



AD HOC COMMITTEE ON COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACTS AND RECOVERY

THE RECORD OF ACTION FOR
JUNE 4, 2020

Supervisor Candace Andersen, Chair
Supervisor Karen Mitchoff, Vice Chair

Present: Chair Candace Andersen
Vice Chair Karen Mitchoff

Staff Present: Dr. Chris Farnitano, County Health Officer
Julie DiMaggio Enea, Senior Deputy County Administrator

1. Introductions

Chair Andersen convened the meeting at 1:30 p.m. She explained that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the June 2 Health Order and need for a recovery timeline so that businesses and community activities can prepare for resumption of activities with proper precautions. She explained that she would begin with public comment and then move to discussion and a question/answer period with County Health Officer Dr. Chris Farnitano.

2. Public comment on any item under the jurisdiction of the Committee and not on this agenda (speakers may be limited to two minutes).

In the interest of time, Chair Andersen combined the general public comment period with public comment on the specific agenda. See Item 4.

3. RECEIVE and APPROVE the Record of Action for the May 28, 2020 meeting.

The Committee took no action on the May 28, 2020 Record of Action.

4. DISCUSS the provisions of the new Health Order reducing Shelter in Place restrictions that is expected to be issued on Tuesday, June 2, and effective on Wednesday, June 3.

Chair Andersen opened the discussion with the announcement that all retail is now open, all offices are now open, gatherings of groups up to 12 are now allowed, and religious gatherings of up to 100 people outside are now allowed. She was surprised by Santa Clara County's decision to open outdoor dining and swimming pools. She expressed empathy for protesters of Black Lives Matter and announced that, given the peaceful protests in our county, the Sheriff's curfew had been rescinded. She appreciated the respectful way people chose to make a difference. She then invited public comment.

The following individuals commented:

- *Jeanne Schwas, regarding the negative impact on businesses, mental health, drug abuse, child abuse, and suicides. She wants to patronize her own county's businesses and feels the restrictions are too stringent, to which Vice Chair Mitchoff clarified that the doctor at John Muir Hospital later rescinded his erroneous statement about the suicide rate in CCC. The Sheriff said the County had experienced two more suicides than this time last year.*
- *Jared Thomsen, Lead Pastor at Calvary Chapel in Walnut Creek, requesting clarity regarding churches, stable groups, home church gatherings, and the perceived discrepancy in how churches are being treated compared to businesses and protests regarding capturing trace data.*
- *Shawna Garvin, appreciating that small group gatherings are being recognized, and asking if test counts unique to individuals or capture people who are tested multiple times, to which Vice Chair Mitchoff clarified that Overview Dashboard includes number of cases in recovery.*
- *Lisa Blackwell, regarding swimming as medical therapy, opining that it can be done safely per CDC guidelines and wondering why it is still prohibited, observing that children can currently swim but adults with special needs may not swim. She commented that other counties such as Santa Clara, San Mateo, Orange and Riverside with worse statistics permit swimming.*
- *Nicky Lecher, Lunchbox Waxing Salons, commented that salon guidelines are available, the industry is regulated at State level pre-COVID, and feels that the County is arbitrary and discriminatory in its restrictions on certain industries, which disproportionately impacts women and minorities working in the beauty industry.*
- *Open My Salon Now (Rebecca Malone), owner of a hair salon in Alamo, commented that her license is based on strict sanitation standards and the new COVID guidelines are close to what salons are already doing. She cited the financial hardship, is clinging to hope, and would welcome more guidance and consideration.*
- *Vince S. questioned how Contra Costa County, if part of a Bay Area ecosystem, can justify continuing to be more restrictive than other counties in the same ecosystem. He said the county is losing sales tax dollars to other counties and promoting travel across county lines.*
- *Eli Friedman spoke about the County suicide rate, to which Chair Andersen clarified that the suicide rate is only nominally higher now than it was one year ago. None of the County Supervisors believe that safety precautions thus far were a mistake. She said the question before us now is how can we move forward safely and be able to measure and test because the virus is still a threat.*
- *Jean Fulmer of Lafayette spoke about pools and asked why Santa Clara County is opening pools but Contra Costa is not. She also requested clarification on conflicting information she received pertaining to children's participation in more than one group at camps.*
- *Christine Kendall, owner of Tangles Studio, said that salons are being singled out even though they are already kept to very strict sanitation standards. She added that salons are caregivers and track who is served, when and by whom. She cited a financial hardship.*

