Memo

To: Mayor, City Councilmembers, City Manager, City Attorney
From: Yvonne Quarker, City Clerk
Date: March 16, 2020
Re: Urgency Item – Emergency Supportive Services in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Attached please find a proposed Urgency Item to be considered for the agenda of March 16, 2020 entitled:

EMERGENCY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC
SUBJECT: EMERGENCY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

INITIATED BY: COUNCILMEMBER JOHN HEILMAN

MAYOR JOHN D'AMICO

STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:
The City Council will consider giving the City Manager additional authority to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and will consider providing additional direction to the City Manager and staff.

In order for this Item to be added to the Agenda as an Urgency Item, it must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the City Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Provide additional authority to the City Manager and give the following directions:

1. Increase the fund for emergency rental assistance.
2. Impose a moratorium on evictions, especially no-fault evictions.
3. Authorize the City Manager, Social Services staff and Sheriff's Department to shelter homeless individuals who are unable to care for themselves to prevent the spread of the virus among the homeless population.
4. Authorize the City Manager to shut down or limit occupancy at nightclubs, bars, restaurants and other public establishments if recommended by public health authorities, and to consider occupancy limits at City facilities and public gathering places.
5. Establish an emergency fund of up to $50,000 to assist residents and employees in West Hollywood who are in need because of lost jobs and income and create an opportunity for residents and businesses to donate to help members of the community who are adversely impacted by business shutdowns and layoffs.
6. Authorize the City Manager to consider temporarily reducing certain taxes for businesses if they agree to not lay off employees.
7. Create volunteer opportunities for people in the community who are able to help deliver meals and other items to those who are in need of assistance.
8. Coordinate with Cedars Sinai to determine if it needs volunteers and develop programs to train individuals to assist.
9. Authorize the City Manager to approve the use of public or private property for emergency temporary medical facilities.
10. Authorize the City Manager to provide appropriate assistance to local grocery stores who are dealing with panic-buying in response to fears of COVID-19 and
10. Consider providing direction to limit public access to City Hall and to allow eligible employees to work remotely, and allocate a technology allowance up to $150,000 for the City Manager to ensure constituent and employee remote access.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:
The West Hollywood City Manager and City staff have done an excellent job responding to the quickly evolving situation with respect to COVID-19. In a short amount of time, they have publicized appropriate precautions to residents and businesses; canceled large scale events and meetings in the City; developed programs for City employees who may need to work from home because of health concerns or because of child care responsibilities; met with some of our heavily-impacted businesses; and, developed alternative methods for serving some of our more-vulnerable residents. The City Manager has also coordinated with other Westside cities in delivering coordinated information and declaring a state of emergency in response to the situation. Recognizing that the situation is changing daily, the City Manager and his staff need additional authority and direction to be able to respond to the local impacts of this international crisis. This item gives additional authority and direction to the City Manager.

1. Increase the fund for emergency rental assistance
A number of residents in West Hollywood live paycheck-to-paycheck. Residents who work in restaurants, nightclubs and a variety of personal service businesses will be especially impacted. The City already has an established emergency assistance program for people who are in need of emergency rental assistance. This item would authorize the City Manager to allocate additional funds for the program and to increase the amount of the assistance available to an individual.

2. Impose a moratorium on evictions, especially no-fault evictions.
A number of cities, such as Santa Monica, San Francisco, and San Jose, have taken action to impose a moratorium on evictions, especially no-fault evictions for nonpayment of rent. This item would authorize the City Manager to impose such a moratorium to prevent displacement during the current state of emergency.

3. Authorize the City Manager, Social Services staff and Sheriff’s Department to shelter homeless individuals who are unable to care for themselves to prevent the spread of the virus among the homeless population.
Homeless individuals do not have ready access to basic hygiene products and are especially vulnerable to the transmission of disease. In addition, unlike most residents, homeless individuals have no ability to isolate themselves at home. This item would
authorize the City Manager, staff and Sheriff's Department to take all actions necessary to provide safety for homeless individuals.

4. **Authorize the City Manager to shut down or limit occupancy at nightclubs, bars, restaurants and other public establishments if recommended by public health authorities, and to consider occupancy limits at City facilities and public gathering places.**

Governor Gavin Newsom has already ordered the closure of nightclubs and stand-alone bars. The Governor has also ordered restaurants to reduce capacity to ensure appropriate distancing between diners to prevent the spread of the virus. This item would authorize the City Manager to take additional steps if recommended by public health authorities.

This direction also includes City facilities and gathering places such as the West Hollywood Recovery Center. Many of our residents participate in 12-step programs or receive some type of counseling. These programs are especially important during stressful times. Some of our service providers have capacity to create virtual programs, but others may not. This would authorize the City Manager or his designee to reach out to these service providers to offer assistance in establishing methods for people to connect virtually during the state of emergency.

