



AGENDA NO: I

MEETING DATE: May 14, 2020

**AGENDA CORRESPONDENCE
RECEIVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL
FOLLOWING POSTING OF THE AGENDA IS ATTACHED
FOR PUBLIC REVIEW PRIOR TO THE MEETING**

May 13, 2020
RE Special Meeting Agenda Item I.

Honorable Mayor and City Council,

Our Chamber members, businesses that are open or open with modifications, and businesses that are closed but able to generate sales for future services, appreciate the kindness and local support that they have received during the COVID-19 pandemic. We commend the efforts of your City staff who have worked diligently and collaboratively with the business community throughout this crisis. We thank you as elected officials for your leadership of the community as we walk through uncharted territory together.

The purpose of this letter is to share with you some data from the business community that we gathered via an anonymous survey aimed at addressing visitation during the shelter at home order. First, some background information for the Council on how this survey was conceived is in order.

Despite the statewide Shelter at Home order, observations of human behavior over the last eight weeks has indicated a growing restlessness with staying home. People are out to get fresh air, as our County's public health officer has encouraged, and they're also out buying from essential businesses. The volume of car traffic at primary and secondary gateways to economic centers, especially on weekends in late April and May 2020, seems to have increased when compared to weekends in March and early April of 2020.

Restaurants on the north side of Embarcadero have experienced some distress with servicing the volume of customers while maintaining 6ft social distancing and managing impacts of visitation. At a virtual meeting on May 1st with City Management and Department Heads in Community Development, Harbor, Tourism and Law Enforcement, these restaurateurs shared experiences operating during the pandemic that included:

- customer public restroom requests
- customers pulling down tables and chairs from roped off areas
- customers using public benches and tables for outside dining
- challenges with equitable enforcement by City regulators
- challenges with clarity on what businesses can and can't do right now, and
- crowd compression along the Embarcadero from closure of the Rock parking lot.

The following weekend, some of these restaurateurs "upped their game" by setting out delineators for crowd control, rolling out their own trash receptacles, and posting signage created by City staff with reference to City and County regulations intended to bolster their capacity as private sector operators to enforce the closure of public seating areas, proper trash disposal and 6ft distancing.

Two weeks later Morro Bay and all coastal communities in the County continue to experience the consequences of deeply entrenched patterns of visitation that bring residents of

warm, inland areas to our cool and breezy seaside. Your EOC has benefited from superior leadership and fair and balanced protection of the community's public health. The Chamber initiated our survey to the business community because so many owners and employees are also residents; because the lived experience on the frontlines of receiving visitors from outside the area gives them a perspective that is unique; and because the financial contributions of these businesses to funding essential city services is a vital part of the economic ecosystem of Morro Bay.

The Survey

The survey we created was sent to our mailing list of 894 Chamber members and non-members at 7pm on Tuesday, May 12th. We have received 96 responses to the survey in just 24 hours.

Respondent Composition by Industry:

- 49% Lodging
- 11% Restaurant/Food Service
- 16% Retail
- 23% Other (Professional Services, Recreation, Real Estate, Health, Entertainment)

Key Data from All Respondents:

- 59% of all respondents' businesses are either fully or partially open.
- 48% have received customers from outside of SLO County during the shelter at home order.
- 42% are worried for their employees' health because of visitation from outside the county.
- 51% of respondents shared the steps they're taking to actively minimize exposure to COVID-19 that include; increasing sanitization, wearing face masks, wearing gloves, practicing social distancing, conducting employee trainings, installing sneeze guard-like barriers, mandating frequent hand washing, implementing contactless transactions, and demarcating 6ft between customers waiting for service.

"Tolerance" for Various Measures

We asked respondents to rate their tolerance of various possible measures that could decrease the impact of visitation during the Shelter at Home order. Respondents *strongly supported* reopening the rock parking lot, adding more and larger public-access trash containers in the commercial districts, and increasing the availability of tables and chairs for socially distant outdoor dining. Respondents *strongly opposed* closing streets in commercial districts to thru traffic (pedestrian traffic only), increasing messaging to drive markets that SLO County is not open to visitors, and enlisting volunteer community members as ambassadors to model social distancing and disperse large gatherings. 50% of respondents were strongly supportive or supportive of face masks being required in public, with 24% neutral and 25% opposed.

