

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GATEWAY CITIES COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Gateway Cities Council of Governments  
16401 Paramount Blvd.  
Paramount, California  
December 2, 2020**

**Zoom Conference**

GCCOG President Maria Davila called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

PRESENT: President Maria Davila, City of South Gate (E)  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Cinde MacGugan Cassidy, City of Avalon (E)  
Immediate Past President Fernando Dutra, City of Whittier (E)  
Member Tony Lima, City of Artesia  
Member Raymond Dunton, City of Bellflower (E)  
Member Pedro Aceituno, City of Bell Gardens  
Member Oralia Rebollo, City of Commerce (E)  
Member Emma Sharif, City of Compton  
Member Elizabeth Alcantar, City of Cudahy  
Member Alex Saab, City of Downey (E)  
Member Marilyn Sanabria, City of Huntington Park (E)  
Member John Lewis, City of La Mirada (E)  
Member Ariel Pe, City of Lakewood  
Member Robert Garcia, City of Long Beach  
Member Marisela Santana, City of Lynwood  
Member Heber Marquez, City of Maywood  
Member Angie Jimenez, City of Montebello  
Member Margarita Rios, City of Norwalk  
Member Vilma Cuellar Stallings, City of Paramount  
Member Joe Angel Zamora, City of Santa Fe Springs (E)  
Member Edward H. J. Wilson, City of Signal Hill (E)  
Member Herlinda Chico, Office of Supervisor Janice Hahn (E)  
Member Kimberly Ortega, Office of Supervisor Hilda Solis  
Member Sharon Weissman, Port of Long Beach

ABSENT: 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Ali Saleh, City of Bell  
Member Naresh Solanki, City of Cerritos (E)  
Member Jesse Alvarado, City of Hawaiian Gardens  
Member Cory Moss, City of Industry  
Member Rex Richardson, City of Long Beach  
Member Brent Tercero, City of Pico Rivera  
Member William Davis, City of Vernon  
Member Lacey Johnson, Office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas  
(E) Executive Committee

ALSO PRESENT: Thaddeus McCormack, City Manager – City of Lakewood; Nancy Pfeffer, Melani Smith, Gilbert Saldate, Karen Heit, Stephanie Cadena, Joel Arevalos, Genny Cisneros, Sandra Mora, Ivy Tsai – COG Staff; Norman Emerson – Emerson Associates; Claudette Moody – WSP; Luke Klipp – City of Long Beach; Nina Turner, Local/Regional Liaison – Port of Long

Beach; Dianne Guevara – City of South Gate; Mark Dierking, Steven Lee – Metro; Sarah Patterson, Regional Affairs Officer – SCAG; Kristine Guerrero – League of California Cities; David Torres – City of Montebello; Karen Lee, Management Analyst – City of Artesia; Guadalupe Camberos – Office of Sup. Solis; Eli Lipmen – Move LA; Danielle Soto – South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Roll call was taken by GCCOG Office Assistant Sandra Mora. There was one amendment to the agenda. By request of the COG Board Officers, staff prepared an item relating to the County's Public Health Order. The item came up after the agenda was posted, and the County order would expire before the next Board meeting, therefore staff has added it as an emergency item to this agenda. The information was emailed to the Board prior to the meeting, and originally came to the COG as a request from a member City.

President Davila asked for a motion to approve adding the emergency item to the agenda. First Vice President Cinde Cassidy moved to approve and it was seconded by Immediate Past President Fernando Dutra. COG Staff Mora performed a roll call, and the item was approved. Director Pfeffer recommended addressing this item after the Transportation Committee Report.

There were no public comments. Under Matters from Staff, Executive Director Nancy Pfeffer thanked past President Diane DuBois for joining the meeting. COG staff played a video to honor and thank her for her service with the GCCOG. Dubois expressed thanks and Boardmembers wished her a happy retirement.

Director Pfeffer reported that the COG did not receive the federal EDA grant that we applied for. This application was submitted for CARES Act funding in partnership with USC, to help fund our complete streets corridors. COG staff is looking to request assistance from our federal representatives to find other opportunities to fund this work.

