MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Karen Pinkos, City Manager
DATE: April 23, 2020
SUBJECT: City Manager’s Update

Yesterday, the League of California Cities provided information on how the COVID-19 pandemic and statewide shelter-in-place orders have impacted cities across California. Data gathered from cities, financial consultants, and state agencies show that cities expect to lose nearly $7 billion in revenues over the next two fiscal years. Cities project that these shortfalls will impact core city services, and nine out of ten cities project that this will lead to layoffs and furloughs, which will further impact core city services for residents, as well as the employees. The League has advocated on a state and federal level for funding relief for local governments to help offset these projected losses, and the City of El Cerrito has joined in that effort by communicating with our state and federal representatives. We are certainly not alone in how this emergency has impacted our City.

In El Cerrito, staff projects a loss of approximately $4 million in revenue, which is about 10% of our General Fund budget. These losses are expected in the areas of sales tax receipts and other taxes and fees for services, including a significant drop in revenue due to the closure of our fee-based Recreation programs. These projections are fluid due to the ongoing public health event and may change depending upon how long the shelter-in-place orders last and at what point the economy reopens. Our budget was stressed prior to this crisis, and these conditions have made our projections even worse. City staff provided this information in a report to the City Council last Tuesday, and discussed with them potential short-term and long-term responses in developing the City’s budget.

The City is still running as an essential business, and most of our employees are still working. Our Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments are on-duty in and around the City, and our City Hall and Recreation employees are working remotely to keep operations running as well.

However, we have implemented cost cutting measures as described in my April 9, 2020 update. Since we expect that the County stay-at-home order will be extended, we will look to implement additional measures including furloughs for full-time staff, reduced hours for City operations and at City facilities upon reopening, and reductions in salaries and benefits for management personnel. Staff will consider every option in order to respond to this crisis, and everything is “on the table” as far as reductions in the City budget for this and next fiscal year. Essentially, every service, project, and program is being examined and analyzed for cost savings.

Since we are working with such uncertainty, it is not easy to know if what we are contemplating is even enough. As such, the City Council has approved staff’s recommendation
to modify our usual timeline for our biennial budget process. This year, the City Council will instead consider a one-year budget that will be passed in time for the next fiscal year on July 1, and then reviewed and further developed over the summer for a budget amendment by October 1. This will give staff more clarity as to the City’s financial picture and implement a more robust budget process once the shelter-in-place orders are (hopefully) lifted by then. Staff will continue to update the City Council and the community as we further develop the budget.

In all the time that I have worked for the City of El Cerrito, the City Council has always strived to do what is best for the community and provide the services that the residents ask them for. We still share that goal, but now we must do so in a way that will allow the City to regain its fiscal health and focuses on our core, essential services. This may mean that some of our most valued or popular services might be reduced at this time and for the immediate future. We remain hopeful that once this emergency ends, we will be able to recover and get back to the thriving community that we know we can be. I appreciate everyone’s patience, understanding, and compassion during this crisis and in the coming months. Please stay safe and healthy.

Karen Pinkos
City Manager
City of El Cerrito
CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) UPDATE

Subscribe to COVID-19 Email List
As the situation changes, we will post new information on our City webpage at el-cerrito.org/covid19. If you’d like to receive notices, please go to el-cerrito.org/notifyme and select “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update”.

Other Agency Links for Service and Information Updates
- State of California
- Contra Costa Health Services
- California Department of Public Health
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- West Contra Costa Unified School Closures
- AC Transit Service Updates
- BART Service Updates

CITY MANAGEMENT

Special City Council Meeting on Saturday, April 25, 2020
City Council will hold a special meeting on Saturday, April 25, 2020 at 10 a.m. During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and suspension of certain provisions of the Brown Act (Pursuant to Executive Order N-25-20 and N-29-20), City Council meetings will be held remotely, with no physical location for public participation. The public will still have the same ability to listen and view from home.

