



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER**

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: June 28, 2022
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time:
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department: Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer
Director(s): Terri Nisich, Assistant CEO
Contact Info: Kelly Hubbard, Director, Office of Emergency Management
SUBJECT: Santa Barbara County Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan

DocuSigned by:
Terri Maus-Nsich
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County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence:

As to form: N/A

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive and file the “Santa Barbara County Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan” (Attachment A), identifying areas of strength and opportunities and considerations for improvement based on the lessons learned associated with the County’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- b) Authorize staff to transmit the Santa Barbara County Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan to California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), as required by Title 19 of the Cal. Code of Regs., Section 2900(q);
- c) Provide any direction that the Board would like to make regarding recommendations; and
- d) Determine that these actions are exempt from the provisions of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378(b)(5) since they are organizational or administrative activities of government that will not result in a significant impact to the environment.

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda to provide the Board with a presentation of the “Santa Barbara County Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan” (AAR). The County is required to prepare an AAR whenever the County declares a local emergency for which the Governor proclaims a

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state of emergency. The format for this AAR is consistent with best practices and is based on templates provided by CalOES.

In May 2021 the County of Santa Barbara Office of Emergency Management (OEM) engaged Hagerty Consulting, Inc. to analyze response activity associated with the County's Emergency Operations Center and Operational Area response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and to develop an Operational Area After-Action Report. This AAR was prepared by Hagerty Consulting, Inc., with collaboration and input from various local, county, and state agencies, and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners.

The intent of the report is to identify areas of strength in the County's response to the disasters, and primary considerations the County can make to improve future response. The focus of this report is specific to the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and its response and capabilities, and how the EOC engaged with other agencies and the public during the response phase of the disasters. As of the date of this report, the local, State, and Federal Emergency has not been terminated.

This AAR does not address the Public Health Department Operations Center or the overall medical health response coordination conducted by the County Public Health Department (PHD). At the time of this analysis, the PHD was still in the height of response activities, including disease monitoring and control, vaccination and testing efforts, and public education. As the PHD has transitioned its pandemic-based emergency response activities into long-term endemic operations, PHD has started to work on its own After-Action Report and Implementation Plan. The PHD is finalizing a Statement of Work with Anne Williams (local contractor) in coordination with the Counties of San Luis Obispo and Ventura to develop a standardized Public Health After Action Report format amongst the central coast counties and a County-specific After-Action Report for each county. The estimated project timeline for the County of Santa Barbara PHD-specific AAR process is July 1, 2022 to October 31, 2022.

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the world in late 2019 and the first cases arrived in the County in March of 2020. The County initially relied on its extensive pre-established emergency management response structures and capabilities, as they had done for previous incidents. The nuanced and complex nature of this public health crisis prompted the County to shift and evolve its response approach multiple times.

The County has experienced many disasters in the previous five years. While the impact to the County and its communities from these incidents was significant, the COVID-19 pandemic is a novel event both because of its expansive geographic nature, as well as in duration. The pandemic was experienced by the County, State of California, United States, and globally at nearly the same time, even as we continue with long-term response and recovery operations. The consequences of this novel event include, but are not limited to, scarce resource competition, supply chain interruptions, limited to no mutual aid, increased demands on local and regional healthcare systems, and business interruptions. The County has been working to address these impacts since the first formal discussions between the County Office of Emergency Management and Public Health Department occurred on February 6, 2020, through the deactivation of the Emergency Operations Center on May 28, 2021, and ongoing with coordination of public health, medical, and economic recovery support outside of the formal Emergency Operations

Center response structure. This Report focuses on those activities that occurred while the Emergency Operations Center was activated – from March 2020 through May 2021.

Overall, the Report offers 97 recommendations for improvement associated with the County's response to COVID-19. These recommendations include concepts such as: strengths that should be continued or memorialized; improvement actions that are already in process and should continue; improvements that have been recommended in previous AARs, but not yet accomplished; and new concepts that were identified due to the uniqueness of this event. The recommendations are associated with findings grouped into the following areas: Overall, Emergency Operations Center Functions, Emergency Operations Center/ Department Operations Center Coordination, Operational Area Coordination, Public Information Management, Community and Business Recovery Coordination, and County Continuity.

The primary strengths in the Report recognize the County's numerous strengths exhibited during the response operation, including:

- **Dedication of Personnel:** The professionalism and commitment of County and Operational Area personnel;
- **Public Information:** A steadfast commitment to providing timely, accurate, and accessible public information throughout the entire incident;
- **Call Center:** Investment into supporting community information and health needs through an expanded call center operation;
- **Partnerships:** Numerous partnerships and innovative Multi-Agency Coordination structures leveraged to successfully respond to the pandemic;
- **Support:** Programs developed to support business and economic recovery; and
- **Recovery Planning:** Early focus and resources dedicated to recovering County costs through State and Federal funding sources, and on long-term community recovery.

The primary areas of improvement focus on:

- **Command and Control:** Clarifying command and control structures, including memorializing leadership and decision-making structures and purchasing authorities to ensure consistency across emergencies;
- **County Code and Policies:** Enhancing the County's readiness for long-term response operations through County Code and policy revisions to ensure clarity of authorities, structures and County employee roles as Disaster Service Workers during times of disaster; and
- **Readiness:** Due to the frequency of disasters, integrate lessons (from COVID-19 and previous disasters) and support their implementation into the County's readiness activities, including planning, training, and exercise activities to support future response operations.

The Improvement Plan portion of the Report summarizes the recommended actions found throughout the AAR, as well as identifies a lead responsible party to address the action and a suggested timeline to complete the improvement. The recommendations are written in a manner to provide the County guidance, while not being prescriptive in how the County ultimately moves forward. The County will utilize the AAR to provide informed feedback to update plans, build local capabilities, enhance training and improve policies. OEM staff will add these improvements with previous disaster AAR improvements, and prioritize all outstanding actions for follow-up and coordination.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts: Budgeted: N/A

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There are no facilities impacts associated with receiving and filing this Report and reviewing the recommendations. The items required to achieve considered improvements will be brought through the budgeting process.

Staffing Impacts:

Legal Positions:
0

FTEs:
0

Special Instructions:

Attachments:

- Attachment A: County of Santa Barbara Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan
- Attachment B: County of Santa Barbara Operational Area COVID-19 After-Action Report and Improvement Plan Presentation to the Board of Supervisors

Authored by:

Kelly Hubbard, Director, Office of Emergency Management