

COUNCIL MINUTES

March 24, 2020

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session via virtual format streamed into the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on March 24, 2020 at 2:00 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

John Giles*
Mark Freeman*
Jennifer Duff*
Francisco Heredia*
David Luna*
Kevin Thompson*
Jeremy Whittaker*

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady
Dee Ann Mickelsen
Jim Smith

(*Council participated in the meeting through the use of video conference equipment.)

Mayor Giles conducted a roll call.

Mayor Giles indicated that Council would be meeting in a Study Session twice per week in order to hear updates and provide direction related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Hear a presentation, discuss, and provide direction on COVID-19 impacts, responses, and the City's future actions, focusing on Public Safety and community resources.

City Manager Christopher Brady explained that items related to COVID-19 are moving in rapid succession and staff is trying to keep up with those responses. He commented as a local government we have certain responsibilities and parameters in which we can operate; however, in large scale emergencies such as this, the City is one of many players. He stated many of the resources staff will cite in response to Council questions are at the County, State, or Federal level.

Fire Chief Mary Cameli highlighted the 2-1-1 COVID-19 information line launched by Governor Ducey to help the community get questions answered. She added there is also a poison control line for the public, giving them information and guidance on signs and symptoms of the virus.

Chief Cameli stressed that if someone feels sick, the first option for them is to go see their family doctor, which poses the least risk in spreading the virus. She explained that if someone does not have a doctor, go to an urgent care facility or the emergency room (ER); and if they are extremely ill or have no way to get to an urgent care or an ER, then to call 911. She commented that some people believe they will get priority treatment at an ER if they arrive by ambulance; however, that is not always the case as it is based on hospital capacity, availability, and acuity.

Chief Cameli stated the biggest issue for the Department is supplies, which are monitored daily, and includes masks, gowns, and gloves. She added that in 2019, the Department used 4,595 masks, and in the 1st quarter of this year usage is at 2,500.

In response to a question from Councilmember Thompson, Chief Cameli commented that dispatch is pre-screening calls and assessing risk, so crews are prepared when arriving on-scene.

Chief Cameli explained that a soft open of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has occurred to better communicate with departments valley wide. She stated supplies and the use of those supplies are tracked; the stockpile is reviewed to determine reserves and need, and supplies are released based on need.

Mr. Brady indicated that the EOC was activated at the lowest level and requested clarification on the levels of activation.

Chief Cameli commented that the EOC is activated in order to share information and understand where agencies are valley wide in terms of supply and need. She clarified that the City is communicating and sharing information daily with the County and State.

Chief Cameli explained that Mesa has 37 ventilators that were acquired through a grant several years ago; however, not every city has them. She added if the need arose, the City would partner with area hospitals for the use of the ventilators.

Chief Cameli highlighted departmental efforts to mitigate exposure and ensure no one comes to work sick, including taking staffs' temperatures morning and night.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Freeman regarding decontamination of personnel, apparatus, and cars, Chief Cameli commented when COVID is suspected on a call, gowns, goggles, masks, and Tyvek suits are being used, areas are disinfected, and as crews return to the station they are changing clothes and showering to ensure staff are not taking contaminants home to their families. She added the Department is making sure crews have what they need to protect themselves, such as disinfectant and hand sanitizer, to minimize the spread.

In response to additional questions from Vice Mayor Freeman regarding remote decontamination, Chief Cameli stated crews are trying to decontaminate at the scene so as not to have a contaminated vehicle. She stated crews are following State and County recommendations.

In response to a question from Councilmember Luna related to coordinated efforts with American Medical Response (AMR), Chief Cameli commented if AMR is needed for transport, they will be dispatched and advised the call has a potential coronavirus patient. She explained that AMR is decontaminating at the hospital.

Councilmember Whittaker stated he has reviewed Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations which state a surgical mask provides protection; and since there is a statewide shortage of N95 masks, at what point does it make sense to switch to surgical masks? He asked whether staff has reached out to other states and countries to find out how many masks per capita had been used at the same point in the pandemic versus how many Mesa is going through. He concluded by saying he is trying to understand the philosophy in the City's approach.

