



Legislation Text

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No fiscal impact.

Marking One Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Saluting Essential Workers.

WHEREAS, it has been over one year since the first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Madison and these past twelve months have led to a state of unprecedented social and economic disruption and has created tremendous challenges for our health care system, government, businesses, schools, families, workers, retirees and diverse communities in countless ways; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Madison recognizes and appreciates the essential workers in the private sector, including grocery, retail and restaurant workers, food service, food pantry and agricultural workers, warehouse, postal, and delivery workers, cab drivers, industrial and commercial workers, journalists, communications and IT workers, critical manufacturing, utility and construction workers, custodians and janitorial workers, and countless others who have continued working in jobs where they were exposed to the public and therefore at greater risk; and,

WHEREAS, the City of Madison recognizes and appreciates the tireless efforts of direct care workers for the elderly and the disabled, teachers, child care and youth program workers, special education aids, home health care providers, nursing home and other congregate care workers, community center employees and the countless unsung heroes who have delivered critical services to families and children under challenging conditions; and,

WHEREAS, every City of Madison department and division contributed to the determined effort to protect public health, support the local economy, and provide crucial City services to residents, organizations and businesses; and,

WHEREAS, drivers and other employees of Metro Transit have been on the front line of this pandemic since day one, providing safe transportation throughout the City without pause and initially without charge, and Metro employees have worked to transport homeless individuals from nighttime to day shelters, and also maintained a route structure so essential employees could get to and from their jobs throughout the City; and,

WHEREAS, the Streets Division employees were undeterred by these extraordinary times and they continued to provide exceptional services for Madison residents. Crews adapted to new schedules, new procedures, and new restrictions all while performing their essential work for our community. From snowplowing roads this winter to sweeping them this past summer to collecting recyclables and trash to maintaining the health of our vibrant urban forest, the Streets Division workforce showed they can be relied upon to meet the moment and exceed our expectations; and,

WHEREAS, Information Technology rapidly transitioned many City employees to a telework environment, continuing effective customer service, developed a virtual environment for the City's legislative process and supported 1,875 hours of virtual meetings, increased online permitting and inspections processes, re-designed the City website to feature COVID-19 information, collaborated with Public Health Madison & Dane County on two COVID-19 data dashboards and continued to build and maintain the City's technology infrastructure and fiber network to support increased network traffic and maintain security best practices; and,

WHEREAS, the City Clerk's Office worked incredibly long hours to provide a total of five safe and fair elections by April of this year, often developing unique and innovative ways, such as Democracy in the Park and the

establishment of drop off ballot boxes throughout the City, to allow people to vote safely. The office has also recruited thousands of intrepid poll workers, and secured new polling locations and has remained open for business licensing throughout the pandemic; and,

WHEREAS, Madison Public Library has maintained its focus and innovation in service to the City by creating a new virtual library card, providing remote telephone reference, increasing online collections and databases, making materials available through curbside pickup or direct delivery, and despite the personal risks in pandemic conditions opening their doors to public computing, demonstrating the resilience and dedication of the library staff in service to our community; and,

WHEREAS, the staff of the City Treasury has worked primarily in person throughout the pandemic to ensure that property tax, municipal services, housing, and licensing payments are processed accurately and on time. In addition, to their normal duties, the staff in Central Payroll worked extra hours to onboard over 3,000 new poll workers for the 2020 Elections and took on more responsibilities processing and verifying WorkShare hours throughout the City; and,

WHEREAS, many Planning Division employees were asked to help address the City's emerging needs related to the pandemic, and employees had to learn new skills and work in unplanned ways to continue their fast-paced work in a virtual setting to support a record-setting year for development proposals in our growing City; and,

WHEREAS, the Economic Development Division continued work on real estate projects critical to supporting private development and public infrastructure throughout the pandemic, quickly set-up new ways of supporting our local business community, most notably through the Small Business Equity and Recovery (SBER) COVID Grant Program, and led a team of staff from across the City to launch the successful Sreatery Program so that restaurants could safely serve their patrons; and,

WHEREAS, the Madison Fire Department played a lead role in the emergency response and has continued to provide high quality patient care to every resident and visitor during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the members of the department went beyond what is normally expected to ensure that the community and their co-workers continue to maintain safety while fighting the virus. The members of the Madison Fire Department quickly adapted to changes in operational and service delivery policies to ensure community safety; and,

WHEREAS, employees with Community Development Division worked tirelessly with staff from around the City and nonprofit partners, to create safe child care options for the City's essential workers and to rapidly seek more expansive shelter options for our vulnerable, homeless populations. Through their work, homeless men were housed safely at first at the Warner Park Community Center and now in the City's former Fleet facility as a permanent shelter is identified and pursued; and,

