



Legislation Text

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Report regarding the status of San Mateo County Health Officer Shelter in Place Orders related to COVID-19, the modified delivery of City government services and operation of programs and facilities, and departmental plans for the phased restoration of operations as restrictions are eased by the County Health Officer. (*Sharon Ranals, Assistant City Manager / Parks and Recreation Director*)

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council receive an update on the current status of modified operations under San Mateo County Health Officer Shelter in Place COVID-19 Order, review departmental plans to gradually restore operations as restrictions are eased by the County Health Officer, and provide direction to staff.

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION

A novel coronavirus, named “COVID-19” by the World Health Organization (WHO), was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, in December 2019. The virus has since spread rapidly throughout the world. The WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, when there were 118,000 confirmed cases and 4,000 deaths in over 110 countries and territories. Today there have been almost 3.6 million confirmed cases, with over 250,000 deaths across 212 countries. As of May 5, 2020, there are 1,315 confirmed cases in San Mateo County, with 56 deaths. Because of limited testing capacity, the number of cases detected through testing represents only a small portion of the total number of likely cases.

In early March of 2020, national, state, county, and local governments declared health emergencies for COVID-19 to confer special authority and leverage resources to address the crisis, as follows: United States, March 13; California, March 4; San Mateo County, March 10; and City of South San Francisco, March 11. In an effort to slow the spread of the virus and mitigate the impact on delivery of critical healthcare services, California issued an Executive Order that went into effect on March 19, directing all individuals living in the State of California to stay at their place of residence, except as needed to maintain continuity of operation of the “federal critical infrastructure sectors.” The purpose of this report is to outline the current status of continuation of City of South San Francisco operations during the current crisis, and to describe tentative plans that are underway to prepare for restoration of operations as the crisis evolves.

San Mateo County Health Officer Orders

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, San Mateo County has issued a series of Health Officer Orders. Prior to issuing a Shelter in Place (SIP) Order, initially effective from March 16 to April 7, orders were issued to ban visitors from skilled nursing facilities; to ban mass gatherings; and to modify school operations. Subsequent to the SIP Order announcement, additional orders were issued, which included modifications related to the reporting of test results; extension of the SIP through May 3; home quarantine and home isolation instructions; further revisions to school operations; expansion of screening and monitoring for residential care facilities; face coverings requirement for members of the public and workers; large construction project safety protocol; small construction project safety protocol; specific social distancing protocols for businesses allowed to operate under the SIP Order; and most recently, an order issued on April 29 which slightly relaxes the SIP Order of March 31, 2020, and extends it to May 31, 2020. This revised order was issued in light of progress achieved in slowing the

spread of the virus in San Mateo County and neighboring counties. The revised order states that activities will be assessed on an ongoing basis and may need to be modified if the risk associated with the virus increases in the future.

COVID-19 presents a very fluid and complex set of conditions, which are constantly subject to change. In the face of this historic pandemic, cities remain committed to public service and communicating and informing residents about County Health Orders and enforcing them where necessary; continuing to deliver essential services; and responding to existing community needs as well as responding to new issues which have emerged as a result of the crisis. At the same time, City operations are necessarily subject to the same operational restrictions as the entire County, and operations have been modified as required.

Continuity of Operations Plans

At the outset of the SIP order, all City departments evaluated their administrative, functional, and field operations within the parameters established by San Mateo County Health, and established a departmental Continuity of Operation Plan (COOP) to be able to continue to provide services as fully and seamlessly as possible, while still adhering to the orders, and protecting the public as well as employees from possible infection.

This was not a one-size-fits-all exercise, as the nature of the work, urgency, and strategy to reduce exposure and still deliver public services varies dramatically for functions such as Fire/Paramedics, Police/Dispatch, Public Works/Water Quality Control/Code Enforcement, Parks/Recreation and Facility Maintenance, Economic and Community Development/Building Inspections, Library, Information Technology, City Clerk, Finance, Human Resources, and City Attorney. While each department has distinct operational missions, there is also the need to apply consistent employee policies and protections for similar functions, such as office workers and field staff. To address this unprecedented situation, the Human Resources Department needed to create new Administrative Instructions related to establishing a telecommuting policy, which previously the City did not have, and drafted revisions to the City's sick leave and family medical leave policies.