Public comments can be submitted in one of two ways:

1. Via email to cityclerk@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us
2. Via voicemail at (510) 306-2558

For complete and up-to-date details on how to submit public comments during the COVID-19 State of Emergency, please visit el-cerrito.org/CouncilMeetingMaterials or select this link.
Passport Services Update from the Department of State as of April 17, 2020
Because of public health measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Department of State has limited its U.S. passport operations. Passport agencies are closed to the public and can only serve customers with a qualified life or death emergency and who need a passport for immediate international travel within 72 hours. Passport Services will not be able to meet its usual processing time of 6-8 weeks for routine service. Customers should expect significant delays beyond the time period it normally takes to receive their passport and citizenship evidence documents.

Passport Services ceased offering expedited service on March 19. For the latest passport information on Passport Services operations, please visit www.travel.state.gov.

All passport services remain suspended at the City’s Passport Acceptance Facility. For up-to-date information, please visit the city’s website at el-cerrito.org/passports.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

New Contra Costa Call Small Business Call Center for Navigating COVID-19
We know the COVID-19 pandemic is hitting small businesses especially hard, affecting owners and workers. A new call center is now available in Contra Costa County to connect businesses and workers with helpful federal, state and local programs. This includes providing resources and referrals on loans and grants, unemployment insurance, payroll subsidies, and other critical concerns. The Call Center, available at 833-320-1919, will operate Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., starting Thursday, April 23, 2020. ehsd.org/2020/04/22/new-call-center-opens-for-business-community-4-21-20

City of El Cerrito & Contra Costa Small Business Development Center Webinar for Small Businesses
On April 14, City staff and a Business Advisor from Contra Costa Small Business Development Center held a webinar for El Cerrito businesses with a total of 50 participants. The webinar provided information and resources available through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). If you missed the webinar, you may access the slides and recording by visiting our website at el-cerrito.org/SBAWebinar4.14.2020.

Dine Out El Cerrito
Our local businesses need your support now more than ever. The El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce has compiled a list of open restaurants offering take-out and delivery. Take a break from the kitchen and order from one of your favorite restaurants tonight!
**Rialto Virtual Cinema**
This Friday, April 24, Rialto Cinemas Cerrito debuted their new venture Rialto Virtual Cinema providing access for brand new first run features directly into homes before they are available on other streaming services. Thanks to the generosity of their partners in distribution, Rialto Cinemas receives a portion of each virtual ticket purchase so you can help support their continued operations which will help during this national crisis.

**County Passes Eviction Protection & Rent Freeze Moratorium**
On April 21, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors passed an Urgency Ordinance that temporarily prohibits evictions of residential and commercial property tenants and established a moratorium on rent increases for those impacted by COVID-19. Some of the protections ban evictions due to unpaid rent and no-fault evictions, prohibits late fees and provides a grace period of 120 days to pay back rent. The County’s Ordinance remains in effect through May 31, 2020, consistent with the Governor’s Executive Order, unless extended by the Board of Supervisors.

The City Council also adopted an Urgency Ordinance on March 25 that enacts a temporary moratorium on evictions for residential and commercial tenants through May 31, 2020. The Ordinance does not establish rent forgiveness but provides temporary rent forbearance to those who qualify by providing 180 days, from the Ordinance expiration date, to catch up on unpaid rent and suspends late fees from being charged for qualified tenants who can demonstrate loss of income or revenue due to COVID-19.

City staff is currently analyzing both ordinances and further guidance regarding implementation will be posted on the City’s website at el-cerrito.org/COVID19.

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**FIRE**

**Fire Station Status**
All three fire stations remain isolated from the public to ensure safety of our personnel. All three stations continue monitoring their health status every day, which includes taking their temperature and noting any changes in their physical status, such as onset of a cough or other possible COVID-19 symptoms. We continue to wear masks full time in the station and apparatus unless social distancing is maintained. Currently all personnel are without symptoms.

**Wildfire Community Preparedness Day**
May 2, 2020 is designated as “Wildfire Community Preparedness Day.” May also marks the beginning of the season in which the Fire Department will start vegetation inspections throughout El Cerrito and Kensington and notify residents who are not in
compliance with the City Vegetation Management Policy.