WHEREAS the CDA Housing Operations Division has protected CDA residents from the pandemic by maintaining CDA properties in a safe and socially distant manner and have continued operation of the Section 8 and Public Housing programs despite the challenges of remote contact with clients; and the Building Inspection Division played an important role in pandemic planning and continued in-person inspection services throughout the pandemic and was the first agency to reopen in person counter services for Zoning and Plan Review services; and,

WHEREAS, Parking Division staff ensured continuous, safe, and timely service to the community with customer service and field staff reporting to work daily to keep facilities clean and provide necessary in-person customer support, through the efforts of redeployed Parking Cashiers who took on new job duties to support public health efforts, elections, Streets' yard waste drop-off sites and parks, and demonstrated a deep understanding for a variety of parking needs to support residents and businesses, including the creation of curbside pick-up areas, collaboration on the Sreatery program and waiver of parking fees, daily parking rate

reductions in public parking garages, and the suspension of various on-street parking restrictions; and,

WHEREAS, workers from multiple departments mailed tens of thousands of absentee ballots during the pandemic; Fire and Parks hosted ballot drop box locations and kept them free of snow; the Finance Department Administrative Support Team hired and scheduled 3000 new election officials to work the polls; Public Health developed safety precaution recommendations for the city's absentee voting sites and polling locations; Parks, Madison Public Library, the Monona Terrace, Fire, the Madison Senior Center, Fleet Services, and Engineering opened their doors to voters during the pandemic; Information Technology helped monitor and protect the city's election administration cybersecurity; Madison City Channel made it possible for thousands of election officials to participate in training webinars; the Madison Police Department provided election security recommendations and helped to secure ballots; the City Attorney's Office provided guidance through an unprecedented series of election challenges; and the Monona Terrace hosted the Presidential Recount; and,

WHEREAS, the Building Inspection Division continued in person inspection services throughout the pandemic and was the first agency to reopen in person counter services for Zoning and Plan Review services; and,

WHEREAS, the Madison Police Department committed to provide public safety and service to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic as front-line personnel tirelessly serving the citizens of Madison 24/7 by providing core services. In addition, the men and women of MPD have worked hard to facilitate the expression of community members' First Amendment rights while protecting public safety. Maintaining a safe environment while fighting a pandemic under these circumstances is challenging, but it is necessary to help reduce the impact of COVID-19 in our community, and,

WHEREAS, Traffic Engineering Division assisted with COVID-19 response and recovery through programs such as Shared Streets, Streatery, curbside pickup, and active traffic management based on changing traffic conditions, all while maintaining all critical traffic infrastructures, handling record number of public requests and launching the Vision Zero Initiative; and,

WHEREAS, the Madison Parks Division has continued to provide a high quality park system of more than 5,000 acres to residents throughout the pandemic as people relied on Parks staff to provide a safe environment to enjoy the mental, physical, and social benefits that parks provide. Staff have responded to the community's needs with purpose by adapting all aspects of its operations, planning, and community services including the Goodman Pool, Warner Park Community Recreation Center, four golf courses, Olbrich Gardens, dog parks, lake access locations, public restrooms, trails and bikepaths, disc golf courses; and,

WHEREAS, the Engineering Division maintained public infrastructure consistently through the pandemic, especially in the field, braving pandemic pressures and risks. Engineering staff maintained sanitary and stormwater systems, continued designing and building streets, bike paths and city facilities, helped support other City agencies with maintaining high standards of sanitizing and preventative efforts in the face of COVID. Engineering crews also responded to the urgent need for a temporary men's shelter at two different locations; and,

WHEREAS, Madison Water Utility staff are devoted to fulfilling their mission - to supply high quality water for consumption and fire protection - regardless of circumstances, including on weekends and holidays, during frigid cold temperatures, searing summer heat, and a raging pandemic. Plus, employees of Madison Water Utility tirelessly and proudly kept pumps maintained and operating, repaired main breaks and failing valves, serviced meters and hydrants, replaced or installed new water mains, performed plumbing inspections, collected and tested water samples, and professionally responded to customer concerns all in a safe and socially distant manner; and,

WHEREAS, we recognize and appreciate the work of the many other City offices that, under challenging

circumstances, served the public without pause. These include the City Assessors Office, the Office of the City Attorney, Civil Rights, Common Council staff, Fleet Services, Finance, and Monona Terrace. All owe a debt of gratitude to the Human Resources Department, which repurposed hundreds of City workers to new tasks and the Employee Assistance Program, which provided high-quality support services to staff upon request; and,

WHEREAS; many of these hardworking private and public sector workers risked exposure to the virus in the performance of their duties, yet never paused in ensuring that essential and often life-sustaining services continued without interruption,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Common Council of the City of Madison express their sincere gratitude and appreciation to these dedicated workers and employees who are uplifting our community and our economy and positioning our City for a more rapid recovery by working tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to deliver essential services.