Chief Cameli explained the only instance where a surgical mask is not as effective is in the aerosolized patients; those that are on a ventilator or receiving a breathing treatment where the

particles are smaller. She stated the research shows the surgical mask is not as successful as the N95 mask, but on most patients the surgical masks can be used in place of the N95 to minimize the spread.

In response to a series of questions from Councilmember Whittaker related to reusing masks, confirmed cases in Mesa, and reliable sources of information on COVID-19 testing, Chief Cameli explained there are several sites conducting testing, and the number of tests done in Mesa is unclear. She stated the County has the most accurate and up-to-date information.

Mr. Brady explained the Arizona Department of Health provides updates everyday around 9:00 a.m. that includes Maricopa County, and both provide graphics and up-to-date numbers.

Councilmember Duff expressed concern related to whether directing residents to an urgent care facility or an ER is the best protocol. She indicated these are environments in which residents can infect other people waiting to get care who are not COVID-19, as well as other medical personnel that may not be protected. She asked if there was a way to have a drive-thru check or a clinic to confine people to one area. She voiced the opinion that a wider outbreak could occur by sending people to an ER, where there are people with weak medical conditions, their exposure is greater, and their chances of getting COVID-19 is greater than the average person.

Chief Cameli responded by saying 911 calls come to Mesa; however, staff is encouraging residents to first seek out their family doctor; and if they don't have a doctor, some urgent care facilities and ERs have set up quarantined areas for patients with COVID-19 symptoms. She added if everyone went to the ER, hospitals would be beyond capacity.

Mr. Brady noted there is a mobile testing facility in Mesa, as well as other parts of the Valley; however, you must have an appointment and complete the protocol with Banner over the phone. He stated the protocol consists of a review of symptoms before a patient is referred to a testing site and a certain number of symptoms must be manifested. He explained there is a strong effort to protect first responders and health care providers from being overrun by people that are worried or concerned they may have the virus. He added Mesa is following the protocols set up by the County and State.

Councilmember Thompson provided an update on his doctor's response indicating that patients exhibiting flu-like symptoms are brought in through a back door into a room set aside for these patients. He added they have shifted to an entirely different protocol and believes most medical centers and hospitals are probably doing the same thing.

Mayor Giles commented that during today's conference call with the Governor's office he received an update on personal protective equipment (PPE) and a release from the national stockpile will be delivered on Saturday. He indicated that hospitals are the first priority; however, Mesa will still receive some supplies in the next week. He explained the Governor's office mentioned entering into a public/private partnership with a company for one million masks, but a delivery date has not been confirmed.

Mr. Brady added that Mesa joined Phoenix in purchasing four million N95 masks; 200 will be received today, followed by 250,000 more in two weeks.

In response to a question from Mayor Giles, Chief Cameli explained the anticipation of receiving 250,000 masks out of this one order will set up Fire, Police, and other departments that utilize them for the next several months.

Mayor Giles expressed appreciation to those groups that have been a resource for masks and PPE, recognizing this is a serious need in our community. He encouraged members of the community with access to PPE to assist with responding to that need.

Councilmember Luna explained that most clinics and hospitals have a protocol where patients must answer a series of questions about their exposure to COVID before they are allowed in the facility.

Mr. Brady mentioned Banner clinics are doing some COVID testing but patients need a doctor's referral in order to be tested. He added the Mayo Clinic is also conducting an algorithm to determine if a patient has the virus, asking a series of questions, and referring for testing if a patient has been in contact with someone who has COVID.

In response to questions from Councilmember Whittaker regarding the per capita supply of masks and research from East Coast cities on their per capita supply, Chief Cameli explained the numbers can change, depending on call volume and acuity of patients. She added staff will research and report back to Council.

Councilmember Whittaker inquired about hospital bed capacity, per capita comparisons, and the need to come up with an alternative for hospital beds. He further inquired if hospitals run out of masks, does Mesa have some sort of relationship to decrease quantities and provide them to hospitals?

Chief Cameli explained that bed availability is being tracked Valley wide, and counties are looking at central locations where many patients can be accommodated. She stated that hospitals are a priority and will receive masks first from the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS), and if Mesa had more than enough masks for the next few months and hospitals didn't, Mesa would coordinate with the County to share those resources.

