



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

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REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Approve Participation in the Santa Clara County Contact Tracer Efforts by Providing Staff Support

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on economic prosperity in our community, the County, State and Nation. Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, with the recommendation of the County Health Officer, Dr. Sara Cody, has developed indicators that determine our ability to ease our Shelter in Place (SIP) orders. Contact tracing is one of the five key indicators.

The County has launched an effort to recruit community volunteers to support this vital function (Attachment 1). This will ensure that the County can quickly contain Coronavirus infections to small clusters and prevent widespread transmission that leads to exponential case growth and an overwhelmed healthcare system. In addition to volunteers, the County has reached out to all local agencies and requested support by providing staff to serve in this role.

Contact tracers will be part of the Public Health Department staff and be responsible to interview members of the public who test positive, call people that the infected person potentially contacted, enter and manage data, and identify resources needed to ensure appropriate follow up and compliance with isolation and quarantine. Staff will be trained by the County and their non-profit partner, Heluna Health.

EXISTING POLICY

Council Policy 5.1.1 - Goal 5.1H - Identify pressing health and social needs of the Sunnyvale community, encouraging appropriate agencies to address these needs in an adequate and timely manner.

Administrative Policy Chapter 1 - Article 21 - Employee Volunteer and Charitable Activities Subd. 1 City Philosophy - Sunnyvale is an engaged, concerned and contributing organization. Employee volunteer activities have a variety of potential benefits for individual staff members, for work groups, for the City as a whole and for the Community.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5) in that it is a governmental, organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect changes in the environment.

DISCUSSION

Case investigation and contact tracing is designed to identify people who may have been exposed to

COVID-19 through close contact with someone that has tested positive. The goal is to interrupt chains of transmission by helping to ensure the safe and effective quarantine of potential contacts, slowing the spread of the virus through our County. This is one containment strategy among many that will allow for far fewer restrictions to be placed on the community. The level of resources needed for this effort is unprecedented and includes not only new technologies and substantial staffing, but also the availability of those critical resources that the community might need in order to safely isolate or quarantine.

Early in the outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus, the County's Public Health Department engaged in extensive case and contact investigations, with the assistance of staff from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to identify and interrupt all chains of transmission. As the number of cases of COVID-19 began to rapidly increase, this initial containment strategy had to give way to the population-based mitigation strategy of Shelter in Place (SIP). While the County continues to use SIP to broadly slow the spread of the virus, the expansion and rapid scaling of contact tracing is essential as restrictions associated with the orders to SIP are eased.

The County's goal to build on existing protocols and deploy new technology has significantly increased its' capacity to investigate current cases. The Health Department is now able to investigate 25 new cases per day, including communicating with each of those individual's contacts. As shelter-in-place restrictions are rolled back the number of people each newly infected person comes into contact with increases. Public Health anticipates it will need capacity to conduct detailed case investigation and contact tracing for approximately 50 to 75 new cases per day, with an average of 40 contacts per case.

The number of staff needed to fulfill these roles is substantial. The County anticipates that intensive case investigation and contact tracing will need to remain operational for at least a year. The County has asked for volunteers from local agencies to improve contact tracing in order to make progress in the five key indicators that are currently monitored by the Bay Area Health Officers. Staff reached out to the Sunnyvale Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program volunteers and received thirteen volunteers that have been submitted to the County for consideration.

City staff were also queried for interest in volunteering for this assignment. Interest was received from 24 employees. Of the twenty-four employees, seven are proposed to move forward for consideration. These seven employees were identified by requesting information about availability and service impacts from department directors. Directors confirmed that employee participation would not create the need for use of casual employees or overtime hours if these employees are removed from their current work assignments for up to three months.

In an effort to support the County achieve the five key indicators to reopen the community and the County of Santa Clara, providing staff to assist the contact tracing work is a positive step for the City. While the County initially requested staff support from six months to one year, they have recently modified their request to a three to four-month period. The City Manager is recommending seven positions, one of which is a casual employee and would be limited to 900 hours in a fiscal year, and five regular employees, four full-time and one part-time for Council consideration (Attachment 1).

FISCAL IMPACT

These positions are currently budgeted in their respective operating programs and all positions are funded in the General Fund. Therefore, no new appropriation is required. Total cost of salary and

benefits for the three-month assignment is approximately \$120,000. Staff will establish an account for employees to charge their time to while working as contact tracers to capture the total cost of providing this support to the County of Santa Clara. The County is not offering to reimburse the City for its costs unless a new outside source of grant funding is identified.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, Sunnyvale Public Library and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve Participation in the Santa Clara County Contact Tracer Efforts by Providing the Support of Seven Staff for an initial three months with the ability of the City Manager to extend the assignment for up to an additional three months.
2. Approve Participation in the Santa Clara County Contact Tracer Efforts by Providing the Support of staff, at a Number Less Than Seven, for an initial three months with the ability of the City Manager to extend the assignment for up to an additional three months.
3. Do not approve the use of Sunnyvale employees as contact tracers.
4. Take other action as directed by Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Approve Participation in the Santa Clara County Contact Tracer Efforts by Providing the Support of Seven Staff for an initial three months with the ability of the City Manager to extend the assignment for up to an additional three months.

Supporting the County's efforts to complete contact tracing will help protect community members from the spread of Coronavirus and ultimately lead to a more timely and effective reduction in the restrictions included in the current Shelter in Place Orders. Based on contact made with department directors that are impacted by the participating employees, accommodations can be made in the workplace to continue to meet work demands and performance expectations without additional costs.

Prepared by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. County of Santa Clara Letter Requesting Volunteers
2. Identified Positions with Total Cost