

*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

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**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: JUNE 30, 2020**

**FROM: COUNCILMEMBER RONALDO FIERRO** **WARDS: ALL**  
**COUNCILMEMBER ERIN EDWARDS**  
**COUNCILMEMBER STEVE HEMENWAY**

**SUBJECT: FORMULATE COHESIVE LOCAL RESPONSE TO STATEWIDE MASK ORDER, INCLUDING COMPREHENSIVE OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT; REVIEW CITY MESSAGING AND COMMUNICATIONS ON COVID-19.**

## **ISSUE:**

Local response to recent statewide mask order and City of Riverside's plan for outreach and community engagement; discussion of methods to encourage compliance with the order.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

That the City Council:

1. Require opened businesses to post notice of the statewide mask order and checklist with the safety and protective measures they have implemented in a easily-accessible place in their establishment; and
2. Direct City staff to conduct comprehensive and sustained outreach to businesses and residents regarding the statewide mask order and the subsequent public health need for all residents to wear face masks while in public to curb the spread of COVID-19 and continue to reopen our economy; by:
  - a. Contacting a targeted list of customer-facing businesses about the new mask mandate and the required notice, coordinating with the Greater Riverside Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Riverside Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Riverside Arlington Business Partnership, the Riverside County Black Chamber of Commerce, the Riverside Downtown Partnership and other community business groups; and
  - b. Conducting a social media campaign explaining the public health reasons to wear a mask: to curb the spread of COVID-19 and protect our community and economy; and
3. Reviewing current City messaging and communications on COVID-19 and discussing other possible methods to encourage utilization of protective measures.

## **BACKGROUND:**

Since early 2020, the global community has been working in overdrive in response to a deadly pandemic that brought little precedent and no immediate hope for a viable vaccine or treatment. The Coronavirus Pandemic has ravaged the United States, California and our local community, both from a health and economic standpoint.

Fortunately, the State of California, Riverside County and our local city government all responded proactively and earlier than most other states and municipalities: With the California Governor instituting a Stay at Home Order on March 19<sup>th</sup> and the County Health Officer instituting a mask requirement on April 5<sup>th</sup>.

Because of these quick and decisive actions, models that predicted the overloading of hospitals and ICUs from hundreds of thousands of cases in Riverside County were not realized. With hospitals stabilized and the curve dampened, the State has had the ability to begin to cautiously reopen.

The City of Riverside has followed the lead of Riverside County and the State of California in accordance with the California Pandemic Resilience Roadmap which included four stages for easing the Stay at Home Order. Riverside County, and subsequently the City of Riverside, is in stage 2.5. This has allowed for qualified reopening of retail, restaurants, bars, and personal care services.

Since reopening, our community has seen an alarming surge in COVID-19 cases and hospitalization rates. The County of Riverside is currently 1 of 13 counties that sit on the State Watchlist.

According to the California Department of Public Health (as of June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020):

*Riverside County is experiencing elevated disease transmission. Drivers of this include:*

- 1. outbreaks at state prisons and skilled nursing facilities (SNFs)*
- 2. potential transmission at public protests with large numbers of people in close proximity without face coverings*
- 3. in-county patient transfers from Imperial County,*
- 4. patients seeking care from Northern Baja California and traveling along SR-86 corridor into Coachella Valley and*
- 5. general increases in local gatherings.*

*Key action steps to address concerns include:*

- 1. close monitoring of data;*
- 2. increase testing volume at county and state sites;*
- 3. continue SNF outreach and support and implement Quick Response Task Force assistance for high risk facilities;*
- 4. expand contact tracing workforce;*
- 5. increase public messaging on the importance of personal protection measures; and*
- 6. coordination and communication between the local health department, CDPH, and California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to mitigate outbreaks at state prisons.*

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, with cases and hospitalizations increasing statewide, California Governor Gavin Newsom instituted a statewide order requiring the wearing of face masks while in high-risk areas.

Exemptions to the order were outlined for: children 2 years of age or younger, persons with medical conditions that prevents them from wearing the mask, persons who are hearing-impaired, persons whom wearing a mask would create a risk related to their work, persons seated at a restaurant, persons engaged in outdoor work or recreation when alone or with household members and able to maintain six feet social distancing.

