



COUNCIL MINUTES

April 14, 2020

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session via a virtual format streamed into the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, on April 14, 2020 at 2:01 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
Holly Moseley
Jim Smith

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

Mayor Giles conducted a roll call.

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

Fire Chief Mary Cameli provided an overview of the types and quantities of masks, donations from the Mesa Chamber of Commerce and East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) for masks, and the use of cloth masks for non-fire and non-police field staff.

Chief Cameli highlighted recent positive COVID cases, stating 22 patients transported by Mesa Fire and Medical tested positive. She remarked that in the event of an increase in cases, two-person vehicles are ready to be activated and Fire operations has a plan in place should members of the workforce become sick.

Chief Cameli presented a COVID-19 by zip code diagram and stated the information was compiled by City staff. She added if a patient does not have an address or if it is not supplied during the call, the location of the hospital is used to classify the patient. She pointed out Maricopa County does not provide addresses of positive patients.

In response to a question from Councilmember Thompson, Police Chief Ken Cost explained staff is working with County and State officials to enhance the ability to get specific information related to positive COVID cases that includes more than zip codes, and he anticipates receiving an update very soon. He advised the specific information is a safety concern for Fire and Police personnel responding to calls in these areas.

In response to a question from Councilmember Luna regarding the demographics of those who have tested positive for COVID or have died as a result, Chief Cameli stated staff will try to obtain that information; however, she is doubtful the County will provide the data.

Mayor Giles requested information on the suit filed by the City of Yuma against Yuma County to obtain the information on behalf of Public Safety departments.

City Attorney Jim Smith responded the City of Yuma prevailed in court and obtained an order for the information, subject to restrictions. He stated cities in Maricopa County are seeking to file a similar lawsuit.

Mayor Giles remarked there are legitimate concerns related to individual privacy and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) for medical information, but it could also help for the greater good.

Chief Cameli explained hospitals have started notifying the Department if a positive COVID patient was transported and the identity of the patient. She commented the chart reflects cases by zip code, which staff has been doing for a while, and the County just started doing that about two weeks ago.

In response to a question from Councilmember Heredia related to the number of tests completed, Chief Cameli indicated she does not have that information; however, it is believed 10% of people that are tested are positive.

City Manager Christopher Brady clarified the State website shows 27,000 tests have been administered in Maricopa County and the detection rate is 10%.

Vice Mayor Freeman commented on the importance of knowing exact addresses of COVID patients and if there are nursing homes affected. He stated first responders need to be on guard for locations that have multiple COVID patients and knowing where hotspots are is critical to performance and delivering services.

Chief Cost provided an update on calls for service and indicated noise disturbance calls are up 224%, neighbor disputes are up 85%, domestic violence calls have smoothed out, and traffic accidents are down due to fewer vehicles on the roads.

Chief Cost stated gloves, glasses, and masks continue to be worn by officers and enhanced personal protective equipment (PPE) protocols and procedures are adjusted to keep officers and the public safe. He added special units are being utilized if street officers are infected, and violent crime detectives are assisting with clearing cases.

Mayor Giles thanked Chief Cameli and Chief Cost for the presentation.

1-b. Hear a presentation and discuss an update on the Mesa CARES program; focusing on an overview of the preliminary community assessment results and key priority needs.

Assistant City Manager Kari Kent highlighted accomplishments of the Mesa CARES program which was launched one week ago. **(See Attachment 1)** She explained over 100 Mesa staff members have reached out to Mesa residents, businesses, and non-profits over a three-day assessment period to survey initial needs. (See Page 2 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent provided an overview of the survey which started with respondents' zip codes to provide perspective. She stated respondents were also asked questions related to their demographics which matched the 2018 Census. (See Page 3 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent remarked many respondents said information was obtained from websites, online, and through local TV stations. She noted Facebook and Facebook en Español was very popular.

