



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0119, **Version:** 1

TO:

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

THROUGH:

Bruce Moe, City Manager

FROM:

Carrie Tai, AICP, Community Development Director

SUBJECT:

Report on City Hall Reopening Plan (Community Development Director Tai)

RECEIVE REPORT

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive a report on the City Hall Reopening Plan and provide any desired input.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no fiscal implications from this report. However, there are costs associated with modifying operations to accommodate for COVID-19 protocols, including securing cleaning supplies, face coverings, additional janitorial cost, and upgrading existing queue management software to allow for texting capabilities for remote queueing. These costs are already accommodated in the current year budget and will be included in the FY 2021-2022 Proposed Budget. As reopening plans are updated, operations costs will continue to be re-evaluated.

BACKGROUND:

Following the State of California and Los Angeles County declarations of emergency due to the COVID-19, the City Council declared a State of Emergency on March 13, 2020, and closed numerous City facilities, including City Hall, community centers, and other indoor spaces to the public. The City drafted and presented a City Hall Reopening Plan to City Council in May 2020, and even briefly reopened City Hall to customers by appointment, but reverted to a closure as COVID-19 cases increased.

While outdoor City facilities began reopening beginning summer 2020, the City's indoor workspaces have remained closed to the public in an abundance of caution and to adhere to Los Angeles County Public Health Officer guidance to encourage remote work when possible. Staff transitioned operations to serve the public remotely, via email or phone or drop-off/pick-up areas, and conducting virtual meetings and inspections. Necessary staff performing in-person work or provide field services (public safety, inspectors, maintenance staff, dial-a-ride drivers, parks and recreation staff, etc.) have worked onsite throughout the pandemic, although with staggered schedules and modified indoor interactions.

The State of California provides guidance on reopening activities through the Blueprint for the Safer Economy, which assigns one of four tiers to every county. These tiers, Widespread (purple), Substantial (red), Moderate (orange) and Minimal (yellow) indicate the level of risk for the spread of COVID-19 in that county. Upon an assignment of a tier, county health agencies publish a specific county health order to apply the tier guidance to that county. Since the inception of the Blueprint, Los Angeles County has been in the Widespread tier, signifying the need to take utmost caution to avoid the spread of COVID-19. As of March 15, 2021, Los Angeles County progressed into the Substantial tier, which allowed a limited additional reopening of indoor restaurant dining, gyms, and stores. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health released a corresponding health order. Government functions are designated as essential operations and are able to function under modified operations.

The movement of the State tier has allowed the City to begin reopening City Hall and City facilities to the public in a manner that continues safeguards against COVID-19 in accordance with Federal, State, and County regulations.

DISCUSSION:

The City Hall and City Facilities Reopening Plan (attached) includes a framework that ensures that the City tracks with Federal, State, and County orders and guidance. The Plan also documents the City services that have been available throughout the COVID-19 response, as well as a list of alternative work methods developed to provide continuation of services. Lastly, the Plan includes a list of COVID-19 protocols.

The Plan steps through a gradual reopening over the course of five Phases. Phase 1 reflects the most cautious state while Phase 5 signifies returning to normal operations. The following is the titled of each phase:

- Phase 1 - Transition City Hall and City Facilities to limited employees
- Phase 2 - Limited employees on-site / limited customers by appointment
- Phase 3 - Additional employees on-site / customers allowed
- Phase 4 - Most employees on-site / on-site operations restored
- Phase 5 - Return to pre-COVID-19 operations.

City Hall and other indoor facilities have been largely operating in accordance with Phase 1 throughout the COVID-19 response. Staff has made accommodations for special circumstances requiring in-person interaction, such as Public Records Act review of plans, bid openings, and employment interviews.

Staff is proposing the progression into Phase 2 of the Reopening Plan on April 12, which consists of accommodating for customer appointments and increasing the number of on-site staff to assist those customers. Due to space constraints, only limited employees are able to return at one time, and in certain cases, may have hybrid remote/on-site work schedules to ensure adequate spacing of workspaces. The purpose of customer appointments is to limit the number of people congregating in constrained spaces such as the City Hall lobby area or the “horseshoe”. Additionally, because all services are currently offered remotely (via phone, email, internet, or mail), appointments will allow staff to ensure that the customer needs can be addressed by the appropriate staff member and also to gauge the demand for in-person services.

Progression into Phase 2 includes continuation of all COVID-19 prevention protocol, including

distancing of employee workspaces and customers, mandatory face coverings, not entering the facilities when sick, and frequent cleaning and handwashing. Installation of physical delineators ("sneeze guards"), floor markings, and signage has been completed.

The progression into Phase 2 of the Reopening Plan will occur while LA County is in the Moderate (orange) tier. If LA County maintains its status in the Moderate tier, the City may be able to progress into Phase 3 to allow walk-in customers. This would necessitate a more comprehensive system for contact logging and tracing, queue management to ensure adequate distancing, and scheduling staff to be able to serve both in-person and remote customers. It is the City's intent on keeping any processes that increase convenience of remote transactions for customers; this also provides options for those wishing to exercise caution as the spread of COVID-19 is still possible.

Once LA County is in the State's Minimal (yellow) tier, it is likely that Phase 4 may be possible, which would consist of most employees back on-site with on-site operations fully restored, with continued preventative measures.

The Reopening Plan includes goals for conducting of public meetings, the feasibility of which is currently being assessed by the City Clerk and the Information Technology Department. Upon determination of an approach for conducting those meetings, the Reopening Plan will be updated accordingly.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

After analysis, staff determined that public outreach was not required for this issue. However, staff will modify the City website to indicate that City Hall is open via appointments, and also send out email communications to subscriber lists.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The City has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines the activity is not subject to CEQA. Thus, no environmental review is necessary.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney has reviewed this report and determined that no additional legal analysis is necessary.

ATTACHMENT:

1. City Hall and City Facilities Reopening Plan