The City began operating under the SIP Order with modified operations on Tuesday, March 17, 2020. In general, all non-essential and administrative staff who were able to work from home were directed to do so. City buildings and counters were closed to the public, with only skeleton staffing on-site. Field staff in Parks, Facilities, and Public Works were reduced to 20% - 50% levels, performing only essential duties in staggered shifts. Police and Fire Departments continued their standard public safety operations, with certain modifications to reduce the exposure of the public and employees such as temporarily closing public counters, and suspended or reduced non-essential programs and operations. Library and Recreation public programs and facilities were temporarily cancelled or closed as required by the SIP, with alternative virtual and some limited services gradually implemented.

Duration and Modification of SIP Order Over Time

California has communicated that COVID-19 is not going away soon; full recovery may take 12 to 18 months. Modifications to Stay-at-Home Orders will be guided by health risks and a commitment to equity; taking responsibility is required at all levels - individual, business, and government. Restoration of "normal" operations will be a graduated and phased process which will advance in stages, and may require a step back if there is an upsurge in COVID-19 cases.

The Federal Government has developed a four-phase guidance document, *Opening Up America Again*, which

addresses the aspects of daily life for which restrictions remain appropriate due to COVID-19. California has also developed a four-stage *Resilience Roadmap* which defines how determinations for easing restrictions will be made, with the clear understanding that at this time, no dates can be assigned to when each milestone stage can be achieved. The State has identified the following six indicators for modifying the Stay-at-Home Order:

- Ability to test, contact trace, isolate, and support the exposed
- Ability to protect those at high risk for COVID-19
- Surge capacity for hospital and health systems
- Therapeutic developments to meet the demand
- Ability of businesses, schools, and childcare facilities to support physical distancing
- Determination of when to reinstitute measures like Stay-at-Home

California Resilience Roadmap Stages

- **Stage 1: Safety and Preparedness** (current phase through May 31, 2020)

Continue to build out testing, contact tracing, personal protective equipment (PPE), and hospital surge capacity

- Make essential workforce environments as safe as possible
- Prepare sector-by-sector safety guidelines for expanded workforce
- Physical and work flow adaption
- Essential workforce safety net
- Make personal protective equipment (PPE) more widely available
- Individual behavior changes

- **Stage 2: Lower Risk Workplaces**

Gradually opening some lower risk workplaces with adaptations

- Expanded Workforce Safety Net (wage replacement so workers can stay home when sick)
- Retail (e.g., curbside pickup)
- Manufacturing
- Offices (when telework is not possible)
- More public spaces open
- Modified school programs and childcare re-open; summer programs and next school year potentially starting July/August; childcare facilities to provide more care; address learning gaps; ensure students and staff are protected
- Allow broader workforce to return to work

- **Stage 3: Higher Risk Workplaces**

Open higher risk environments with adaptations and limits on size of gatherings

- Personal care (hair and nail salons, gyms)
- Entertainment venues (movie theaters, sports without live audiences)
- In-person religious services (churches, weddings)

- **Stage 4: End of Stay-At-Home Order**

Re-open highest risk environments and venues once therapeutics have been developed

- Concerts
- Convention centers
- Live audience sports

Transition from Stage 1 to Stage 2

San Mateo County is still in Stage 1 of the SIP Order, and City of South San Francisco departments have been operating under the most restrictive guidelines through May 31, 2020, unless modified or extended.

The State has identified the following actions as needed to progress from Stage 1 to Stage 2:

- *Government Actions*
Policies that allow people to stay home when they are sick
Guidance provided on how to reduce risk
- *Business Actions*
Wage replacement so workers can stay home when sick
Implement adaptations to lower-risk workplaces now
Employees continue to work from home when possible
- *Individual Actions*
Safety precautions - hand washing, physical distancing, face coverings, etc.
Avoid all non-essential travel
Support and care for people who are at high risk

Key indicator considerations to move to Stage 2 (Transition to Stage 2 through statewide modification to the Stay-at-Home Order) include:

- Hospitalization and ICU trends stable
- Hospital surge capacity to meet demand
- Sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE) supply to meet demand
- Sufficient testing capacity to meet demand
- Contact tracing capacity statewide

California has acknowledged that it is a very large and diverse state, and that in the future, as the crisis abates, there will be an opportunity for regional variations. During Stage 2, counties may choose to relax stricter local orders at their own pace. Following Stage 2, once a statewide COVID-19 surveillance system is made possible through testing, regional variations could be supported. The State will consult and collaborate closely with local governments. Changes to the San Mateo County SIP are being issued frequently as indicators support, which not only impact how businesses may operate, but which affect permitted City operations as well.