Mr. Kent reported on the Call Center, which is staffed by Library personnel, and commented information is added to the website based on caller feedback. She explained one concern is WIFI and internet access, so staff worked with Information Technology (IT) staff to broadcast Mesa WIFI hotspots in downtown. She highlighted a video that was launched last week that includes the Mesa CARES website and hotline information. (See Page 6 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent summarized resident responses, stating their concerns are for neighbors and first responders, access to food, desire to shop local, concern about quality of life and closures of facilities and businesses, utility interruption, mental health, and requested virtual fitness, arts, and library services. (See Page 9 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent highlighted top needs from non-profits as relief funds, labor, volunteers, and trusted information to share with clients. (See Pages 10 and 11 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent commented that staff worked with businesses and identified concerns related to access to loans, cash, rent relief and deferrals, and utility payments. She stated some of the businesses have never applied for a loan and do not know where to start, that the loan process takes weeks and businesses have days, and that businesses are living day to day. She added some businesses were not set up to operate remotely and have challenges with technology and internet speeds. (See Page 12 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent explained Economic Development staff has been working with some of the business districts and one conversation that transpired is the situation in the Asian District where they learned the situation is dire, with some restaurants that have closed, and many do not have relationships with banks and are concerned they might not be eligible for current programs. She said the Asian Chamber is promoting businesses through their website and added a link to the Mesa CARES page. She added Asian television is interested in a Mesa CARES forum to provide information to those businesses. (See Page 13 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent extended thanks to the East Valley Chamber of Commerce Alliance (EVCCA), which includes eight City and Town Chambers of Commerce with a total of 5000 members. She stated the EVCCA conducted two surveys and received over 800 responses. She described similar concerns to the Mesa survey, that spring is the busiest season, sales are slower than usual, supply chain disruption, unavailable materials, employee layoffs, and businesses seeking reduction or deferment in rent and utilities. (See Page 15 of Attachment 1)

Ms. Kent provided the next steps in the program and indicated staff will continue to focus on the Call Center and the surveys, working with grocery stores and other businesses to post flyers and distribute the Mesa CARES hotline number, issue flyers to the United Food Bank, and begin identifying programs and services. She concluded by saying staff is hoping to receive and begin distributing funds soon.

Mr. Brady explained before funding is received, the City must provide a certification by the end of this week stating the rules are understood and the City has interest in receiving the dollars. He

commented the challenge will be to understand eligible expenses and to expend the dollars by the end of December 2020. He said staff is taking the input received and is developing teams of employees around topics such as food security, utility, rent and mortgage assistance. He added staff will also establish eligibility with guidelines provided by the federal government so once the program is ready to be rolled out there will already be a list of eligible individuals.

Councilmember Thompson highlighted the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for small businesses with 500 employees or less and is geared towards keeping small businesses running. He encouraged staff to refer small businesses to lending institutions to find out more about this program.

Councilmember Thompson commented that he has received emails from constituents regarding opening the Red Mountain Multigenerational Center, and indicated that while he knows it cannot be opened as long as gyms remain closed, he expressed interest in providing live streamed fitness classes, similar to what Planet Fitness is currently doing with live streamed workouts on Facebook.

Mr. Brady commented Channel 11 does provide fitness programs.

Councilmember Thompson concluded by saying he would like information on the response from the Police Department on vandalism since kids are at home. He reported on social media posts that showed vehicles being vandalized with spray paint and would like an update on whether there has been an increase in vandalism calls.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Freeman regarding alternative delivery methods for library services, Deputy City Manager Natalie Lewis stated the Library offers online library cards; that staff is creating mini lessons, how-to videos, and provides a virtual story time each week.

In response to a question from Mayor Giles regarding additional online resources, Ms. Lewis highlighted programs for Arts and Culture such as collective leadership training; Project LIT, which is poetry for emotional learning; youth live open mics; Creative Catalyst group meetings online, which will launch the Creating Alone Together and the Mobile Art-Based Engagement Lab (MABEL) projects; curbside art pickup; online classes; and DIY videos to help parents and families learn together. She added the museums are providing crafts and Yoga for children.

In response to a question from Councilmember Duff related to Mesa CARES program dollar recipients, Mr. Brady clarified the funding is for individuals, non-profits, businesses, and anyone impacted by COVID. He added the City is waiting on specific guidelines, but nothing received so far excludes businesses from assistance.

In response to additional questions from Councilmember Duff regarding Small Business Administration (SBA) assistance, Mr. Brady commented staff encourages businesses to go through that process and then the City can supplement with utilities or other services not covered by the SBA.

Mayor Giles remarked on the Utility Assistance Fund that Council already established and stated there is no need to wait to implement the program since the fund will be replenished with Mesa CARES dollars. He commented on the Rental Assistance Program and the need to prioritize to avoid more residents going into homelessness and added the City can provide online assistance for rental vouchers in anticipation of federal dollars.

In response to a question from Councilmember Thompson related to adding staff to assist with Economic Development efforts, Mr. Brady stated staff can easily be added to the department; however, the current staff has a familiarity and experience with the business community that staff in other departments may not have.

Mayor Giles thanked staff for the presentation.

2. Scheduling of meetings.

Thursday, April 16, 2020, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 3:19 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 14th day of April 2020. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

DEE ANN MICKELSEN, CITY CLERK

dm