In response to a concern from Councilmember Whittaker related to masks for Primary Care Physicians (PCP), Chief Cameli commented those requests go through the County and State; however, Mesa may be able to offer assistance.

Mr. Brady stated that during these emergencies there is a lot of coordination and decision making that is done at the County, State, and Federal level. He stressed that the objective is to connect with the County since they have lines of communication with providers and receive direction from the State. He explained that based on size, Maricopa County receives a lot of resources which filters down; however, ultimately in national emergencies such as this, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will make the final decisions.

Councilmember Thompson indicated that in the event of an increase in COVID-19 cases, perhaps the National Guard can assist with mass units throughout the County to take some of the burden from the hospitals. He stated there is a learning curve about supply chain optimization in this crisis and there have been lessons learned up to this point on what we could and should do better.

Mr. Brady explained that after the H1N1 pandemic the national supply of masks was not replenished (at the national level) to prior levels. He commented because of that decision, the country is now playing catch-up.

Chief Cameli stated the EOC is working with the County and considering vacant hospitals, hotels, and other locations for more bed space. She indicated the reason Mesa is in a good position with masks is due to the stockpile from 2008.

Police Chief Kenneth Cost commented that several thousand surgical masks were distributed to Police personnel, which is a stopgap measure, until N95 masks are received. He stated that surgical masks are provided to people that are suspected to be symptomatic to minimize the contact staff has with the public. He added calls are handled online or virtually by the officer, offenses can be taken over the phone; and when officers are dispatched, residents are asked to step outside.

Chief Cost explained that early on one of the challenges was locating thermometers for supervisors to complete well-checks on officers before and after shifts. He added at this point thermometers have been acquired for each division and station in all Council districts. He highlighted call protocols for virtually every scenario so staff can be adjusted, and specialty units can be placed on standby.

Chief Cost reported that last week dispatched calls for service decreased by 11%. He stated the way business is now conducted and the lowered call volume has decreased the amount of contact officers have with the general public.

In response to a question from Councilmember Heredia related to calls for service over the last month, Chief Cameli pointed out there has been a decrease over this time from last year; however, that could be attributed to several factors.

In response to a question from Councilmember Whittaker related to researching and analyzing East Coast cities' call types related to the pandemic, Chief Cost reported that staff has been assigned to research Washington, California, and New York, as well as certain European countries, to find out their experiences in order to stay ahead of the curve. He indicated that he would report back on the results of that research in the next couple of weeks.

In response to additional questions from Councilmember Whittaker, Chief Cost explained COVID-related calls are being tracked; and staff is discovering, after vetting calls, many are not COVID related.

Mr. Brady pointed out that the County and State has made the decision not to separate calls by city and advised caution in putting a number out there that would not be a correct representation of Mesa.

Councilmember Whittaker clarified that he is not necessarily worried about the number of COVID cases, but about an increase in crime. He offered the example, if the City is locked down and people are out of jobs, are those people going out and committing crimes. He requested information related to crime rates in relation to people being confined to their homes.

Mr. Brady explained crime numbers are going down with people staying in their homes and businesses closed.

In response to a question from Councilmember Whittaker related to first responders wearing masks correctly and the detrimental effect of wearing them improperly, Chief Cameli commented that staff are following Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, including how to store them, using them only for one day, storing them appropriately, and proper fit.

In response to a question from Councilmember Duff regarding increased checks on vacant properties, Chief Cost explained that business checks have increased. He continued by saying there are crime analysts in each division and the Compstat model is set up to follow trends and analyze data each day. He stated if there is an increase in burglaries, then Police can react on a daily, if not hourly basis, to redirect resources for those types of crimes and areas.

In response to a question from Councilmember Thompson related to reinitiating volunteer groups to help patrol some of the business corridors, Chief Cost stated the process of revamping the reserve program is ongoing and he will have an update on that program tomorrow.

