



To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín and Councilmember Kate Harrison

Subject: Lessons Learned in Organizational Management During Crisis

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager to include insights and reflections on organizational management in any comprehensive report regarding the City response to the COVID-19 Emergency. Information should include but not limited to: an overview of how the City was structured and functioned differently during activation of the Emergency Operations Center, the benefits and challenges with cross departmental collaborations, and strategies or structures worth instituting and incorporating into future day-to-day departmental actions and interactions.

BACKGROUND

In preparation for the spread of COVID-19, the City Manager declared a Local State of Emergency. Prior to the Emergency declaration, she activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC)¹ in late January 2020 to prepare for our response to this public health emergency. These actions have become increasingly common in the last several years due to Wildfires, Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and now the COVID-19 pandemic. During a local emergency the City Manager acting as Director of Emergency Services has broader authority to allocate resources and staffing. The EOC brings together staff across departments to work in coordination to address all aspects of the local emergency.

Under these circumstances the City is functioning outside of its traditional organizational structure and for a longer duration than past emergency events. Due to the enduring nature of COVID-19, staff that have been pulled from their traditional roles to support the emergency response are functioning in cross-departmental teams for at least a quarter of the year. This significant shift in the structure of the city's operations is notable, and lessons learned from this period may be valuable to future emergencies as well as the normal operations of the city when they are able to resume.

In particular, the interconnected impacts of COVID-19 are a likely preview of an increase in emergency events due to Climate Change. Similar to the wildfires and PSPS shutdowns, the impacts of these emergencies are complex and dynamic and require our public responses to extend beyond the boundaries of individual departments. With this in mind, this referral asks that the City Manager include in her summary report how the city has adapted in the face of

¹https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2020/03_Mar/Documents/2020-03-17_Special_Item_01_Ratification_of_Recommendations_pdf.aspx

COVID-19 and what lessons, insights, efficiencies and challenges could be applied to the city's administration moving forward.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time providing input to be included in the report.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No environmental impact.

CONTACT

Mayor Jesse Arreguín

mayor@cityofberkeley.info | 510-981-7100