Director Pfeffer reported that staff has submitted an application for REAP funding. The Board received a presentation in October on the work plan for the \$1.3 million in funding that the COG will receive over a couple of years from SCAG to assist with affordable housing planning and production. SCAG has provided comments on our application and staff is responding.

Director Pfeffer also shared the new pages on the COG website, including the new Resource Page for Homelessness, and the SoCalREN program webpage on energy efficiency. Additionally, staff is looking into how to make better use of the COG's social media accounts, including LinkedIn and Twitter. Staff is coming up with a content calendar to make more regular use of these accounts and communicate the work of the COG to its members and stakeholders.

Lastly, Director Pfeffer provided an update on the story that was shared on KCRW radio about the I-605 corridor improvement project. She was quoted briefly on the commitments Metro has made to work with affected cities.

President Davila asked for a motion to approve the Consent Calendar. Immediate Past President Fernando Dutro moved to approve and it was seconded by Member Ed Wilson. COG Staff Mora performed a roll call and the item was approved.

President Davila turned to the Transportation Committee Report. Mayor Robert Garcia said there was no Metro Board meeting in between the COG meetings, and the Metro Board meeting will be meeting the following day. Phil Washington has been selected by President-elect Biden to lead

the transportation department transition, which is a huge deal for our region and speaks positively for projects in our region.

Mayor Garcia briefly mentioned the impacts that COVID has had to Metro's budget, and said staff is continuing to deal with the impacts. He acknowledged outgoing Metro Board members, John Fasana and Mark Ridley-Thomas, and noted Holly Mitchell will be joining.

Lastly, Mayor Garcia introduced a letter from the Transportation Committee for the Board's consideration. Director Pfeffer said it is a staff comment letter to Metro staff regarding implementing a motion by the Metro Board earlier this year on modernizing the highway program, which is designed to revise the Measure M and Measure R guidelines for how funding can be used on highway projects to make them more flexible, and to reflect other transportation priorities. COG staff and the Transportation Committee had some concerns about removing language regarding safety and traffic flow. The letter takes a neutral position and provides Metro staff with comments on how to implement the motion of their board. The COG received public comments on this matter, which asked for the COG to take a more active role, though what the advocates are asking for is in alignment with what staff also supports.

Member Garcia moved to approve staff's recommendation and it was seconded by Immediate Past President Dutra. COG Staff Mora performed a roll call and the item was approved. There were two abstentions.

President Davila turned to the added Emergency item. Director Pfeffer reported that the City of Downey asked the COG for support of their letter to the County Board of Supervisors in regard to the outdoor dining ban. Director Pfeffer drafted a letter for the Board's consideration. She noted that Member Kimberly Ortega had offered to invite a speaker from the Public Health Department to join the meeting. Member Ortega said staff was not available, however she would be able to relay any questions. Director Pfeffer reviewed the most recent actions taken by the County, including the sweeping restrictions on outdoor activities and the outdoor dining ban, and also noted the letters and resolutions from member cities of Downey, Lakewood and Whittier. Director Pfeffer also reviewed actions by the other COGs, noting that several individual cities share similar concerns about economic impacts. San Gabriel Valley COG (SGVCOG) sent a letter to the County expressing that it would be helpful to have a venue of direct communication between city staff and public health department staff to make sure that we understand what the basis and data for their recommendations are. City Managers of San Gabriel Valley COG felt that the situation was changing very quickly, and that it was more important to understand the data and basis for public health decisions than to address or submit letters for any one order. The COG's draft letter is modeled after SGVCOG's.

Member Dutra thanked staff for their work. He shared that a restaurant in Whittier would be laying off its employees in the following week as a direct result of the outdoor dining ban. This is a difficult decision and while he appreciates staff's draft letter, he would like to take a stronger position. Fundamentally the restaurant industry is taking an unfair and inequitable burden of the pandemic, due to the overburdening restrictions. There is no evidence that supports the County's curfew or restaurant restrictions. Dutra said the COG's position should resemble that of our member cities, and also suggested the letter include a request for the County to treat individual cities similarly to how the States treat counties. Cities could have similar metrics applied by which restrictions are then decided.

