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July 24, 2020

COVID 19 Update to Union Leadership

Yesterday, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) renewed the Public Health Emergency as expected. The Secretary extended the Public Health Emergency for 90 days from July 25 to October 23, 2020. The following information is provided as an update from our virtual meeting of July 23rd:

1. We discussed the upcoming Budget Hearings and reiterated the County's commitment to rebalance without further layoffs, furloughs, wage reductions or other concessions. Materials for the Budget Hearing will be available on-line beginning Thursday, July 30th.
2. We reminded the group that our Tactical Employment Team is working diligently with those employees who were laid off as of July 1 and those slated for layoff on August 1. Several employees have already been placed and others have been offered interviews. For employees who experience a break in service, the County will pay the first two months of healthcare provided pursuant to the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Employees will be directed to elect COBRA coverage through Navia, and the County will cover the costs. For those employees laid off as of July 1, the County will make the change retroactively. Our goal continues to be to make reductions that impact as few employees as possible, and to offer alternative employment to those who are impacted.
3. We discussed our interim CARES (\$83,158,696) and FEMA claims (\$3,534,859) through June 30, 2020. We discussed using CARES funding to preserve our reserves for future use. Our projected claims for FY 2020/21 will be approximately \$144.6 million for CARES and \$30 plus million for FEMA. It is anticipated that these figures will change as claiming regulations are constantly changing.
4. We discussed PPE and updated the group on our recent receipt of 60,000 masks that will be distributed to departments, as needed, in the coming weeks. These masks were made in the USA by Brooks Brothers and are very comfortable. These masks are 85% Polypropylene, 15% PLA, with a synthetic elastic band and metal nose bridge. The masks have passed 3 of the FDA required tests for surgical masks (bacterial filtration efficiency, particle filtration efficiency, and pressure drop) and will be submitted for 2 additional FDA tests (flammability and synthetic blood penetration); however, the intent is that these PPE will be for non-hospital employees. The manufacturer has recommended that the masks be hand-washed with soap and water and air-dried, however, we have tested them in the CAO's office and have washed them on gentle cycle in washing machines with success.
5. We discussed that the County is currently updating the Exposure in the Workplace policy document. These updates will reflect recent changes in guidance from the CDC. The updated policy will also clarify portions of the existing policy and update existing procedures and contact information. The County recommends that its Labor Partners continue to familiarize themselves with this important document.

6. We discussed the County's efforts to ensure that all employees are coming to work in safe workplaces. County Risk Management maintains a list of all departments that have provided social distancing protocols and have conducted Industrial Hygiene (IH) assessments. Public Works is installing the necessary modifications to the worksites based on the IH assessments. Public Works is currently prioritizing areas in Health Services facilities where employees have contact with the public. The attached document lists all departments that have completed their social distancing protocols and IH assessments. This information will give you an idea of the progress that departments have made so far, and we will be following up with more specific information on which sites have received modifications. Additionally, we have provided the safety coordinators list, which we are updating and which is available to employees at <http://insidecontracosta.org/469/Safety-and-Loss-Control>
7. We discussed several concerns regarding EHSD's efforts to return certain employees to the workplace. EHSD is in the process of retrofitting workspaces in an effort to provide services to the public at its worksites. We will follow up with the department on projected dates for reopening.
8. We know that there has been interest in making mental health resources more accessible for County employees. The County will be sending a series of email blasts from Magellan, which manages the County's Employee Assistance Program. The first email blast went out this morning and includes a link and a phone number for employees to contact Magellan and speak to a clinician, who can help the employee or direct them to resources. There is also a link to a webinar that will explain all of the resources available for County employees.
9. We continue to work with our departments to modify facilities to provide a safe environment for our employees and to provide public access during the pandemic. Our goal is to open for full service to our community as soon as we can safely do so. We have had a lot of questions regarding what this means for employees who prefer to work from home. Currently we have taken a top-down approach to evaluating which positions should work from a County building and which can continue to work from home or work a combination of home and office. All department heads are expected to work in the office. Management staff and supervisory staff will eventually be expected to be in the office if they have a subordinate employee in the office. Staff who serve the public in person will eventually be expected to be in the office. We are following up on dates and expectations and will provide further information as soon as possible.
10. During our call, we were alerted to several Head Start center closures. We followed-up and learned that since June 30, seven staff reported symptoms of Covid-19 and/or a positive test. It was decided to close impacted sites and/or classrooms for some days to seek additional guidance from the health officer, to communicate with staff and families, and to have the sites and/or impacted classroom cleaned. Most classrooms/sites reopened on Monday, July 20, 2020, with the exception of a few, impacted classrooms. Those classrooms are slated to reopen on Monday, July 27, 2020. Staff meetings were held and attended by teaching staff and the teacher union representative. During the meetings, the clearing processes were shared in great detail. These processes were also shared with all CSB site supervisors, teachers, and Comprehensive Services staff on Friday, July 24, 2020 via email memo. Prior to CSB's phased reopening, all teaching staff and site supervisors' received training via PowerPoints and pertinent documents. A Q & A session was held for all teaching staff and site supervisors related to the training material. This gave everyone the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, if needed. A folder on the Document library was also created to house all materials related to reopening. These are easily accessible to all staff.