Of the 80% of respondents who offered their own creative ideas to effectively manage the influx of visitors from outside SLO County during Shelter at Home, improved signage deployed

throughout the city and at all primary and secondary gateways emerged as a theme. Increased utilization and access of outdoor space, being mindful of messaging to drive markets to prevent longer-term behavioral changes of our mainstay visitors, and reopening and maintaining public restrooms were common threads. Many of the comments spoke to the desire of business to be in business and begged for urgency to reopen. But, there were also numerous thoughtful comments expressing concern over the vulnerability of our community to exposure to the virus.

We hope that this data is informative for you as you consider possible actions to mitigate community impacts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for your consideration of the business voices expressed through this survey in your discussion.

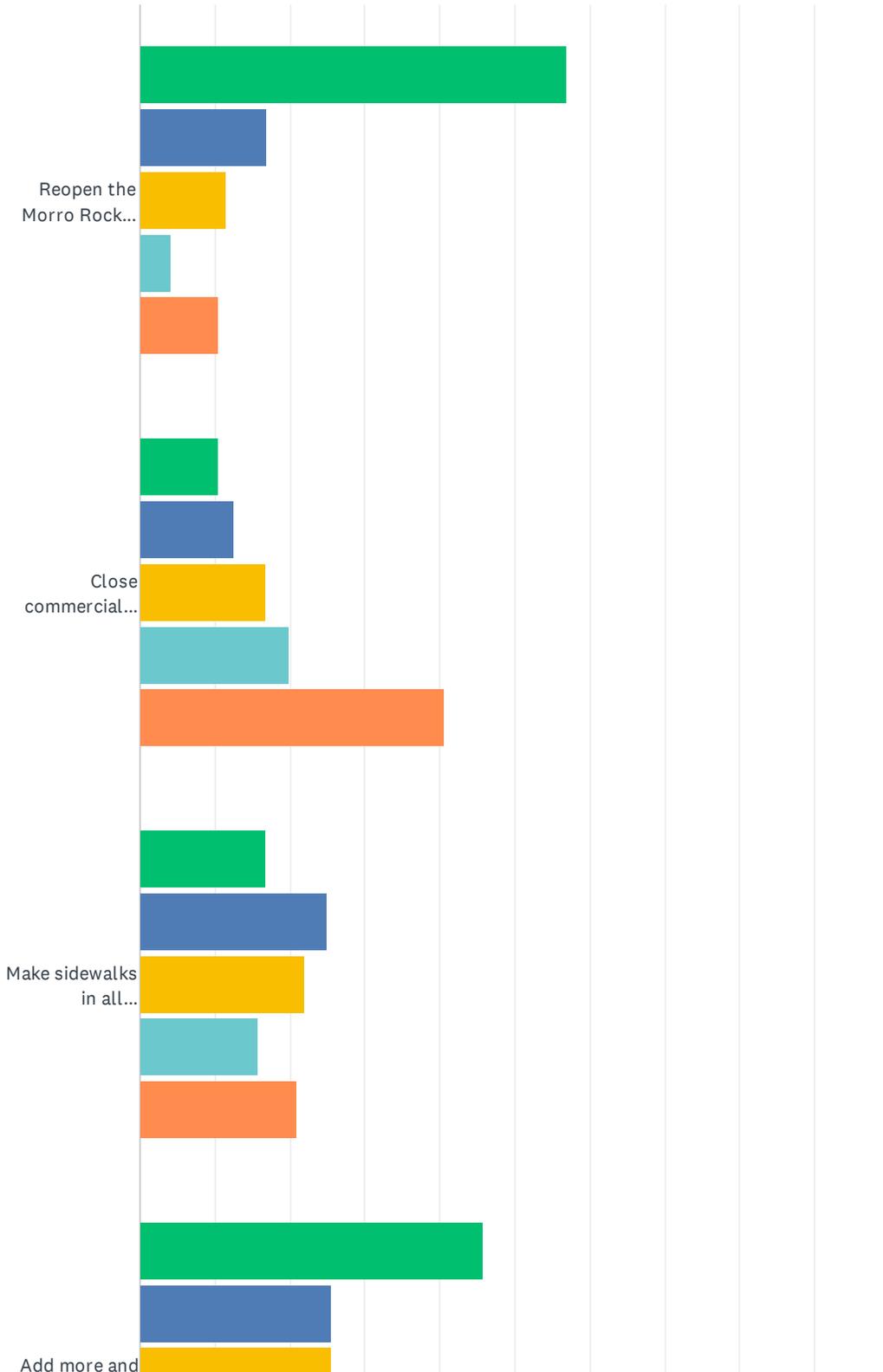
Sincerely,

Erica Crawford
President/CEO
Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce

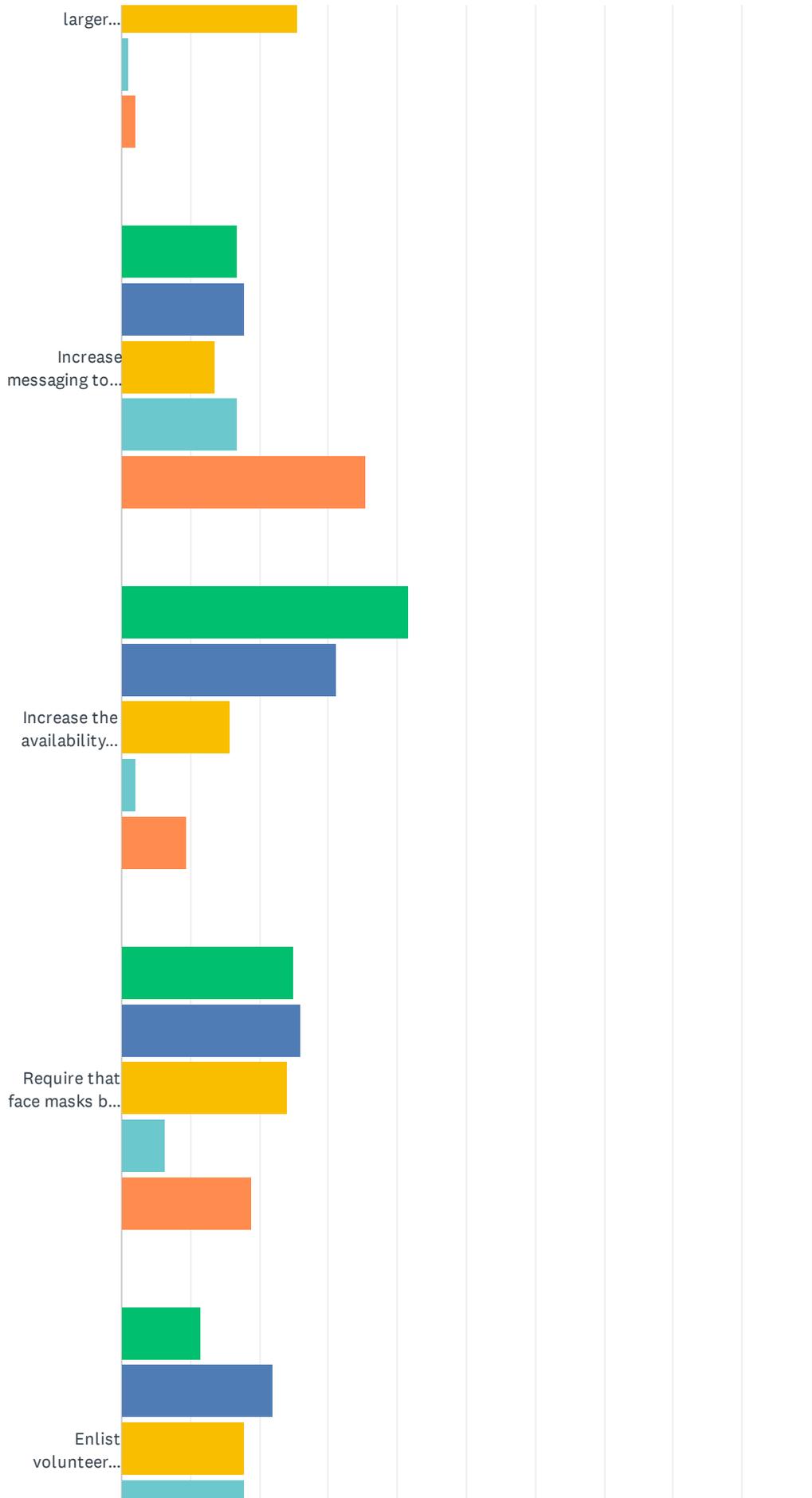


Q7 Please rate your tolerance of the following ideas we've heard around the region that could decrease the impact of visitors during the Governor's Shelter at Home order.