To help residents, the Fire Department has provided some education on Vegetation Management Practices to Reduce Fire Hazards on their properties at the City’s website at [el-cerrito.org/firehazardmitigation](http://el-cerrito.org/firehazardmitigation).

Last year nearly 100,000 acres (25+ times the size of our City) burned just north of El Cerrito in Sonoma County, taking out nearly 200 structures including homes, wineries and other businesses and caused nearly 200,000 people to evacuate. The Fire Department will be taking all precautions due to COVID-19 to make sure residents are complying.

**POLICE**

**Preventative Patrols**
The El Cerrito Police Department continues to focus on preventative patrols throughout the city. During last week, ECPD officers intervened during a burglary of a school campus, in the early morning hours. Officers have also increased their presence in commercial centers during the day, to provide additional security for essential shopping.

**Health Order Violations**
The ECPD has received reports of health order violations and works with other city departments to address resident concerns. Community members complained about several residential construction sites last week. The police department would like to ask
residents to be patient as the city addresses health order violations. In some cases, what at first seems to be a violation is determined to be within the parameters of the health order.

**Call 911 for Emergencies**
The ECPD encourages our community to call 9-1-1 if they have or witness an emergency and continues to maintain significant staffing levels during the shelter in place.

### PUBLIC WORKS

**Fire Preparedness Efforts Continue**
The Public Works Department Maintenance Team, essential workers during this COVID-19 crisis, have been focusing on weed abatement and fire preparedness over the last few weeks. Invasive Scotch Broom was removed at the end of Snowdon Avenue, at the entrance to Motorcycle Hill. Weed whipping was completed on the north side of Moeser Lane between Shevlin Drive and Galvin Drive. Mowing and weed whipping were also completed along Key Boulevard at Conlon Avenue, near the entrance to Baxter Creek. Public Works Maintenance will continue work on other high fire risk areas in the city.

PG&E is also continuing its fire prevention work and will be pruning and removing trees and brush located near high voltage power lines on PG&E-owned property in the city. This important work will help reduce wildfire risks by clearing vegetation with the potential to serve as fuel and maintain required safety clearances between trees, limbs and power lines. PG&E has identified needed work on PG&E-owned property along Moeser Lane, between Shevlin Drive and Arlington Boulevard. They anticipate beginning this safety work during the week of April 20.

As PG&E and City crews continue to perform this critical safety work, they will maintain social distancing and wear protective equipment when necessary to help safeguard the health and safety of workers and the general public. For questions about city landscapes and weed abatement, email maintenance@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us or call (510) 215-4369

**Staying Connected without Spring Environmental Events in El Cerrito**
Spring has typically been the busiest season of the year for environmental events in El Cerrito. Events include Earth Day, the El Cerrito Hillside Festival, the Spring Citywide Garage Sale, Bike to Work Day, “Green Team” volunteer work parties, and often additional workshops, film showings, or Fix-it Clinics that bring the community together to increase environmental awareness in El Cerrito. The aforementioned events were
scheduled to occur again this year, in April and May 2020, but to prevent the spread of COVID-19, they have all been cancelled or postponed. However, residents and community members can still stay connected to the City’s environmental efforts by signing up for the Operations + Environmental Services monthly e-newsletter at el-cerrito.org/GreenHappenings.

Update on El Cerrito’s Proposed Expanded Foodware Ordinance

Over the past year, the City worked with the Environmental Quality Committee and other groups to develop proposed changes to the El Cerrito Foodware Ordinance. A public meeting was held in early March and City staff anticipated bringing the draft ordinance for City Council consideration in late Spring 2020. However, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency, scheduling of the Public Hearing has been suspended at this time.

The expanded ordinance would support the City’s goals to reduce the community’s environmental impact, to reduce recycling contamination and costs, and to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the City’s Climate Action Plan and Strategic Plan goals. For more information about the ordinance, including public and business outreach, please visit el-cerrito.org/foodware, or contact Will Provost at (510) 525-7622 or wprovost@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

Clean Water Program Permit Set to Expire in December

The City of El Cerrito is a Permittee under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Regional Permit (MRP 2.0) and is a member agency of the Contra Costa Clean Water Program (CCCWP). The current permit expires in December 2020. City, CCCWP, and Regional Water Board staff have been discussing permit reissuance (MRP 3.0) since October 2018.