5. **Establish an emergency fund of up to $50,000 to assist residents and employees in West Hollywood who are in need because of lost jobs and income and create an opportunity for residents and businesses to donate to help members of the community who are adversely impacted by business shutdowns and layoffs.**

Some local residents and employees who work in West Hollywood will be adversely impacted by lost wages, lost tips and layoffs. The City can help establish and administer an emergency fund to assist people who have been adversely impacted. When the NBA suspended basketball games, a number of players donated a portion of their salaries to ensure that workers at stadiums did not lose their incomes. While many residents are able to maintain their jobs and incomes, some of our residents and local workers will be facing economic hardship. Establishing an emergency fund will provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to donate to the help members of the community who are adversely impacted by business shutdowns and layoffs.

6. **Authorize the City Manager to consider reducing certain taxes temporarily for businesses if they agree not to lay off employees.**

Local businesses are being adversely impacted by the current emergency. The cancelation of large-scale events and the ban on international travel has an especially serious impact on West Hollywood restaurants and hotels. The Governor’s decision to close bars and nightclubs and reduce capacity for restaurants will directly impact many
of our key businesses. Other businesses that involve close personal contact such as nail salons and hair salons will also likely see a sharp decline in business. During the state of the emergency, the City Manager should have the authority to reduce taxes temporarily in exchange for businesses agreeing to not lay off workers.

7. **Create volunteer opportunities for people in the community who are able to help deliver meals and other items to those who are in need of assistance.**

West Hollywood residents have always been at the forefront of serving in times of need. In response to the AIDS epidemic, West Hollywood residents were on the front line of providing service to others in the community. We need to create opportunities for residents to help others in need while ensuring we make sure we are adhering to public health protocols in doing so.

8. **Coordinate with Cedars Sinai to determine if it needs volunteers and develop programs to train individuals to assist.**

One of the biggest concerns about the spread of COVID-19 is the ability of our hospitals and public health systems to deal with a surge of cases. The current social distancing protocols and cancellation of large events is designed to reduce the rate and volume of the spread of the virus or to "flatten the curve" of the spread. However, even with adherence to current protocols, local hospitals will see an increase in cases of both flu and COVID-19 infections. In addition, to looking at general volunteer programs for the community, we should coordinate with Cedars Sinai to determine how the City and our residents can be of assistance.

9. **Authorize the City Manager to approve the use of public or private property for emergency temporary medical facilities.**

Along with coordination with Cedars Sinai for volunteers, the City may be able to provide the use of public or private property for emergency temporary medical facilities, if it should be necessary. This direction provides the City Manager authority to work with medical centers and clinics to set up these temporary facilities rapidly, without requiring additional Planning Commission and City Council review.

10. **Authorize the City Manager to provide appropriate assistance to local grocery stores who are dealing with panic-buying in response to fears of COVID-19 and to consider senior-only access during certain morning hours at the grocery stores and markets.**

Panic-buying has impacted large parts of the United States with reports of people buying large quantities of bottled water and toilet paper among other items. These purchases have caused local supermarkets to be at capacity and to sell out of items quickly. COVID-19 has not interrupted our water supply like an earthquake might. Nor has COVID-19 interfered with the usual supply of paper products or food. These items would be readily
available to all if we could reduce the amount of unnecessary panic buying. Local supermarkets may need short term assistance from the City in providing public information, in managing traffic and parking and addressing the continued panic buying.

Because COVID-19 is particularly dangerous for people over the age of 65, it has required many older adults to become more isolated and stay home as much as possible. In order for seniors to access necessary supplies, it may be possible for grocery stores and markets to establish senior-only hours first thing in the morning to provide people a time to shop with reduced crowds.

11. Consider providing direction to limit public access to City Hall and to allow eligible employees to work remotely, and allocate a technology allowance up to $150,000 for the City Manager to ensure constituent and employee remote access.

In order to avoid interaction, some cities, including Los Angeles and Santa Monica, have decided to close City Hall to members of the public during this time. West Hollywood may consider further limiting public access to City Hall. The City Manager will also consider allowing employees to work remotely to further limit the amount of interaction. The technology allowance of up to $150,000 will be used to ensure the City is able to allow remote access to constituents and employees, including appropriate cyber security measures.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-5: Support People through Social Services.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- HS-1: Maintain and pursue humane social policies and social services that address the needs of the community.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:
N/A

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:
N/A
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:
N/A

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:
CITY MANAGER'S DEPARTMENT

FISCAL IMPACT:
This item authorizes the City Manager to provide additional funding for rental assistance; to establish an emergency fund up to $50,000; and to create a technology allowance up to $150,000 to expand remote access. Other directives provided in this report may require additional funding and the City Manager will report back on fiscal impacts.