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San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors Receive COVID-19 Updates
Guidelines Being Developed to Begin Reopening for Business, County Services and Recreation

STOCKTON – The San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors met today to discuss and receive updates on the COVID-19 pandemic in San Joaquin County and provide direction to staff and approve actions.

Updates on COVID-19 Pandemic in San Joaquin County

- Mark Myles, San Joaquin County Counsel, explained to the Board the rationale behind the County following the Governor’s Public Health Orders as they relate to reopening businesses and activities. Mr. Myles said that by statute, counties must follow the State Public Health Officer’s orders during health emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. Per State law, every County Public Health Officer must follow the Governor’s and State Public Health Officer’s orders, or they may risk penalties or lose financial reimbursement for COVID-19 related services and activities. He said that the County can be most proactive by doing everything possible to follow the Governor’s criteria to reopen and develop an implementation plan that meets all of the requirements so the County is ready to go when the Orders are lifted.
- Marcia Cunningham, Director of Emergency Services reported to the Board that their Department is developing a “Roadmap to Recovery” to develop protocols for businesses to enact in order to reopen to the public once the Governor’s Public Health Order is gradually lifted in the coming days and weeks. The plan will provide guidelines and recommendations for reopening businesses in San Joaquin County, including a phased approach to easing restrictions, while ensuring the safety of employees and the public. Cunningham said she will work with in tandem with County Public Health, the Board of Supervisors and the local business community to help facilitate the economic recovery of San Joaquin’s local employers. Cunningham said she will present the full plan to the Board during their next meeting on Tuesday, May 12.

Kathy Miller, Chair of the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors, responded to the presentations by Mr. Myles and Ms. Cunningham stating, “The reality is, every business is essential to some, or else they wouldn’t exist. It is more productive to focus on what can businesses do, what sort of protocols can be adopted across the board and focus our implementation plan on those protocols to keep the public and businesses safe. Our business community needs to know what practices and procedures to enact so they can be ready when the State opens up. If our Public Health Officer has an implementation plan that is scientifically, medically and data driven, then I believe we should be able to begin implementing it carefully with the goal of being able to loosen it up a bit going forward and keeping pace with the State.”

Dan Burch, the San Joaquin County EMS Agency Administrator and Medical Health Operational Area Coordinator, sought the Board's direction on the development of a staffing plan in the event of an "unplanned staffing event" at a long term care facility as has occurred in other counties. Mr. Burch shared that the Governor has made ensuring the resiliency of local long term care facilities which serve our most vulnerable population a priority. The Board of Supervisors encouraged Mr. Burch to move forward with developing a plan to use emergency medical technicians and paramedics to temporarily provide crisis staffing to long term care facilities until the facility or the State can provide permanent support.

- Brandi Hopkins, San Joaquin County Human Resources Director, updated the Board on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted County staff and gave a report on issues related to the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act; the Emergency Family Medical Leave Act (and school/child care closures); essential work supplemental pay and; other COVID-19 employee matters. Hopkins said that:
 - 288 employees in 25 departments were off work for a COVID-19 reason between March 25-31.
 - Following enactment of federal legislation (H.R. 6201), about 52,000 hours of paid sick leave were requested by County staff in the last two pay periods through the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act at a cost of \$1.8 million.
 - The County also received about 241 qualifying Emergency Family Medical Leave Act requests from employees who are unable to work or telework due to childcare issues during the pandemic.
 - Since March 2020, 6,885 County employees have been identified to receive five percent supplemental pay for providing essential services at a cost of \$2.5 million. Only County staff who are providing essential services can qualify for the five percent supplemental pay which will expire on May 24.
 - A special COVID-19 employee website has been developed <https://www.sjgov.org/covid19/employees> and an email has been set up for employee questions and requests: SJCCOVID19employeeinfo@sjgov.org. Over 100 responses have been provided by Human Resources staff.

- Jerry Becker, Assistant County Administrator, gave a presentation about when County facilities will reopen. He said that as a health and safety measure, the County began closing their doors to the public on March 16 and were scaled back to focus on the delivery of essential services which includes 94% of the County workforce. In order to reopen County facilities, the following guiding principles must be followed:
 - Employee and public safety remain paramount;
 - Compliance with Governor and County Public Health Officer directives must be maintained;
 - Essential service delivery levels to the public must be sustained with a complete reopening of County facilities to the public by May 18;
 - Reopening strategies must be cost effective, operationally efficient, and protect the safety of employees and the public;
 - Reopening approach with cities and municipalities will be coordinated for the benefit of residents;
 - Government service methods must facilitate economic recovery and community well-being; and
 - Short-term and long-term realities of the COVID-19 pandemic must be considered.

Mr. Becker said the reopening of County facilities will occur in two phases. Phase one will begin on May 11 when County facilities will be open to the public on a limited basis with strict social distancing and safety protocols for interaction with the public. Assuming there is no spike in cases following the implementation of phase one, the next phase would begin two weeks later when all County facilities would be open to the public and 24/7 County facilities will open as appropriate with all COVID-19 safety protocols strictly in place.

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