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# **NEWPORT BEACH**

## **City Council Staff Report**

July 28, 2020  
Agenda Item No. 16

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Grace K. Leung, City Manager - 949-644-3001,  
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**TITLE:** Temporary Adjustment to the City Council Seating Arrangement Due to Social Distancing Guidelines

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**ABSTRACT:**

On March 15, 2020, the City Manager issued a Proclamation of Emergency in response to the global COVID-19 outbreak that was ratified by the City Council on March 18, 2020. Since that time, the City has been operating under the emergency order. During this emergency, the City is following State and County orders and guidelines, as well as industry guidance in its operations. In order to allow for social distancing between Council members, the seating arrangement during City Council meetings must be adjusted during this time period.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- b) Waive City Council Policy A-1: *City Council – Seating Arrangement for City Council* and determine the method to rotate Council Member seats, or other adjustment to ensure social distancing, until such time as the emergency is over.

**FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:**

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

**DISCUSSION:**

City Council Policy A-1 establishes the seating arrangements for City Council and states "Following each Council election, members of the City Council shall be seated at the City Council table with senior Council Members having first choice of seats. The Mayor, however; shall be seated in the center of the City Council table and the Mayor Pro Tempore shall always be seated immediately next to and to the right of the Mayor. In the event of equal seniority among members of the City Council, selection of City Council seats shall be made by the Council Member who received the highest margin of victory percentage in the most recent election."

Due to social distancing requirements during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the City Council has had to distance themselves from each other. To accomplish this, five City Council members continue to sit at the dais and two City Council members now sit at the staff table. The staff table does not have the same amenities and technology as the dais does, specifically individual volume controls which can improve the sound quality for City Council members.

Prior to the City Council meeting of July 14, 2020, Council Member Herdman and Council Member Dixon have been seated at the staff table, as this accommodated the existing City Council seating arrangement. On July 14, 2020, Council Member Joy Brenner and Council Member Herdman sat at the staff table.

It appears it may be several more months until we can return to all City Council members seated on the dais. In order to provide equity in seating and dais amenities, the City Council may want to consider a rotation of seating assignments. One option is to keep the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem in their respective seats and the remaining Council Members move to their left each meeting. Rotations can be accommodated in any manner the City Council determines.

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment).

**NOTICING:**

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).