



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council **DATE:** August 23, 2021
FROM: Matthew Bronson, City Manager
PREPARED BY: Matthew Bronson, City Manager
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Response Update

RECOMMENDATION

Receive an update on the countywide and City response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

Since the beginning of the pandemic in spring 2020, staff had placed a COVID-19 agenda item on each Council meeting agenda to provide an update on the countywide and City response to the pandemic. Staff discontinued this ongoing agenda item following the June 28, 2021 Council meeting given the waning of the COVID-19 pandemic at that time including lower case numbers and other metrics. However, given the recent worsening of COVID-19 conditions, staff has decided to place this agenda item on the August 23, 2021 meeting to provide updated information and will continue to place future agenda items as conditions warrant.

As of August 17, San Luis Obispo County has 23,737 confirmed COVID-19 cases with 24 current hospitalizations and 1,218 individuals at home and 22,210 individuals recovered (approximately 94%). This is an 11% increase in cases over the past two months with almost all of this increase occurring in August. For reference, there have been 1,551 new cases of the virus locally in the first two weeks of August compared with 163 new cases in the month of June. The number of active cases and the case rate per 100,000 population is at the highest level since January.

In South County, there has been a total of 5,651 confirmed cases (approximately 23% of countywide cases) with 1,757 in Arroyo Grande, 1,749 in Nipomo, 1,001 in Grover Beach, 738 in Oceano, and 405 in Pismo Beach. Current case numbers in Grover Beach per 1,000 residents (74) continue to be lower than Arroyo Grande (98), Nipomo (99), and Oceano (103) though higher than Pismo Beach (49). There has been a 12% increase in cases in Grover Beach over the past two months similar to the countywide trends in case numbers.

In June, the State discontinued the *Blueprint for a Safer Economy* which removed remaining restrictions on businesses and activities including the face coverings mandate. The improved situation was due in large part to the extent to the vaccination rate given the vaccine's protection against serious illness, hospitalization, or death. As of August 15, County Public Health has administered 170,654 total doses of the vaccinated in addition to doses administered by private pharmacies. Approximately 60% of residents in the county eligible for the vaccine (12 years of age and up) have been fully vaccinated with 68% partially vaccinated and 32% unvaccinated. In zip code 93433 which comprises Grover Beach, 53% of eligible individuals are fully vaccinated with 62% partially vaccinated. The city's vaccination rate is below the countywide average and Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach and roughly equal to Oceano. This lower rate has led the County to conduct targeted outreach within Grover Beach to encourage more people to get vaccinated.

However, the widespread proliferation of the Delta variant of COVID-19 has greatly increased the rate of transmission across the nation, state, and county. The Delta variant appears to be equally transmissible regardless of vaccination status though vaccinated individuals are less likely to become infected and very unlikely to suffer serious effects of the virus. Given the high transmission rates, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control on face coverings was revised to require use by unvaccinated individuals in indoor public spaces with the California Department of Public Health going further in recommending use by all individuals in such spaces. Numerous counties in the state have subsequently mandated face covering usage in indoor public spaces once again including Bay Area counties, Los Angeles County, and neighboring Santa Barbara County. To date, the County has not issued a similar mandate and instead has strongly urged residents to wear face coverings while inside public places.

Given public health trends and guidance, the City on August 11 reinstated a face covering requirement for all employees at City facilities along with customers and other members of the public visiting or using these facilities. These facilities include City Hall, Police Station, Corporation Yard, and Ramona and Community Centers. The Five Cities Fire Authority and City of Arroyo Grande also have a similar requirement. This action was done as a temporary measure in the interest of public and employee health and safety and will be re-evaluated as conditions change. City Hall counter hours have also been reduced to 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Monday through Thursday to provide an in-person option for the public while encouraging people to access information or conduct business with the City online or over the phone. Also given current conditions, Council meetings will continue to be virtual for the time being along with a continued ability for the public to call in for comments with a return to in-person meetings once it is safe and prudent to do so based on case numbers and other metrics.

Lastly, the City has resumed our public special events beginning with the Sizzlin' Summer Concert Series which started on July 4 and culminated on August 15. The concerts were successful in drawing a large crowd in a safe outdoor environment with the last concert also featuring a mobile vaccination clinic used by 19 individuals. The City will continue with other special events in a safe outdoor manner this fall and winter.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

ALTERNATIVES

The Council has the following alternatives to consider:

1. Receive an update on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic; or
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The agenda was posted in accordance with the Brown Act.