



## Agenda Item Staff Report

**To:** Honorable Mayor and Members of City Council  
*For the meeting of January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021*

**From:** Chris Constantin, City Manager

**Initiated by:** Brad McKinney, Assistant City Manager

**Subject:** Information on Establishing a Public Health Department

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### **SUMMARY**

The City has utilized the County of Los Angeles to provide Public Health Officer services since the incorporation of the City in 1960. At the December 8, 2020 City Council meeting, the Council requested information pertaining to what functions and/or burden would be delegated to the City if the City created its own Public Health Department, how the City currently pays for the County Public Health Officer services, and is there any interest from neighboring cities to create a Public Health Department.

### **BACKGROUND**

The City of San Dimas has utilized the County of Los Angeles to provide Public Health Officer services since the incorporation of the City in 1960. Due to the current pandemic and any future pandemics, at the December 8, 2020 City Council meeting, the Council requested information pertaining to what functions and/or burden would be delegated to the City if the City were to create its own Public Health Department, how the City currently pays for the County Public Health Officer services, and is there any activity from neighboring cities to create a Public Health Department.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The City of San Dimas adopted the County of Los Angeles Health Code and adopted San Dimas Municipal Code (SDMC) 8.04.030, which provides that the LA County Health Officer shall carry out and enforce all health code and public health matters in San Dimas. This is why the City is currently governed by County Health Officer orders.

San Dimas can elect to take back this authority from the County by adopting an ordinance. However, the earliest that can legally take effect is July 1, 2021. Additionally, taking back the responsibility from the County to carry out and enforce public health laws involves a state accreditation process and would involve a large expense for San Dimas, and likely the creation of a new City department to handle all of the numerous legal requirements and duties of a public health officer.

In an effort to provide more information from a legal perspective about what a health officer's duties are, the document attached to this report lists every time the term "health officer" is used in California state laws, as of 2018. Next to each citation is a summary of the text and the type of statute, including "Duty", "Reporting", "Authority", "Consultation", "Approval". This provides a sense of the responsibilities San Dimas would undertake if the City took the Health Officer authority from the County.

As stated above, creating a public health department comes with a great expense. The County is currently funded to provide Health Officer services to the City through a direct assessment to our residents and businesses via the property tax roll.

Our residents and businesses are assessed a 1% property tax on the assessed value of the home, building, and/or land at the time of purchase and any annual increase based on revised assessed valuation are limited to no more than 2% per Prop 13. Of the 1% collected, 26.44% of those collections are distributed to the County of Los Angeles to be used according to their approved budget uses.

The County of Los Angeles 2020-21 budget lists a number of services including Public Assistance, Public Protection, General Services, Recreation & Cultural, Health & Sanitation, and others. The Health & Sanitation services, which encompasses the Department of Public Health makes up 32% of the County budget.

Of the \$5,611,950,646 of assessed valuation of San Dimas properties, roughly \$14,837,998 is appropriated to LA County for their services. Based on the Counties budget, roughly \$4,748,459 of taxes assessed on San Dimas property owners is used for Health and Sanitation services.

According to our Property and Sales Tax consultants, it is highly unlikely that if the City were to create its own Health Department, it would have an effect on the amount of property tax that is distributed to the County for services. If the City were to create our own Department of Public Health it would have to be funded by the General Fund and or Federal/State grants.

In an effort to get additional information on the funding requirements associated with having a Public Health Officer/Department, staff contacted the City of Pasadena. According to Pasadena, their pre-pandemic Health Officer/Department budget was roughly \$15.5M, which is almost all competitive grant funded. Pasadena indicated that they leverage other City departments to fulfill the obligations mandated for a Health Department/Health Officer. These departments include their Police, Fire, and Paramedic services, which all provide in-kind contributions to the overall Pasadena Health Department and its Public Health Officer. Pasadena also indicated that due to the

competitive grants required to fund the department, the City has dedicated City Attorneys, City Accountants, and Nurses.

Although the financial obligations are not the only concerns when looking at creating a Public Health Department, they are very significant. Due to most Public Health Funds coming from grants, elimination of available grants or non-awarded grant because of the competitive nature would put the City in a position to have to choose what services to provide to the community. Given the available City resources, funding a City operated Public Health Department would be mandatory, which could leave other non-mandated services and programs subject to less funding.

Staff reached out to the City of West Covina per discussion by the City Council regarding news that they were looking into creating their own Public Health Officer. The City of West Covina has entered into a six-month agreement with Valley Physicians Medical Group Inc. for consulting services related to exploring options for establishing a local health department. West Covina is in the initial stages of discussion, and the agreement is being offered at no cost by the Medical Group. Staff also contacted the cities of La Verne, Claremont, Glendora, and Pomona who are all interested in the West Covina analysis. Staff plans to remain in discussion with the City of West Covina who has offered to provide updates on the findings and status.

**RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the City Council discuss and provide any further direction to staff.

Respectfully submitted,



Brad McKinney  
Assistant City Manager

Attachment: Health Officers in the California Code