In response to a question from Councilmember Whittaker regarding Police and Fire personnel use of masks, Chief Cameli indicated that firefighters will use the masks on any call where there is any kind of risk. She explained in 2019, 4,500 were used, and in the first three months of 2020, 2,500 have been used.

Mayor Giles thanked Chief Cost and Chief Cameli for the presentation and extended his thanks to the departments for their work in the community.

2. Provide and discuss updates from the Maricopa County Department of Public Health and the Arizona Department of Health Services on COVID-19.

Mayor Giles explained that free testing is available through Banner, and the only prerequisite is a phone screening. He commented that the City will distribute testing information on social media.

In response to a question from Councilmember Duff, Mayor Giles stated that the testing location is intentionally not being publicized so that people do not show up with the expectation of being tested.

Mr. Brady stated the Banner COVID testing site number is 1-844-549-1851 and expressed his appreciation to Council for distributing the 2-1-1 information.

Councilmember Whittaker requested resources and information for residents that are uninsured.

Mayor Giles commented that there is no billing associated with the test, so people that are uninsured can call the Banner number, complete the screening; and if they meet the CDC guidelines, they will be directed to a testing facility. He added insurance is not an issue in this situation.

Deputy City Manager Scott Butler explained that part of the federal legislation deals with ensuring that testing for the uninsured has no co-pay and no cost to individuals. He stated that once the legislation becomes effective in a couple of days, every medical provider will be adhering to those guidelines.

Mr. Butler commented that this has truly been an unprecedented time as far as the level of impact throughout the different agencies. He explained every call staff has fielded is from a different state or federal agency, and each of those agencies is involved in different aspects of coordination. He highlighted the primary goal is to ensure Public Safety officials, Chief Cameli and Chief Cost and their staff, can do their jobs based on established relationships, then management staff can add value to that through coordination of communication on the public policy side. He concluded by saying the Mayor has calls with the Governor and 91 Mayors across the state each morning to receive updates.

Mr. Butler highlighted the executive order issued by the Governor yesterday dealing with critical services and critical workers in the event a shelter at home declaration is issued. He explained the Governor's action memorialized some of the instructions coming from the Department of Homeland Security and some of the critical workforce from a national security standpoint layered in service industries the Governor has deemed as critical. He reviewed the similarities between Governor Ducey and Governor Newsom's orders (California), stating some of the categories are more robust in Arizona than in California, but overall, they cover many of the same areas.

City Attorney Jim Smith explained the Governor's order does two things: first, the order says that no municipality can pass a regulation that affects essential functions of categories of workers, then a long list of employment categories that qualify as essential functions; second, both counties and municipalities are limited in issuing a stay-at-home or shelter-in-place order. He stated the order requires that any stay-at-home order must be consistent with the Department of Health Services and must be coordinated with the state.

Councilmember Thompson expressed appreciation to Mr. Butler and his staff for the legislative updates.

Mr. Brady provided an update stating COVID has had an impact on current operations but will also continue to have an impact on future resources. He stated that currently over 1,000 employees are working remotely. He mentioned that essentially the doors are locked in Development Services; however, staff is actively reviewing permits and plans.

Councilmember Heredia requested information be provided at future meetings that include Federal and State assistance that is available and what can be drawn down to assist non-profits, small businesses, and residents over the next few weeks.

Mayor Giles provided an update from his recent call with the Governor regarding the dollars made available by the legislature. He indicated \$55 million is to be used at the discretion of the Department of Health and another \$50 million at the discretion of the Governor to respond to COVID. He stated the money at the Governor's discretion is to address social issues and homelessness, and Council and staff will be working with the Governor's office to see what needs to be done to receive some of that funding.

3. Scheduling of meetings.

Mayor Giles highlighted the community events, blood drives, food drives, and expressed his thanks to the residents of Mesa for their overwhelming generosity.

Mayor Giles announced a faith leaders teleconference on Friday at 1:00 p.m. and explained the topic will be what can be done as a community to minister to seniors.

Mr. Brady stated for the foreseeable future, a study session will be held every Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. and Thursday at 7:30 a.m.

4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 3:34 p.m.





JOHN GILES, MAYOR

ATTEST:



DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 24th day of March 2020. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.



DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

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