- *Kathy Hemmenway, Executive Director of Walnut Creek Downtown, representing 130 downtown restaurants, urged reopening restaurants for both inside and outdoor dining, and clear timeline and guidelines. She said that restaurants and the entire business community are suffering.*
- *Jon Owen felt that the county's virus statistics don't support such a stringent recovery plan. He observed that emergency rooms are empty. He cited mental health concerns and said that these restrictions were killing this county.*
- *"A" expressed frustration over the absence of practical guidance. He said that the social bubble unit as it relates to sports teams isn't practical. He wants kids to be able to participate in multiple groups and have coaches interact with multiple groups. Sports teams can modify their curriculum to comply with social distancing. He does not operate full day camps. He complained that a child cannot attend a one-hour baseball practice and a one-hour swim practice under current guidelines.*
- *Jessica Goodwin commented on a lack of equity in the health order, e.g., protests vs. religious gatherings. She said that religious beliefs are as important as political beliefs and that science/risk not political pressure should not be determining these priorities. She said that restrictions should be consistency applied for same types of activities with the same risks.*
- *Ellen Mossman, craniosacral massage therapist, said hers is a high-risk profession and cited difficulty for individual practitioners to meet hospital level sanitation requirements.*
- *Barbara Csider, public school teacher, commented that State numbers are looking positive and we can rely on other states' data to inform our recovery. She said we can expect a small surge and opined that churches are safer than protests because members of church congregations are typically known. She said we need the freedom hold funerals to properly mourn our dead loved ones.*
- *Lydia Booth asked about carpooling and complained that her spouse was suffering longer commutes. She also asked about small family gatherings.*
- *Patricia McBroom, occupant of a 32-house cooperative housing with a shared pool, commended that only seven counties including five Bay Area counties are still in early Stage 2 of recovery. She complained that in 100-degree heat, they want to use the pool. She asked for a special category for small shared housing.*
- *Michael Wiseman, owner of a 5,100 sq. ft. styling salon, said he has plenty of room to socially distance as compared to a high-risk Hygienist, whose services are currently allowed. He called the inequity in the rules ridiculous and requested compassion.*
- *Sean Quackenbush, regarding swimming pools and swim camps for children. He would like to apply the children swim protocols to permit adult swimming.*
- *Susan Morgan commented that the Health Officer is not a businessman and that business owners know what is required to make their patrons feel safe and should be trusted to follow the guidelines and run their businesses. This felt the current restrictions were excessive.*
- *Eidsont, owner of a dance studio in Pleasant Hill requested clear guidelines for opening businesses. He observed that one can drive 20 minutes over the bridge to Solano County and attend a dance class, and that we live in a mobile society.*
- *Sandra Storer commented that people can choose when and which businesses to patronize.*

Dr. Farnitano responded to many of the concerns and questions raised. He said that the June 2 order is essentially equivalent to the full State Stage 2. Data analysts have been modeling data, and calculated that, absent Shelter in Place (SIP), this county would have had 100 times as many deaths or 3,700 deaths saved due to safety precautions. He estimated that the SIP also prevented about 7,000 hospitalizations. While keeping numbers low in Contra Costa, there have been steady increases elsewhere. Even Alameda County's numbers are now higher than in the initial surge, so their recovery pace will be even more gradual than Contra Costa County. If we open up too quickly, we risk filling our hospitals.

He discussed social bubbles/groups of 12, which can apply to home bible study, scout troop, day care, extended family group, etc. He clarified that children can be a part of more than one group.

He explained that the record of attendance at religious gatherings is based on statistics of infections from these gatherings. Such records are required for all types of gatherings for tracing purposes. Data need only be maintained for a few weeks. Places of worship do not have to be buildings. Outdoor gatherings are safer than indoor, to which Chair Andersen commented on the importance of both the right to freedom of expression and freedom to worship. She asked if we move church gatherings up on the timeline, citing the difficulty in defending a policy that treats church gatherings differently from protest gatherings.

Dr. Farnitano considers church gatherings to carry a higher risk due to the length of services and singing. Also, church attendees often include elderly who are at higher risk and danger of infection.

Dr. Farnitano encouraged everyone on the call to get tested. He said if 1/10 residents got a test this month, we would meet our testing goal, but we are testing less than half of our goal. People who have higher exposure should get tested more often.

He added that the County is trying to stay aligned with the rest of the Bay Area but is also adjusting for our own county's data indicators. He is looking to see how much flexibility there is to exceed the State limitations and said there is frequent debate. He is actively looking at swimming and outdoor dining. He is also looking to develop a timetable similar to San Francisco. For example, if our numbers continue to be stable, here's our reopening plan. He is hoping to have this timeline available tomorrow (June 5).

He explained that the attestations that have been filed were generally by counties having few cases and sparse population. Some counties have filed attestations based on capacity for testing vs. actual testing. He felt this makes the attestation less meaningful. Most Bay Area counties have not filed the attestation and currently cannot meet the criteria. Discussion is occurring regarding how much flexibility Bay Area counties may have to move forward without the attestation.

He then clarified that household support units up to 12 people can meet together outdoors to reduce risk.

He acknowledged the effects of the SIP, recession, financial strain, and virtual schools on people's stress levels. He reported an average of 100 suicides per year in Contra Costa, with 3 in May, down from 12 in April. He said the year over year change in number of suicides is not statistically significant. He reported that the number of psych emergency visits are fewer than this time last year but remain a concern to be tracked.

He explained that carpools are high risk but are allowed if part of a household support unit. He advised to wear masks and do everything possible to reduce the risk: facial coverings, distance, hand hygiene, not going out when feeling ill.

Camps for kids can be 12 or less kids in a stable group and are now open to any child. Continuous camps are ideal over shifting groups. Kids can now participate in more than one stable group.

Vice Chair Mitchoff concluded by saying that she hears the concerns of the business and faith communities but must balance with the wellbeing of the community. Imperial County is experiencing a surge due to international travel violations. The virus is still here.

Chair Andersen reiterated that we want to open up as quickly as is safely possible. We don't want to see a surge and then have to roll the recovery back, which would be even more devastating. We want to get to the new normal and it seems that people are willing to self-govern and live with the new normal. We expect people to make responsible decisions. She said that the Health Officer is working with hospitals to encourage testing for anyone who wants to be tested regardless of whether they are symptomatic.

Health Department Chief Executive Officer Anna Roth thanked the community for their questions and comments. She said that new information would be coming out tomorrow regarding outdoor dining and swimming. She highlighted a new graphic online that will be the basis for the timeline and said that this is the daily priority of the health officer group. The timeline will be dynamic based on what is happening at the state level as well as any new local information. She and Dr. Farnitano listen carefully to input of this Committee and take it back to the policy group.

5. The next meeting is currently scheduled for June 11, 2020.

The Committee confirmed the next meeting date of June 11 but did not set the specific agenda.

6. Adjourn

Chair Andersen adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

DRAFT