarding Facilities, and Veterinary Clinics • Stores that Sell Products Needed for Your Home, such as Hardware, Building, Home Appliance, and Pool Supply Stores • Lower-Risk Retail Stores, such as Bookstores, Jewelry Stores, Furniture Stores, Toy Stores, and Clothing Stores • Restaurants and Cafes: Open for Pick-up, Drive-thru and Delivery Only • Hair Salons, Barber Shops and Pet Grooming

CLOSED

powered by Legistar™

• Personal Grooming and Nail Salons

Healthcare Services

OPEN Clinics, Hospitals, Dental Clinics, Physical Therapy and Chiropractic Offices, Optometrists, Mental or Behavioral Health Providers, and other Healthcare Settings

Places of Worship

OPEN (Limited number of congregants to less than 25% of the building's capacity, or a maximum of 100 people, whichever is lower.

Public Protests

In-person protests are permitted as long as attendance is limited to 25% of the area's maximum occupancy or a maximum of 100 attendees, whichever is lower.

V. FISCAL IMPACT

As has been the case for all municipalities across the country, Carson's revenues have been impacted by the slowing of the economy. This will be addressed in our proposed FY 2020/21 Budget, which is a separate item that will come before the City Council on June 16, 2020.

Staff costs are being incurred by the City for the coordination, surveillance, communication, and management of the COVID-19 local emergency, as well as costs for procuring related services and supplies. City costs are either being covered by existing department appropriations or new City Council appropriations from the General Fund. All costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic are being tracked separately in the City's Disaster Fund so that the City can pursue any available Federal and State reimbursement for eligible City costs incurred.

VI. EXHIBITS

None

Prepared by: David C. Roberts, Jr., Assistant City Manager

powered by Legistar™