Although, discussions have been mostly productive City staff has concerns with the cost of specific provisions and certain changes.

The biggest issues of concern to City staff and CCCWP staff are:

- **Trash Reduction Credits for Source Controls and Offsets.** Proposed permit changes include eliminating credits for source control measures (e.g. El Cerrito’s single-use bag ordinance), trash removed at creek cleanups, and other similar activities, making it very difficult and costly for most cities/towns to meet a 100% trash load reduction target.

- **Green Infrastructure Implementation Drivers and Indicators.** Proposed permit changes include how to measure compliance with the permit in terms of how many Green Infrastructure facilities are built each year. The City wants easy to use metrics measured countywide, that recognize the cost of building Green Infrastructure.
• **PCB Load Reduction.** Proposed permit changes included how the Regional Board will measure PCB compliance. The Regional Board has a preference for numeric standards (hard quantities of removed PCBs), while we want to equate compliance with performance of PCB removal activities.

• **High-Density and Transit Oriented Development.** MRP 2.0 provides specific circumstances (“Special Projects”) where, if it is infeasible to treat all runoff with bio-retention or other Low Impact Development (LID) methods, development projects can use underground media filters instead. The Regional Water Board is proposing to eliminate this approach. If the allowance for “Special Projects” to use underground media filters is eliminated or further restricted, some otherwise viable multifamily housing and mixed-use projects may very likely not get built.

• **Regulated Project Exemption for Road Reconstruction.** City staff is concerned about the proposal to remove the Regulated Project exemption for road reconstruction. The City has made significant investments in improving our roadways, specifically pavement conditions, resulting in large part from approval of a City ½ cent sales tax in 2008 that provided dedicated funding for streets, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities largely made possible by competitive grant funds, the Contra Costa County sales tax for transportation and SB 1 funds. Requiring Green Infrastructure to be incorporated into some or all of these projects will greatly reduce the maintenance and improvement of transportation facilities for which these transportation funding sources were intended, or make transportation projects infeasible.

• **Trash Controls on Private Land Areas.** There is also a lack of agreement in terms of how MRP 3.0 will view municipal efforts to control trash on private lands. Under MRP 2.0, the City of El Cerrito has mapped Private Land Drainage Areas and has sent notices to at least two locations requesting they more regularly clean storm drain inlets and full trash capture devices. However, City staff is concerned with increasing requirements in this area. The City’s General Fund already heavily subsidizes NPDES compliance activities. Therefore, any additional requirements to inspect properties and coordinate compliance, in any permit section, will require more resources. Absent additional funding, the City would have to reduce other services it provides or reduce activities that no longer receive credit under the MRP but that continue to provide valuable community and environmental benefits.

As noted in the April 7, 2020 City Council meeting, the City of El Cerrito already spends

* Polychlorinated biphenyls
nearly twice as much on NPDES compliance activities as is generated by the local Stormwater Utility Assessment and as a result subsidizes these activities with General Fund and Storm Drain Fund revenues. In the face of dramatic losses in revenues resulting from the COVID-19 global health crisis and other rising City costs, City staff is highly concerned with the cost implications of changes to the MRP. For more information, please contact City staff at wprovost@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

California Public Utilities Commission “Rule 20 Program” Proposed Changes
On April 20, City staff submitted comments as part of the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) proceeding on their staff’s proposed changes to the Rule 20 Program. Under this program, PG&E annually allocates Work Credits jurisdictions to convert overhead electric and telecommunication facilities to underground facilities.

City comments mirror those developed by the League of California Cities, which supported cities also submitting comments. In addition, the City comments incorporate those in the Mayor’s October 2019 letter indicating support for the League’s Resolution that called on the Commission to amend Rule 20A to add projects in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (VHFHSZ). City staff comments on the Commission staff’s proposal are as follows:

• Urge the Commission to not sunset the Rule 20A program. The undergrounding of overhead electric facilities is in the public interest.