Although COVID-19 continues to have a devastating and widespread impact, there have been positive indications in San Mateo County that the SIP Order has been effective in slowing the infection rate, and that progress is being made in reaching the key indicators described in California's *Resilience Roadmap* as described above. It is important to note that while San Mateo County has made progress in flattening the curve of confirmed cases, as restrictions are eased and human interactions increase, infections that had previously been avoided may surge, with the result of the curve essentially being elongated with a lengthened recovery period. Planning efforts need to anticipate an unpredictable and extended transition between Phase 1 and Phase 2, and a possible resurgence of the virus in the future.

On April 29, the San Mateo County Health Officer extended the previous deadline for SIP from May 3, 2020 to May 31, 2020. Although the modified order does not move the County from Stage 1 to Stage 2 as defined by the State, it does relax some restrictions. It allows all types of construction projects; allows outdoor landscape and maintenance repairs; expands the categories of workers who are permitted to work on-site; and allows modified childcare and summer programs for children whose parents are permitted to work under the revised order. As previously noted, this is a very fluid situation, with the State of California and San Mateo County Health updating permitted activities based on the indicators described above.

City of South San Francisco Departmental Restoration of Operation Plans (ROOP)

The City is closely monitoring the situation, attempting to be as responsive and nimble as possible in adapting to updated orders. Departments have developed tentative plans for how to restore services utilizing a four phase model, in parallel with the State and County models. The following general definitions were utilized in developing ROOP plans: Phase 1: current restrictions under the SIP Order; Phase 2: some relaxation, but restrictions remain moderate; Phase 3: further relaxation, restrictions are light; Phase 4: restrictions are lifted and society returns to pre-COVID-19 conditions.

Each Department has developed a ROOP plan based on a phased restoration of operations. Although some preliminary planning has been done for Stages 3 and 4, given the uncertainty of the course of the virus and future progress in accomplishing the resilience readiness indicators defined in California's *Resilience Roadmap*, staff focus is currently primarily on the transition from Stage 1 to early Stage 2. Although as noted previously each department has a unique mission, some uniform policies apply to similar functions across departments.

Based on the recent relaxation of the SIP, the City will immediately recall to on-site duty staff who cannot perform their duties remotely, unless their functions are not permitted under the SIP, e.g. Adult Day Care or Aquatics. Parks, Facilities, and Public Works maintenance workers have been asked to return to their work sites effective Monday, May 11. Office workers who can continue to work remotely will be encouraged to do so, as per the SIP. Coverage for administrative functions that need to be performed on site will continue to be covered through staff rotation. Municipal facilities, including City Hall, the Annex, Municipal Services Building/Police Station, Corporation Yard, Fire Administration and Stations, will remain closed to the public, except by appointment. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will continue to be staffed to coordinate emergency response operations and FEMA expenses and reimbursement submittals. Parks and Recreation is exploring resuming a modified preschool program and modified summer camps, as permitted under the SIP, to serve parents who are permitted to return to work.

General ROOP considerations include how functions are to be prioritized; maintaining good communication with employees to inform them about the dates and status of returning to work; keeping the public well-informed regarding modified City operations; identifying facility maintenance tasks necessary to safely re-open closed buildings; physical and psychological impacts to staff through employee and family support plans; collaboration with the County and neighboring cities to coordinate best practices and consistent interpretation of SIP orders; and establishing consistent safety protocols to protect employees and ensure a comfortable working environment. Planning considerations, as recommended by FEMA, which are still in progress, include the following:

- Prepare for a resurgence or additional waves of the virus and identify mitigation measures;
- Continue utilization of telework and other workforce flexibilities; these measures may remain in place for an extended period of time, and prove valuable to retain after the crisis;
- Incorporate social distancing measures, including limiting building occupancy, staggering shifts, closing common areas, rotating "office days" for shared offices, installing physical barriers, and limiting non-essential travel;
- Allow high-risk/vulnerable individuals additional flexibility or to continue isolation without repercussions;
- Acquire cleaning supplies, masks/face coverings and gloves, and implement personal protective policies or measures (handwashing, hand sanitizer, barriers) to limit the spread of the virus and protect employees and the public;

- Conduct health screenings where appropriate to monitor employee wellness and prevent further infections, and develop policies to detail processes for sick employees or family members, as well as those exposed to the virus or showing symptoms;
- Intensify cleaning, sanitizing, disinfection, and ventilation activities according to CDC and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidance.