In response to this surge, Governor Newsom called for Californians to combat these numbers by improving protective measures and physical distancing, stressing that it is our personal behaviours that are leading to these numbers and putting more of our community's lives at risk.

In addition to this, Governor Gavin Newsom has tied roughly 2.5 billion in aid for local governments to the willingness to abide by state public health directives. He said in a news conference, "We give an enormous amount of power, control and authority to local government, but what we're now looking for is accountability."

## **DISCUSSION:**

After nearly three months under a strict Stay at Home Order and a now gradual reopening of the economy, our community is attempting to adapt to a new normal. For many, the perception is that the once urgent threat of COVID-19 is largely over. Due to the County's variance, we have widely reopened many sectors of our economy and social gatherings have understandably increased, with families getting back together and friends seeing each other after months of isolation.

However, COVID-19 is still a very real threat and is surging at an alarming rate. On June 24<sup>th</sup>, new infections of Coronavirus statewide rose over 40% in a 24 hour period, with a gain of 7,149 cases. Hospitalizations statewide have increased by 32% in the last 14 days and the number of patients in the ICU have increased by over 19% in that same period.

As of the publication of this report, the City of Riverside has seen a 26% increase in cases within the last 14 days, with a total of 571 new cases. Riverside County hospitalizations have increased by 20% in the past 14 days, with a 14% increase in ICU beds in use and a 15% increase in ventilators in use.

For much of the pandemic, the City of Riverside has taken a cautious approach and largely deferred to the direction of the County and State.

However, as the largest City in Riverside County, the County seat, the 12<sup>th</sup> largest City in California and as the City with the most COVID-19 cases and deaths, we have a responsibility to actively and expeditiously inform our residents of the need for compliance with common-sense preventative measures so that we can:

1. protect the lives of our most vulnerable;
2. Keep our local businesses open;
3. Maintain our variance and continue to move forward on the County's accelerated reopening timeline.

It should be no surprise that with businesses reopened, many County residents are coming to Riverside to enjoy our restaurants, bars and local businesses. This further enhances our responsibility to not only protect the health and safety of our residents but of our visitors.

Our letting up on simple and thoughtful protective measures has directly resulted into the surge we are seeing in hospitalizations and cases, all of which is still the first wave of the pandemic. In order to keep our businesses safely opened and to keep hospitalization and cases stable, increased compliance with health and safety measures is needed.

The following measures are being proposed to complement and reinforce the direction of the California Public Health Department:

Measure 1: Requirement for businesses to post an easily-accessible notice (provided by the City) of the statewide mask order that includes a checklist of protective measures that the establishment has implemented.

Measure 2: Targeted outreach to customer-facing businesses about the statewide mask order, the required notice and checklist, and answering frequently asked questions.

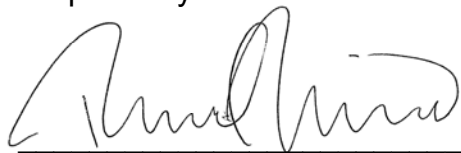
Measure 3: Social media ad campaign about the vital role wearing masks plays in suppressing COVID-19 and preserving the reopening of our economy.

**REASONING FOR BYPASSING THE SUNSHINE ORDINANCE:** The Statewide Mask Order on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 came to the attention of the City Council after the posting of the June 30<sup>th</sup> agenda on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020; additionally in order to provide quick and timely guidance to City staff on gaining compliance a City Council discussion is needed on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

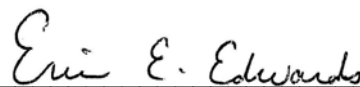
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no expected fiscal impact of this item.

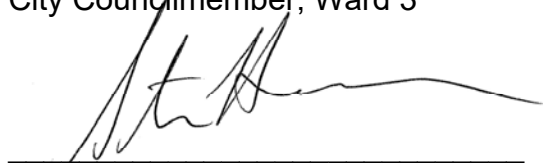
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Attachments:

1. Statewide Order – CA Public Health Guidance Document
2. Statewide County Watchlist
3. Riverside County Public Update – June 25, 2020
4. Riverside County EMD COVID-19 metrics – June 24, 2020