11. We were asked to recommit to remote work to provide for employee safety and to support employees who may have limited childcare opportunities. I do support remote work; however, due to the significant challenges we are facing as an organization during the COVID emergency, we must rely on our departments to determine which positions they can support to work from home. We maintain that it is the department's prerogative to make that assessment until a Remote Work policy is finalized. Although we are open to discussing specific situations should they arise, our focus is to ready our facilities to safely reopen to the public so that we can serve our vulnerable populations.
12. We provided an update on our draft Remote Work policy, which is intended as a long-term policy and not just a temporary measure during the pandemic. We have a good draft; however, it needs more work on establishing criteria to make evaluating appropriateness less subjective. Because this will be a countywide program administered by virtually all department heads, we are working to limit subjectivity. We are reviewing policies from neighboring counties and will have a draft in the next few weeks.
13. We were asked for an update on the Sales Tax Measure. The County partnered with the City of Concord to pursue legislation to allow for a sales tax measure to be placed on a future ballot. Currently, the County is unable to list a countywide sales tax measure on the ballot because six cities within the County are at, or above, the local sales tax cap authorized in statute. The bill was passed on the Senate Floor on June 11th. The Board of Supervisors supports the legislation and would appreciate assistance from all stakeholders in seeing its successful passage in the Legislature and final enactment by the Governor.

On June 16th, the Board authorized a cost share of \$10,000 from the County to assist in polling the community regarding the potential sales tax measure. On July 14th, the Board received the results of polling, which showed that a transactions and use tax would likely be successful if listed on the November 2020 General Election ballot. The Board subsequently directed County Counsel to draft a transactions and use tax ordinance for introduction on the July 28th agenda, which includes language stating that the ordinance is only to be placed on the November 2020 ballot if the Legislature and the Governor approve Senate Bill 1349 no later than August 24th.

The action introduces the transactions and use tax ordinance and requests that the Board fix adoption of the ordinance and related resolution calling for the election for the August 4th regular meeting of the Board. Staff has worked with the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (previously the California Board of Equalization) to draft the ordinance using template language for general transactions and use taxes across the state with the exception of the language related to Senate Bill 1349 discussed above. Should the ballot measure be successful, the CDTFA requires the County to enter into a contract for collection and allocation of the tax receipts no later than April 1, 2021.

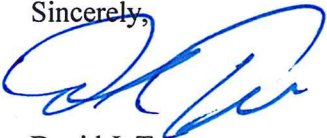
There is a draft resolution designating the County Registrar of Voters as the election official and directing that the ordinance be presented to the voters for approval at the November 3, 2020 General Election. The resolution also provides the proposed ballot language, using the language previously developed for the most recent polling, and authorizes the County Administrator, or designee, to file all necessary documents on behalf of the Board of Supervisors for the measure to be listed on the November 2020 ballot. The resolution will be included with the ordinance for final adoption on August 4th.

14. We discussed requests to create a hotline to respond to COVID-19 safety concerns. Currently the County does not have resources to support another line. Employees can continue to contact the multilingual Call Center 844-729-8410, daily 8 am to 5 pm. For help after hours, please call 211 or 800-833-2900 or text HOPE to 20121. Visit cchealth.org/coronavirus for updates. Follow [@CCCCounty](https://twitter.com/CCCCounty) and [@CoCoHealth](https://twitter.com/CoCoHealth) on Twitter and [CCHS Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CCHS).

15. We were asked for information regarding blanket waivers for nursing ratios. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has now stated that there won't be blanket waivers for nursing ratios. Instead they are asking for individual institutions to request the waiver. We have not yet requested this waiver. We would do so if surge and staff shortages required any changes. Staffing is starting to get tighter and less agency options are available so if we surge we may need to request the waiver in the future. We would inform labor relations and our labor partners prior to doing so.
16. We were asked to support increased video telehealth visits and indicated that we support this work and that Health Services supports the work as well.
17. CoCoKids will still assist with placement of the children of County employees. Employees interested in child care options can contact CoCoKids at <http://www.cocokids.com> or call 1-866-262-6543. Employees may have a cost for childcare since emergency-related vouchers are not currently available.

The next conference call will be scheduled for Thursday, July 30th at 3:00 with David Sanford, Labor Relations Manager and Karen Caoile, Director of Risk Management to specifically address concerns regarding facility safety and noticing. Thank you for all you do, and for continuing to work with us to support our employees and our community through these challenging times.

Sincerely,



David J. Twa
County Administrator