

EL DORADO LAFCO

LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

AGENDA OF MAY 26, 2021

REGULAR MEETING

TO: Tim Palmer, Chair, and
Members of the El Dorado County Local Agency Formation
Commission

FROM: José C. Henríquez, Executive Officer 

AGENDA ITEM #8: PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO STAFF REGARDING THE RETURN
TO IN-PERSON COMMISSION MEETINGS

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission provide direction to staff on its preference with resuming in-person Commission meetings.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDED ACTION

Because of the pandemic, the Commission began having virtual meetings starting in April 2020. A significant number of restrictions are scheduled to end or be lifted by summertime 2021, allowing for the potential resumption of in-person meetings.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Centers for Disease Control has lifted most mask restrictions for fully vaccinated adults. As it pertains to LAFCO, masks are not required for fully vaccinated adults at “small, indoor gathering of fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people from multiple households.” Unfortunately, the CDC is silent on what constitutes “small.” LAFCO meetings are usually sparsely attended, so it may qualify.

Governor Newsom has indicated that the statewide lifting of Covid restrictions will happen on or around June 15th. As of mid-May, 2021, California has administered at least one dose to 20,623,587 people, covering 61.3% of the eligible population, 12 and older and 52.2% of the state’s entire population. At least 14,471,012 people have been fully vaccinated. The statewide full vaccination rate is 37%, with El Dorado County’s fully vaccinated percentage not that far below at 34% of the population.

“Herd immunity” occurs when a significant portion of a population achieves immunity to a disease, either through prior infection or vaccination, so that the disease is unable to spread from person to person. Reaching herd immunity varies by disease. For instance, measles is highly contagious, requiring about 95% of the population to be immunized to stop the spread of the disease. For polio, the figure is 80%. According to the American Association of Medical Colleges, “Since COVID-19 is a brand-new disease, no one quite knows what level of immunity might be required to stop SARS-CoV-2 from spreading. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Anthony Fauci, MD, recently stated that he thinks that 70% to 85% of the population might need to be immune before the coronavirus is effectively contained.” Whatever the percentage ultimately is, the current rate is too low to reach herd immunity.

Most boards, including LAFCO, have their members and staff meet via Zoom or some similar platform, with few people being physically present in the same room. Some boards have chosen to have their members meet in the same room. The El Dorado Hills Community Services District and the El Dorado Irrigation District directors have bigger facilities and so they make full use of them. The respective boards meet in person, unmasked, but seated six feet apart. The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors has 4 of the 5 Supervisors and some County staff at the Board Chambers, but all wear masks throughout the hearings since there is not enough room on the dais for six-foot spacing between the Supervisors. No local agency’s governing board has resumed to in-person public participation.

Staff is seeking input on when it chooses to resume in-person participation. The Board of Supervisors example is the key analog since LAFCO also holds its meetings in the Board Chambers. With more members, 7 voting members vs. 5 (not counting alternates who may also want to attend), the Commissioners will be closer to each other sitting up at the dais. In addition, this arrangement will also require at least those who are not fully vaccinated to be wearing masks throughout the meeting. Some Commissioners may find that objectionable and may prefer to continue to meet remotely for the foreseeable future.

Staff anticipates that in-person public participation will not resume for some time.

Staff’s only recommendation is that the Commission go all-in one way or the other: either the entire Commission meets in person or you continue to meet remotely for a few more months until the vaccination rate is higher. This is because it is difficult to coordinate public participation remotely, let alone with some Commissioners physically present and others participating online. This will continue to be true once the Administrative Assistant is hired. From a Zoom cost standpoint, staff had to renew its license for another year last month. From that standpoint, the Commission should be set to continue remotely.