



# Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Grisanti and the Honorable Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Kelsey Pettijohn, City Clerk

Approved by: Steve McClary, Interim City Manager

Date prepared: March 14, 2022 Meeting date: March 28, 2022

Subject: Consideration of Hybrid Meetings or the Resumption of In-Person Meetings

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** 1) Receive an update on the current State and County public health regulations; and 2) Provide direction to staff on whether to resume in-person meetings or pursue a hybrid option.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** There is no fiscal impact associated with this recommended action. Depending on what direction Council provides on hybrid meetings or the resumption of in-person meetings, additional funding may be necessary to fund staff overtime costs, part-time salaries and other resources needed to facilitate public meetings that was not previously included in the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

**WORK PLAN:** This item was included as item 1a in the Adopted Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2021-2022.

**DISCUSSION:** The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LADPH) continues to track COVID-19 cases, including those resulting from variants of the virus. Los Angeles County has been seeing a decline in the numbers of newly infected individuals, the test positivity rate and hospitalizations, and is now at the Low Community Risk Level as defined by the Center for Disease Control.

Effective March 4, 2022, the latest County Health Officer Order no longer requires, but still strongly recommends, masks in indoor public settings and businesses for all persons regardless of vaccination status. Masks are still required in high risk settings, including on public transit, or in emergency shelters, health care settings, correctional and detention facilities, homeless shelters, and long-term care facilities. Masks are also still required for those in isolation/quarantine and who exit early through the day 10 period.

On March 15, LADPH reported 28 new deaths, bringing the total number of deaths in Los Angeles County to 31,343, and 698 new cases for a total of 2,814,409 positive cases reported to date across all areas of the County. The seven-day average is 121,063 individuals tested, resulting in a 0.85% testing positivity rate for that period. In addition, Residents are still legally required to self-isolate if they have a positive COVID test result, and that vaccinated close contacts with symptoms and unvaccinated close contacts need to be quarantined.

At this time, as the County transitions to the Post-Surge Response Plan, Council may wish to consider resuming in-person or hybrid meetings. Below are some of the factors that should be considered when making that determination.

### Hybrid Meetings

At the February 28 meeting, the Council expressed interest in considering hybrid meetings in more detail. On the advice of the City Attorney, if the Council transitions to hybrid meetings Councilmembers would need to participate in-person or from publicly noticed teleconference locations open to the public and members of the public could participate in-person or remotely. Staff has considered the logistics of hybrid meetings and outlined recommendations below. Staff is seeking feedback from the Council if it would like to transition to hybrid meetings and, if so, how the Council would like staff to implement hybrid meetings.

- COVID-19 Protocols
  - In accordance with the latest Los Angeles County Health Officer Order, masks would be recommended but not required for Councilmembers, staff, and members of the public attending the meeting. In addition, no social distancing or capacity restrictions would likely apply.
  - If the Council would like additional safety precautions put in place, such as social distancing signage or Plexiglas dividers between the Councilmembers, it can provide that direction to staff.
- Audio/Visual Technical Issues
  - Hybrid meetings will require an additional computer and monitor to be set up in the Council Chambers to run the Zoom component of the meeting.
  - The Council Chambers was not designed to display video of teleconference participants. Zoom participants would continue to participate via audio only.
  - The live video of the meeting would be streamed through Zoom for the remote participants, but running the meeting's broadcast feed through this additional equipment will cause a short delay that may be noticeable when remote participants are called to speak.

- Staffing
  - At least one additional staff member would be required to run the Zoom component of the meeting. In the short-term, the City would likely be able to provide this service with existing Media Team and part-time staff. However, it is important to note that this would require additional overtime, compensatory time or part-time salaries expenses.
  - If the Council were to transition to hybrid meetings permanently, the City will need to train additional staff and/or hire specialized part-time staff to serve as back-up for the Media Team.
  - During virtual meetings, the City has made a staff member available to help participants get connected to the Zoom meeting. While it is possible that participants who need this technical support will choose to participate in-person, until the demand for this service is known, it is recommended that staff continue to provide this support. Responding to these phone calls is not anticipated to require an additional staff member, but would add to the tasks of the Media Team during the meeting.
- Public Comment
  - Speaker Sign-ups
    - To make it simpler to locate speakers either in Chambers or on Zoom and reduce associated time delays, staff recommends having separate speaker sign-up processes for in-person and remote participants. It is also recommended that all in-person speakers be called first to allow remote participants time to indicate that they would like to speak and work out any technical difficulties.
    - During virtual meetings, the City has asked participants to sign-up to speak in advance using the sign-up form at [malibucity.org/virtualmeeting](http://malibucity.org/virtualmeeting) and has also heard speakers who indicate their intent to speak by raising their hand in Zoom. To minimize the number of systems that staff would need to monitor within the hybrid meeting format, it is recommended that the City move away from using the speaker sign-up form on the website and instead require all remote participants to raise their hand in Zoom if they would like to speak. If Council wishes to implement hybrid meetings in this manner, staff would provide directions for this process on the website.
  - During in-person meetings, the City has historically allowed individuals to cede their opportunity to speak on an item and defer one minute of their time to another speaker at in-person meetings. This was managed by requiring speakers to submit their own Request to Speak form along with all forms deferring time, and individuals deferring their time were required to be present when the item was heard in order for the extra minute to be added to the speaker's time. This practice does not translate well to a hybrid meeting format where not all of the participants are present in the Chambers and there are separate sign-up methods for in-person and remote

participants. If the Council would like to implement a time deferral system for hybrid meetings, staff is requesting guidance on what the standards would be to defer time to another speaker.

- If the Council has follow-up questions for a remote participant staff will be able to unmute participants again in order to answer the Council's questions. Otherwise, staff will not be monitoring the Zoom meeting for raised hands after public comment is closed.

### In-Person Meetings

- Public Notice Requirements
  - One month's public noticing of the change back to in-person meetings is required for all public hearings.
  - If direction is given at the March 28 Meeting to move forward with in-person meetings, the earliest possible in-person meeting would be May 9, 2022.
- COVID-19 Protocols
  - As with the hybrid meeting option, the City would follow current County, State and federal health guidance and, if the Council would like staff to implement any additional safety precautions, it can provide that direction at this time.

In conclusion, staff has reviewed the main considerations of hybrid and in-person meeting options and is requesting direction from Council on how to proceed.

ATTACHMENTS: None.