Member Pedro Aceituno agreed, and asked for support to include the card club industry cities, like Commerce, Compton, and Hawaiian Gardens, that are also being heavily impacted. Casinos have been doing everything they've been asked to do to ensure safety.

Member Oralía Rebollo agreed, and said Commerce depends on their card club for over 40% of their budget. The card club has spent millions of dollars to make sure their rooms are safe. She emphasized that in no way are we underestimating the virus or its public health impacts, but are asking to look at all of the data and facts.

Member Ariel Pe echoed the previous comments and added that having clear data could help us answer constituent's questions and concerns and help clear confusion.

Member John Lewis commented in support of the resolutions by Downey, Lakewood and Whittier. He shared that La Mirada reviewed the public health ban and found there are only 2 businesses in the city that have COVID-related issues, none of which are restaurants. Shutting down restaurants is having profoundly serious effects, and many businesses will be closed permanently. Lewis supports taking a stronger position in the COG's letter and also offered to share La Mirada's resolution for other cities.

Member Alex Saab agreed with Dutra regarding the countywide restrictions and added that individual cities should have a say especially with impacts of this magnitude.

Member Ray Dunton said Bellflower previously sent a letter to the Office of Sup. Janice Hahn, and is in support of sending a stronger letter to the County to try to overturn the outdoor dining ban, with the inclusion of card clubs. Member Dunton made a motion.

Member Wilson commented that while he is in support of the business community, he is against trying to overturn the County order. He has attended various COVID-19 informational meetings held virtually by the federal government, and noted that there has been severe mixed messaging. He emphasized that the virus does not care what city people are in, and a number of people have become infected due to out-of-town visitors. He commented that sending a letter to override the County's public health officers is potentially politicizing the virus. The COG has a responsibility to businesses in our cities and our residents, but health is the first and most important issue. He believes we should turn to lobbying the state for stronger action, as we are seeing numbers escalate across the country, and allowing more business to open doesn't address this issue and actually inflates the number of infections. He shared on family members who caught COVID over the past holiday weekend and emphasized the COG's responsibility to support health care providers. Wilson suggested asking the County for regular briefings to receive updates and review the data, with opportunity for discussion. He commented that writing about economic impacts doesn't consider our responsibility to the health of the community and finds that difficult to support. Public health officers are the ones making these decisions as they have the information and know what is best for the health and welfare of the people. Wilson said he does not believe it is appropriate to politically overturn the decisions of medical and public health professionals, and noted he would be against anything that would be a rebuttal to the health officers recommendations.

Member Heber Marquez agreed with Wilson's comments, and added that we can't be sure that there is full compliance of the public health orders by businesses. He said the County is doing the best they can and asked how the COG could help. The letter should look to provide possible solutions as a collective, and not as individual cities.

Cassidy commented that she understands how difficult the health department's decisions are to make. However, she does not appreciate what appears to be back-and-forth decision-making on opening and closing businesses and the inconsistent restrictions imposed. As an example, she shared that in Avalon you are able to rent a kayak but not a golf cart. She noted the disparity in the rules and said the health department is not able to ensure precautions are actually taking place. Picking and choosing what can be open is unfair to economics in communities. Having visited many restaurants on the mainland, Cassidy does not believe Avalon should have to close down as they have shown to be the true embodiment of social distancing and are taking all precautions, especially in restaurants. From her perspective, the COG would not be questioning the Health department's authority or knowledge, but is asking to look into the decision-making for this particular order and disparities in the rules.

Member Elizabeth Alcantar echoed Wilson's comment about what work we can be doing without going against public health professionals' orders. For example, the COG can push for funding from congressional representatives for families and workers in our communities. She noted the science has said outdoor dining is a wide spreader for COVID-19, and while we can ask for disparities that are happening in terms of closures and non-closures to be addressed, we cannot ask to overturn the order for nonessential businesses. Protecting our residents also means protecting our workers, including those that work in other cities. We should advocate to states and congress representatives to make sure they give our residents the funding they need.

Member Kimberly Ortega read a statement from Sup. Solis on the COVID-19 related closures, especially those in the COG region. The statement was made after the County's order last Tuesday. The statement included data on the number of new positive cases and number of people hospitalized with COVID-19.