Specific safety protocols to be implemented City-wide include the following:

Guidelines for Office Workers:

- Ensure staff work stations are at least 6 feet apart, with enough space to pass when walking to/from workstations;
- All staff should wipe down their own work stations at least daily as well as commonly touched surfaces: doorknobs, copier/printer controls, cabinet/drawer handles, light switches, common-use supplies or appliances;
- Continue to allow full or partial remote-work schedules, which may be on a rotating basis, especially where social distancing is impossible or impractical. Those who self-identify as being in a high-risk category should be allowed flexibility, as well as those with childcare needs due to school or childcare closures.

Facility Guidelines for Facilities that Permit Public Entry:

- Ensure the department/facility has sufficient disinfecting supplies, hand soap for restrooms, and hand sanitizer for staff and visitors. This effort will include joint responsibilities between the Emergency Operations Center logistics team, Facility Maintenance Division, and individual departments. Restrooms to remain closed to the public where visits are typically brief.
- Post signs with instructions to visitors on social distancing/hygiene requirements.
- Create tape markings and/or physical shields where practical for areas where visitors will be interacting with staff or members of the public.
- Limit number of visitors in the facility at one time, depending on the size of the facility. A staff member may be needed to monitor entrances and exits if they are unlocked. Departments continue to provide face to face service “by appointment only” during Stage 2, except for public safety functions.

Guidelines for Maintenance Staff:

- Uniforms and clothing provided to employees are not to be worn more than once without washing. Standard issue uniforms shall be put in designated soiled bin, or laundered at home after each use. It is recommended to leave uniforms at work, in the soiled bin, so as not to increase the risk of spreading potential illness to an employee’s home.
- General gathering areas shall follow social distancing guidelines. The lunch room shall have spacing of chairs to adequately provide 6’ or more of space between employees. All hard surfaces (tables and chairs) shall be wiped down before and after use. The employee exercise room at the Maintenance Services Building will remain closed during Phase 2.
- Social distancing of 6’ or more shall be enforced. When employees are talking or interacting with the public or other employees they shall always remain at a minimum distance of 6’. This includes indoor spaces such as offices, lunchrooms, and hallways.
- Employees shall wear approved face coverings at all times. The only time it is approved to not wear a

face covering is when driving a vehicle alone.

- Personal or shared computers and phones shall be disinfected before and after each use. This includes disinfecting the mouse, keyboard, screen, ear/mouth piece, number pad, and hard surfaces of the chair sat in while using the computer. Employees are encouraged to fill timecards and check email at home from their personal computers.

Departmental ROOP plans, primarily focused on the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2, are provided in Attachment 1. As noted above, due to the fluid nature of the situation, plans are subject to change as the situation evolves.

FISCAL IMPACT

The fiscal impact of restoring City operations is difficult to determine at this time, due to the uncertainty of when San Mateo County Health will permit relevant activities, and depend upon how long each stage of recovery will last. Some additional expenditures will be necessary for personal protective equipment for employees such as face masks and gloves, hand sanitizer, and office cleaning supplies. Costs may be incurred for deep cleaning facilities in preparation for employee and public occupancy, as well as for more frequent cleaning as operations resume. All expenditures, as well as employee costs, related to COVID-19 are being tracked and will be submitted for potential FEMA partial reimbursement.

No employee reductions were implemented for FY 2019/20, although vacant positions, and non-essential or not previously encumbered expenditures for materials and services have been frozen, which may partially offset some of the increased costs related to COVID-19. Budget reductions are under review for 2020/21 to close the gap created by an anticipated decrease in revenue caused by the COVID-19 crisis. More information regarding the fiscal impact of the situation will be presented through the 2020/21 budget process.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN

The COVID-19 crisis, and the City's response, relate to all six of the Strategic Plan Priority Areas: workforce development; quality of life; financial stability; public safety; economic vitality; and community connections.

CONCLUSION

Recovery from the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis will travel a long and arduous road, with much unknown and uncertain about the journey at this time. Staff continue to be as informed and proactive as possible about developments at the national, state, county, and local levels as they impact the community of South San Francisco, to garner and leverage all available resources and adjust operations to continue to deliver public services and speed recovery.

It is recommended that the City Council review the current status of modified City operations under San Mateo County Shelter in Place Order; review departmental plans to gradually restore operations as restrictions are eased by the County Health Officer; and provide direction to staff. It is important to note that plans are based on the best information available when drafted, but are subject to change based on rapidly evolving circumstances.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Departmental Restoration of Operations Plans (ROOP)