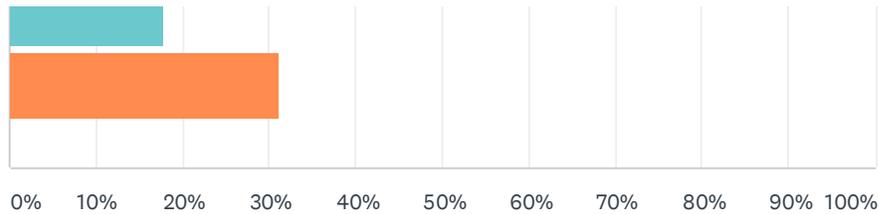
Answered: 96 Skipped: 0



Ideas to Address Visitation During the Shelter at Home Order



Ideas to Address Visitation During the Shelter at Home Order



■ Strongly Support
 ■ Support
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Oppose
 ■ Strongly Oppose

	STRONGLY SUPPORT	SUPPORT	NEUTRAL	OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Reopen the Morro Rock Beach Parking Lot	56.84% 54	16.84% 16	11.58% 11	4.21% 4	10.53% 10	95	1.95
Close commercial district streets to thru-traffic (pedestrian-only traffic to enhance social distancing)	10.42% 10	12.50% 12	16.67% 16	19.79% 19	40.63% 39	96	3.68
Make sidewalks in all commercial districts one-way pedestrian only	16.67% 16	25.00% 24	21.88% 21	15.63% 15	20.83% 20	96	2.99
Add more and larger public-access trash containers in commercial districts	45.74% 43	25.53% 24	25.53% 24	1.06% 1	2.13% 2	94	1.88
Increase messaging to Valley, Santa Barbara, Monterey, LA and South Bay that SLO County is not open to visitors	16.67% 16	17.71% 17	13.54% 13	16.67% 16	35.42% 34	96	3.36
Increase the availability of tables and chairs for socially distant outdoor dining	41.67% 40	31.25% 30	15.63% 15	2.08% 2	9.38% 9	96	2.06
Require that face masks be worn in public	25.00% 24	26.04% 25	23.96% 23	6.25% 6	18.75% 18	96	2.68
Enlist volunteer community members as ambassadors to model social distancing and disperse gatherings	11.46% 11	21.88% 21	17.71% 17	17.71% 17	31.25% 30	96	3.35

Dana Swanson

From: Meredith Bates [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 10:14 AM
To: Scott Collins; John Heading; Dana Swanson; Dawn Addis; Robert Davis; Voad20; Marlys McPherson
Subject: Reopening Morro Bay

Dear City Council,

I appreciate all the difficult work you are doing to deal with the reopening of our community. Because we are a tourist destination, I see that you understand the concerns of our residents.

Additional handicapped spaces: I am incredibly grateful the added handicapped spaces to the parking lot by the coastguard station, as it permits seniors like me and walkers with mobility issues to maneuver the boardwalk. I walk the boardwalk daily and find that the rock closure has helped immensely in reducing traffic on the board walk and the surrounding area.

Rock Parking Lot: In reviewing the staff report, I see that you are considering opening the rock parking lot "with striping, to space cars out to keep vehicles apart". As I understand our public health officer, problems occur when people gather in groups without social distance that creates problems, not so much when cars are parked less than the suggested 6 feet apart. Spacing cars does not seem like a good solution.

Regarding enforcement: I understand the resources required to enforce safety measures and am glad to know that FEMA will reimburse for some of these items. I know that criminalizing tourists for violating stay at home orders is not the way to go. **However, I recommend going beyond education and issuing citations with the \$1000 fine.** This would help our declining city revenues and discourage out of towners.