Lewis commented that the statement did not include numbers related to outdoor dining. Statistics have shown that approximately 3% of cases are due to dining. He also noted that many restaurants are no longer eligible for new funding from the federal government, and that new funding should be revised so that restaurants that previously accessed CARES Act assistance can be eligible for new funding. He also noted that cities along the eastern border of the COG lose anyway since residents only have to travel to Orange County if they want outdoor dining. He added that an article recently came out from a major source that confirmed outdoor dining is not contributing to increased virus cases. The COG's letter would not disregard all of the County's decisions, but ask for dining to continue only if proper precautions are taking place.

Member Margarita Rios said if the County wanted to double down, they should have done so in March. The message has been inconsistent and emphasized Lewis' example about Orange County's less strict restrictions. She hopes the County Supervisors are really in tune with the Public Health Department for anticipating what's to come. She added that if they are going to recommend these decisions, they should also include remedies or cushioning in terms of economic relief, especially for businesses that are in dire need. She also noted that city leaders should have the ability to enforce some of the social distancing requirements. Completely putting the burden on businesses without facts that really support these decisions is dangerous. She added that many residents are doing outdoor dining to support their community and businesses. She shared that her family members have had COVID and knows the seriousness of the virus, but that the decisions that have been made are overreaching and there is a disconnect between what is happening on the ground and the County Board's knowledge that needs to be fixed. Rios

supports taking a firm position that lets the County understand how their decisions are impacting cities and people on the ground.

Wilson commented that the federal government is now debating on another stimulus bill, the parameters of which have not been issued, and it is upon us to push that everyone still be included, regardless of participation in the first round. He believes there should be a total shutdown for 3 weeks, and we should act before the numbers get too high. Every time we start making exceptions, we are allowing the pandemic to continue and thrive. It does not care about borders, businesses, or even people, and only cares about surviving.

Member Joe Angel Zamora commented in agreement with the positions taken by Downey, Lakewood, Whittier and the card club cities. He added that these decisions before the holidays could have people losing hope. People can catch COVID anywhere, such as ordering food to your home or getting a package in the mail. He emphasized that people need power of choice, and he would support a stronger position in the letter as the County is not communicating with cities. He suggested the COG could write two letters reflecting the positions expressed by Board members, in order to support each other. Most important is for the County to know that the COG is coming together as a united front.

President Davila commented that with the numbers continuing to rise in South Gate, her interests are to do what's best for residents. If it's between economics and health, health would come first. She appreciates the discussion and all of the opinions expressed. Davila would support sending a letter to the County to ask for more information and also looking forward to what we can do to support.

Davila asked for a second to Member Dunton's motion. Dutra asked for the motion with an added amendment for the letter to include a recommendation for the County to treat cities or the subregion similar to how counties are treated by the state, with metrics applied to each. If cities have lower case numbers, they could have the ability to decide to keep restaurants open. The purpose is to avoid the current one-size-fits-all solution and offers a more equitable way of treating the region instead of picking on one sector.

Dunton agreed, and restated the motion is to send a letter to the County asking to rescind the order made last Tuesday, and allow reopening of outdoor dining and card clubs. It would also include the amendment by Dutra to look at individual city data and not have them included in sweeping countywide decisions. Member Lewis seconded the motion. Member Rios asked to consider also including language on how communities of color have been disproportionately affected with no suggested solutions. Members agreed.

COG staff Mora performed a roll call and the motion passed, with four abstentions.

Director Pfeffer asked what process can be taken to ensure the intent of the Board is captured in the letter. Dunton said through the COG's counsel, staff could reach out to those that made the motion and ask for clarification as needed.

Wilson said normally the Board would vote on a letter that is presented. In this case, he believes it is appropriate for the Board to see the letter that is crafted before it is sent.

COG Counsel Ivy Tsai suggested the Board convene a special meeting to review the letter. Board members agreed to meet on Monday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at 5pm, in order to review the letter and have it sent to the County Supervisors before their next meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

There were no Matters from the Board of Directors. There were no matters from the President.

**Adjournment:** President Davila adjourned the meeting at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Pfeffer, Executive Director