

VALLEY CLEAN ENERGY ALLIANCE

Staff Report - Item 4

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Mitch Sears, Interim General Manager
Alisa Lembke, Board Clerk/Administrative Analyst

SUBJECT: Authorization to continue Remote Public Meetings as authorized by Assembly Bill 361

DATE: January 27, 2022

Recommendation

VCE Board authorize remote (video/teleconference) meetings, including any standing or future committee(s) meetings and Community Advisory Committee meetings, by finding:

1. Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361 (AB 361), that, (a) the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency is ongoing, and (b) local officials continue to recommend measures to promote social distancing.

Background/Summary of AB 361

Pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(b)(3) legislative bodies may meet by “teleconference” only if the agenda lists each location a member remotely accesses a meeting from, the agenda is posted at all remote locations, and the public may access any of the remote locations. Additionally, a quorum of the legislative body must be within the legislative body’s jurisdiction.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor issued Executive Order N-29-20, suspending certain sections of the Brown Act. Pursuant to the Executive Order, legislative bodies no longer needed to list the location of each remote attendee, post agendas at each remote locations, or allow the public to access each location. Further, a quorum of the legislative body does not need to be within the legislative body’s jurisdiction. After several extensions, Executive Order N-29-20 expired on September 30, 2021.

On September 16, 2021, the Governor signed AB 361, which kept some of the provisions of Executive Order N-29-20. Pursuant to Government Code Section 54953(e), legislative bodies may meet remotely and do not need to list the location of each remote attendee, post agendas at each remote locations, or allow the public to access each location.

However, legislative bodies must first find: (1) the legislative body is meeting during a state of emergency and determine by majority vote that meeting in person would present an imminent risk to the health or safety of attendees; or (2) state or local health officials impose or recommend social distancing measures.

On July 29, 2021, the County Health Officer issued the attached Amended Order for Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings. Page 3, Section 7 of the Amended Order states that all persons should wear well-fitted face coverings and practice physical distancing. Further, on September 22, 2021, the Health Officer issued the attached memorandum, recommending that all Brown Act bodies continue to meet remotely.

Government Code Section 54953(e)(1). The legislative body must make the required findings every 30 days, until the end of the state of emergency or recommended or required social distancing. Government Code Section 54953(e)(3). On January 1, 2024, Government Code Section 54953(e) is repealed.

Due to the rise in COVID-19 cases caused by the Delta Variant, on July 29, 2021, the Yolo County Health Officer issued an Amended Order for the Wearing of Face Coverings in Workplaces and Public Settings a recommendation that all Brown Act bodies meet remotely. The Amended Order requires the use of face coverings indoors and states that all persons should continue to protect themselves and others by physical distancing (see Page 3, Section 7). Further, on October 20, 2021 the Health Officer issued a memorandum to the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, reaffirmed their September 22, 2021 memorandum to continue to recommend meetings be held remotely whenever possible.

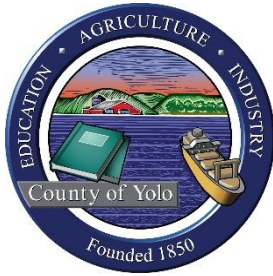
On January 11, 2022, the Board of Supervisors renewed authorization to continue remote public meetings, pursuant to Assembly Bill 361 and consistent with the attached memorandum from the Yolo County Health Officer dated January 4, 2022, wherein it states the Public Health Officer will continue to evaluate their recommendation and will communicate when there is no longer such a recommendation with respect to meetings for public bodies.

Since it has been more than 30 days since the Board last made findings pursuant to AB 361 on November 10, 2021, it is necessary for the Board to make new findings in order to continue with remote meetings. The highly contagious Omicron Variant continues to spread quickly in Yolo County and the nation, requiring the implementation of additional safety measures and precautions with respect to in-person meetings and social distancing. Therefore, it is recommended that the Board make the finding that the state of emergency is still in place and that local health officials are recommending social distancing measures, including but not limited to remote public meetings.

Staff will continue to monitor the situation as part of our emergency operations efforts and will return to the Board every thirty (30) days or as needed with additional recommendations related to the conduct of public meetings.

Attachments:

1. Yolo County Health Officer memorandum dated 1/4/22 to Board of Supervisors



COUNTY OF YOLO

Health and Human Services Agency

Karen Larsen, LMFT
Director

Aimee Sisson, MD, MPH
Health Officer

MAILING ADDRESS
137 N. Cottonwood Street • Woodland, CA 95695
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Date: January 4, 2022

To: All Yolo County Boards and Commissions

From: Dr. Aimee Sisson, Health Officer

Subject: Remote Public Meetings

On September 22, October 20, and November 20, 2021, I issued memoranda recommending remote meetings. The case rate in Yolo County has increased significantly since the November 20 memorandum, and the current case rate represents high community transmission. In the context of high community transmission, I recommend meetings be held remotely whenever possible. I am re-issuing the earlier memorandum with updated COVID-19 case rate data.

In light of the ongoing public health emergency related to COVID-19 and the high level of community transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19, the Yolo County Public Health Officer recommends that public bodies continue to meet remotely to the extent possible. Board and Commissions can utilize the provisions of newly enacted AB 361 to maintain remote meetings under the Ralph M. Brown Act and similar laws.

Among other reasons, the grounds for the remote meeting recommendation include:

- The continued threat of COVID-19 to the community. As of January 4, 2022, the case rate is 32.3 cases per 100,000 residents per day. This case rate is considered “High” under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) framework for assessing community COVID-19 transmission; and
- The unique characteristics of public governmental meetings, including the increased mixing associated with bringing together people from across the community, the need to enable those who are immunocompromised or unvaccinated to be able to safely continue to fully participate in public governmental meetings, and the challenges of ensuring compliance with safety requirements and recommendations at such meetings.

Meetings that cannot feasibly be held virtually should be held outdoors when possible, or indoors only in small groups with face coverings, maximal physical distance between participants, use of a portable HEPA filter (unless comparable filtration is provided through facility HVAC systems), and shortened meeting times.

Davis

600 A Street
Davis, CA 95616
Mental Health (530) 757-5530

West Sacramento

500 Jefferson Boulevard
West Sacramento, CA 95605
Service Center (916) 375-6200
Mental Health (916) 375-6350
Public Health (916) 375-6380

Winters

111 East Grant Avenue
Winters, CA 95694
Service Center (530) 406-4444

Woodland

25 & 137 N. Cottonwood Street
Woodland, CA 95695
Service Center (530) 661-2750
Mental Health (530) 666-8630
Public Health (530) 666-8645

This recommendation is based upon current conditions and available protective measures. The Public Health Officer will continue to evaluate this recommendation on an ongoing basis and will communicate when there is no longer such a recommendation with respect to meetings for public bodies.