

Rancho Cucamonga pushes California governor to reopen more businesses

The city wants Victoria Gardens mall to reopen sooner rather than later



Street signs point to currently closed retail stores as an empty parking lot sits behind at Victoria Gardens Tuesday, April 7, 2020 in Rancho Cucamonga. Though not scheduled for reopening Friday, the city wants to work with county and state officials to try to get some of the restaurants and shops at the outdoor mall open, according to a resolution passed May 6, 2020. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

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PUBLISHED: May 7, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. | UPDATED: May 7, 2020 at 4:01 p.m.

The Rancho Cucamonga City Council voted Wednesday night, May 6, to send the governor and state Legislature a letter asking for a specific, multi-pronged plan allowing shut-down businesses to safely reopen by May 22.

Mayor L. Dennis Michael said the city will sign on to a letter to be sent Friday from the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors to leaders in Sacramento.

“This resolution, combined with all the cities (in the county), will be an opportunity for moving forward sooner rather than later,” Michael said at the meeting Wednesday.

Since Gov. Gavin Newsom issued the “stay-at-home” order on March 19, businesses deemed nonessential have been closed. As a result, more than 4 million people are

out of work, and cities across the state predict a combined \$7 billion in revenue losses over the next two years.

“We are hearing businesses say if I have to be shut down for two more months, I will not be able to reopen. Then the jobs go with them and those most vulnerable can’t pay rent, can’t get food or health care,” said City Manager John Gillison.

About 43% of the city’s revenue comes from sales tax, said Michael.

The city will join with the county in asking not just for a plan for reopening the state’s economy, but giving counties and regions the authority to adopt their own reopening schedules.

“We want to take over from the governor and have our own county working with our cities (on a reopening plan),” Hagman said in a phone interview Thursday. This mimics an April 27 request from 14 Northern California cities.

Newsom announced some lower-risk retail and hospitality businesses would be allowed to reopen for curbside pickup on Friday, an initial step. Bookstores, clothing stores, florists, sporting good stores and companies in the logistics industry are covered by the governor’s plan. Restaurant dining rooms, shopping malls and offices will remain closed, however.

On Thursday, Newsom said local governments could make bigger moves as long as infection numbers continue to decline and the area can meet certain testing and tracing requirements.

Hagman and Rancho Cucamonga want to see Stage 2 of the governor’s plan implemented faster to allow certain restaurants and facilities with outdoor seating to reopen for dine-in service. All servers would be required to wear masks and social distancing still must be practiced, Hagman said.

“This is a safe way for us to keep our residents protected, while letting them get back to their lives as safely as possible,” Hagman said.

The City Council asked Gillison to work with the county and state to allow the reopening of Victoria Gardens, a 147-acre outdoor mall with large department stores, smaller shops and eateries. The mall is closed, according to its website. Shopping mall openings are down the road, according to the governor’s plan.

“What can we do to get Victoria Gardens open?” asked Councilwoman Kristine Scott. “It is an open-air facility. It would be good to get the city working with county public health to get the next step moving forward.”

Gillison agreed, saying the outdoor mall is different than an enclosed mall. Outdoor dining could work with tables spaced according to social distancing guidelines with employees trained in safety protocols, he said.

“We could try to make that one of the early priorities,” he told the council.

Phone calls left with the management office of Victoria Gardens were not returned Thursday.

Also, the council wants to ask the county and state to allow the Sam and Alfreda Maloof Foundation For Arts and Crafts to resume workshops. Gillison said participants in woodworking classes normally wear masks and sit on benches about 6-feet apart.

The Newsom administration is tracking six indicators to determine when to allow local entities to further ease restrictions. They include the state’s ability to test people for COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, and trace who might have been exposed to it, and the capacity of hospitals to handle a potential surge of new cases.

Rancho Cucamonga has a COVID-19 case rate of 0.62 per 1,000 people, which is among the lowest in the county, the city report stated.

So far, Newsom has said the state is on track to meet its goals.

The Associated Press contributed to this article.