Respectfully,

Meredith Bates, Morro Bay resident

Dana Swanson

From: kris white [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 10:47 AM
To: Scott Collins; John Heading; Dana Swanson; Dawn Addis; Robert Davis; Voad20; Marlys McPherson
Subject: PARKING AT ROCK

Dear City Council,

I appreciate your work on reopening of our community. Even though we are a tourist location, we need understand the concerns of our residents.

Additional handicapped spaces are welcome and we walk the rock many evenings a week. I am grateful to use the parking lot by the coastguard station.

The rock closure has helped reduce traffic on the board walk and the surrounding area.

I really don't see how making the parking spaces bigger or spaced out helps. Spacing cars does not seem like a good solution.

Monitoring crowds seems to help, we have seen groups of 16 without masks nor keeping distance. Mostly on weekends.

I would hope for some visibility, if not enforcement.

Thanks,

Kris White,

Morro Bay property owner and resident

Dana Swanson

From: Scott Collins
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 11:24 AM
To: Dana Swanson
Subject: FW: exercising great care in phase 1

From: Megan McGreen [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 11:14 AM
To: Robert Davis <rdavis@morrobayca.gov>; Scott Collins <scollins@morrobayca.gov>; John Headding <jheadding@morrobayca.gov>; Dawn Addis <daddis@morrobayca.gov>; Voad20 [REDACTED]; Marlys McPherson <mmcpherson@morrobayca.gov>
Subject: exercising great care in phase 1

Dear City Council,

This is a difficult time for all of us, especially those who are sick and out of work. We have done well in keeping the virus contained in our town. Kudos to your quick response. As we enter a new phase of slowly reopening some of our beautiful town, we need to exercise great care.

I think reopening the rock parking lot is not a good idea because it will bring more and more tourists who will offer money to the hotels and restaurants but many could have the virus and no symptoms. Until everyone is tested, I think we should keep the tourist population as low as possible to ensure more safety to our residents. After all, the stay at home orders are still in place and we should not encourage others from out of town to disobey that order.

Respectfully,
Megan McGreen, Morro Bay resident

Dana Swanson

From: Jeanie Roberts [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 1:12 PM
To: Scott Collins; John Heading; Dana Swanson; Dawn Addis; Robert Davis; Voad20; Marlys McPherson
Subject: Morro Bay

Dear City Council,

I do understand that our town faces serious issues as a result of the Corona virus, both economic and health safety issues. However, please take into account the following resident concerns.

I am willing and anxious to keep our residents safe by adhering to the stay-at-home orders, 6 foot spacing, and face mask usage. I would urge the Council to insist that tourists follow the same rules or be fined. While I understand the importance of tourist dollars in this town, I would hope that visitors will be held to the same constraints as we who live here. To do otherwise would be to issue a double standard, and it seems a financial fine for any violators would help the city's revenues if levied.

I understand that you are considering opening the Rock Parking Lot using striping to assure 6 foot distances. May I point out that cars are not the issue. People are, and setting cars 6 feet apart does not ensure that their occupants will be held to that requirement in the parking lot or on the beach. I urge you not to follow through with opening the parking lot.

I really like the one-way foot traffic on the Embarcadero, and I commend many of our restaurants for offering take-out service. The grocery stores have served the community well, as have our first responders. Thank you for all you do; we appreciate your efforts in helping our beautiful city to work through this crisis.

Respectfully yours,

Jeanie Roberts, Ph.D

Morro Bay Resident

Dana Swanson

From: Malcolm McEwen [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 2:07 PM
To: Dawn Addis
Cc: John Heading; CityClerk
Subject: Special meeting 5/14/2020: Please don't open Morro a Rock parking lot.

Opening the Rock parking lot would encourage more visitors.

Many visitors appear to be not using, or are even hostile to, protective measures such as face masks.

Two weekends ago, I was standing in the parking lot in front of the Dockside restaurant. A couple walked by, neither wearing masks. After they passed the woman said, "When I see people wearing masks I just want to sneeze on them!"

Visitors like these will inevitably bring more disease to our town.

--

Malcolm McEwen
Morro Bay, CA