• Urge the Commission to restore full funding to the Rule 20A program. The current level of funding, at a minimum, is critically needed to complete important projects on streets and public right-of-way that is extensively used by the general public and carries a heavy volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic, that adjoins or passes through a civic area or public recreation area, and that is considered an arterial street or major collector.

• Urge the Commission to afford cities as much flexibility as possible in determining where, and for what reasons, undergrounding projects occur. At the very least, the Commission should expand eligibility under Rule 20A to include undergrounding projects intended to mitigate wildfire risks and other public safety concerns. Fire safety is a high priority for the City of El Cerrito, with over 40 percent of the City designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. As a result, an expanded Rule 20A eligibility should also include additional funding to facilitate more undergrounding projects in high-risk zones such as these.

• Urge the Commission to continue to collaborate with the League of California Cities and local governments to amend and improve the Rule 20A program.

City staff will continue to monitor the Commission proceeding on the Rule 20 Program.
RECREATION

We Miss You!
Messages from our staff to your family during this difficult time:

Earth Day Social Media Celebrations
The City Council proclaimed Saturday, April 18, 2020, as Earth Day in the City of El Cerrito and encourages all residents and businesses to help make El Cerrito a healthier, more sustainable place for all. The Recreation Department commemorated Earth Day through weeklong social media posts celebrating environmental education and art, steps our community members are taking to make the world greener, and much more!

Recreation’s social media pages also include updates on new content added to el-

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cerrito.org/reCsources, like newsletters from Recreation Staff and Instructors, and information on services that are still being provided for seniors such as the weekly lunch program. If the community has any ideas on a weekly theme for our social media, content they would like to share, or any other way we can engage with each other while physical distanced, please message recreation@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us.

C.C. Café Delivered & To-Go Lunch Program
Do you know an older adult (age 60+) in El Cerrito who would benefit from weekly meal delivery? Please encourage them to call or email us to get them registered for Contra Costa County’s meal program today. If they are comfortable sharing their contact information, please send it to us and we will reach out to them. Seven meals are delivered weekly on Wednesdays. Orders must be received by the preceding Monday at noon. For more information or to place an order for meals, call (510) 559-7677 or email midtown@ci.elcerrito.ca.us
**Meals on Wheels**
Home-delivered meals for Seniors 60+ may be available through the Meals on Wheels home delivered meals program. Meals on Wheels has changed from daily meal delivery to weekly meal delivery. Meals will be delivered on Mondays between 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Call (510) 412-0166 for more information or to sign up for this program.

**Planning for Future Programs**
Many community members have registered for a wide variety of Recreation programs and classes scheduled for late spring and summer that may be postponed, significantly modified from the originally intended programming, or fully cancelled due to the current Shelter-in-Place (SIP) order. While the SIP order is through May 3, we realize it is likely that this timeframe will be extended.

Recreation staff are closely monitoring health directives as well as guidance provided from professional organizations and local, regional and national agencies. Programs that serve the most vulnerable populations (the young and old) will require the most stringent restrictions and modifications, and staff are analyzing program considerations, revenue implications, and expense management in the decision-making process for determining phasing for possible reopening. More extensive guidelines and protocols are anticipated to be available in early May. The goal is to be able to make quick decisions about summer programming at that time based on the research and analysis completed beforehand.

Participants will be informed of plans for modifying or cancelling programs as soon as possible, however decisions will be carefully considered and not rushed. Thank you for your understanding and patience.

**Subscribe & Follow**
It is important to stay connected during this difficult time. For up-to-date information in the El Cerrito Recreation Department, please subscribe to our email newsletter rECnews at el-cerrito.org/recreation
Follow us: Instagram - @ecrecreation | Facebook - @ecrecreation | Twitter - @ElCerritoREC

**ATTACHMENTS/FLYERS**
- El Cerrito Restaurant List
Bánh Mi Sandwich Deli
10174 San Pablo Ave.

Banana Leaf Thai
11880 San Pablo Ave.
bananaleafelcerrito.com

Baskin Robbins
10598 San Pablo Ave.
baskinrobbins.co

Brasil Bistro
11866 San Pablo Ave.

Burger IM
El Cerrito Plaza
burgerim.com

Burger King
6021 Central Ave.
bk.com

Chef’s Chinese
El Cerrito Plaza

Chipotle
Carlson & San Pablo
chipotle.com

Church’s Chicken
11575 San Pablo Ave.
churchs.com

Donut Time
10740 San Pablo Ave.

El Cerrito Natural Grocery
Annex — wine & beer only
Stockton & San Pablo
naturalgrocery.com

Elevation 66 Brewing Co.
10082 San Pablo Ave.
elevation66.com

El Mono Fresh Flavors of Peru
10264 San Pablo Ave.
elmonofresh.com

Frannie Express Hawaiian Barbecue
11775 San Pablo Ave.
frannieexpresshawaiian.com

Gangam Tofu Korean Cuisine
11740 San Pablo Ave.

Himalayan Grocery
10340 San Pablo Ave.

HK Home Kitchen
10140 San Pablo Ave.

Jack in the Box
5920 Cutting Blvd.
jackinthebox.com

Jamba Juice
El Cerrito Plaza
jamba.com

Little Caesar’s Pizza
11299 San Pablo Ave.
littleceasars.com

Little Hong Kong
10443 San Pablo Ave.

Lucky Store
El Cerrito Plaza
luckysupermarkets.com

McBears Social Club taco truck
10458 San Pablo Ave.

McDonalds
11821 San Pablo Ave.
mcdonalds.com

Mountain Mike’s Pizza
10750 San Pablo Ave.
mountainmikespizza.com

Mr. Pickle’s Sandwich Shop
10810 San Pablo Ave.
mrpickles.com

New India Supermarket
10289 San Pablo Ave.

New Dumpling
10064 San Pablo Ave.

Noodles Fresh
10042 San Pablo Ave.
noodlesfresh.com

Nori Roll
10178 San Pablo Ave.
noriroll.com

Papi’s Pizza Roma
10616 San Pablo Ave.
papispizzaroma.com

Panda Express
El Cerrito Plaza
pandaexpress.com

Peet’s Coffee
Carlson & San Pablo
peets.com

Popeye’s Louisiana Kitchen
10125 San Pablo Ave.
popeyes.com

Quickly
El Cerrito Plaza

Red Onion
11900 San Pablo Ave.

Romano’s Macaroni Grill
El Cerrito Plaza
macaronigrill.com

Safeway
11450 San Pablo Ave.
local.safeway.com

Sasa Kitchen
10350 San Pablo Ave.
sasakitchenca.com

Starbucks Coffee
11861 San Pablo Ave.
starbucks.com

Subway
10398 San Pablo Ave.
11430 San Pablo Ave.
subway.com

Taqueria El Salva
11252 San Pablo Ave.

Tashi Delek Cuisine
11224 San Pablo Ave.
tashidelekcuise.com

The Junket
El Cerrito Plaza
thejunket.com

Uncle Wong’s
11760 San Pablo Ave.
unclewongselectrro.co

Well Grounded Tea & Coffee Bar
6925 Stockton Ave.
well-grounded.com

Wienschnitzel
11101 San Pablo Ave.
wienschnitzel.com

Wingstop
El Cerrito Plaza
wingstop.com

Yammi Sushi
El Cerrito Plaza

Yoshio Sushi
10889 San Pablo Ave.
yoshiosushielcerrito.com

These restaurants offer take out food during the COVID-19 lockdown.
List subject to change. El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce members shown in red.
Check restaurant websites as many provide online ordering and delivery to maintain social distancing.

TAKE OUT SPECIAL!
20% Off Food • 50% Off Bottled Wine
Call 510-237-9047 to order; pickup curbside
www.lastradasanpablo.com