DATE: April 21, 2020
TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Cindy Chavez, Supervisor
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Recovery Public Process

RECOMMENDED ACTION
Approve recommendation that the Board of Supervisors convene and lead a public process to receive input from stakeholders and the public to inform approaches to safely reopen our community during the next phases of the COVID-19 response. (Chavez)

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS
Crafting and implementing an effective strategy and approach to leading Santa Clara County through the next stages of the pandemic response will ensure public funds are expended effectively to address the needs of the community. Contract costs to engage IEM through its existing contract with San Mateo County will likely be eligible for reimbursement from the State or federal government.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION
Because the COVID-19 crisis is one that has impacted the entire County of Santa Clara it is important that the County lead the response and recovery.

The County of Santa Clara has been very successful in convening hearings including panels of experts and stakeholders as well as residents, clients, and employees to inform the Board and the County’s response to the needs of the community. Examples include the special hearings held following the federal election in 2016 and hearings that have informed the Board’s policies on addressing surveillance, privacy and data security, homelessness, bail reform, and intimate partner violence.

Convening similar hearings during Board of Supervisors meetings will provide opportunities for the full Board of Supervisors to receive information and testimony from the public and stakeholders. The information gathered will serve as an effective means for the County to
craft and implement a strategy as we move through the next phases of the pandemic response. Panelists will include but not be limited to the Public Health Officer, local governments as well as the business, education, nonprofits, and labor communities. The panels will address issues including public safety, education, economic stabilization and development, and key services provided by the County during and beyond the recovery.

In order to not over-burden County staff, and to leverage information already gathered by IEM on behalf of San Mateo that is applicable regionally, it is recommended that our County partner with San Mateo County in its engagement with IEM. IEM is a known expert in the development of recovery plans by government entities that are informed by public input that are consistent with FEMA framework and regulations. San Mateo County has communicated its willingness to allow Santa Clara County to piggyback on its existing contract with IEM. In a manner consistent with the procurement authority delegated during the COVID-19, contracting quickly with IEM is prudent in order to access the relevant lessons learned already by San Mateo County and IEM, and because time is of the essence as our County begins to plan for and enter the next phase(s) of the response to the pandemic.

The Board of Supervisors will adopt the framework established by Governor Newsom as we develop and implement a recovery plan to move through the stages of the pandemic response. Doing so will align the actions of the County with those of the state to maximize reimbursement and provide more clear information to the public of the principles being followed in the state and local recovery efforts.

The conditions Governor Newsom indicates that the focus should be on achieving and maintaining until immunity is achieved are as follows:

- Ensure our ability to care for the sick within our hospitals;
- Prevent infection in people who are at high risk for severe disease;
- Build the capacity to protect the health and well-being of the public; and
- Reduce social, emotional and economic disruptions

The six indicators described by the Governor necessary to be considered related to modifying any stay-at-home or other public health orders are as follows:

- The ability to monitor and protect our communities through testing, contact tracing, isolating, and supporting those who are positive or exposed;
- The ability to prevent infection in people who are at risk for more severe COVID-19;
- The ability of the hospital and health systems to handle surges;
- The ability to develop therapeutics to meet the demand;
- The ability for businesses, schools, and childcare facilities to support physical distancing; and
- The ability to determine when to reinstitute certain measures, such as the stay-at-home orders, if necessary.

Through the existing Policy Committee structure in place, each Supervisor will continue to
lead the County’s role and activities as they relate to the COVID-19 recovery plan. Health and Hospital under Supervisor Simitian’s leadership is paramount given the medical nature of the crisis. The threat to the County’s budget the crisis has created requires active leadership through Supervisor Cortese and the Finance and Government Operations Committee. Similarly, the intersection of the authority of the Public Health Officer and the enforcement of the orders by law enforcement as well as the impact of COVID on our custody settings both require strong leadership of the Public Safety and Justice Committee by Supervisor Ellenberg. As food access and housing are emerging key issues related to the response, Supervisor Wasserman and the Housing, Land Use and Transportation Committee’s role will expand as we move towards the next phase on the response. And, the Children, Seniors and Families Committee will continue its work focusing on dependency, senior services, and child support. A process that engages outside professional services and leverages existing committee leadership is a means to move forward without relying solely on the administration.

The engagement with IEM will include the following deliverables to inform and support the panel discussions before the Board of Supervisors, and the eventual consideration of recovery plan(s). This work will also provide the Board with important information to share with other governmental entities and stakeholder groups as they craft their recovery plan(s).

a. IEM will conduct numerous interviews with individuals and groups representing the various stakeholders of the County, including but not limited to the list below.

- City Councils
- School Boards
- Special Districts
- Private Sector
- Non-profits
- Labor
- Faith Community
- Civil Rights Groups including disability advocacy organizations
- A process for individual members of the community to provide input through multiple communication channels including email, surveys, and structured public comment in addition to public comment during the Board panel presentations.

b. IEM will identify and integrate existing County initiatives and programs that complement the components of the recovery plan. The Office of the County executive will be charged with collaborating with IEM to provide this information and describe the various initiatives, departments and functions of the County government to ensure the recovery plan builds on existing County functions.
c. IEM will combine the information collected through items a and b to facilitate and support panelist presentations to the full Board of Supervisors and a well-crafted recovery plan strategy document. This planning may include identifying key individuals whose testimony and presentations at Board meetings will inform the Board’s discussions and deliberations regarding recovery planning. Smaller groups of the various stakeholder groups may be convened by IEM to synthesize testimony and information.

The recovery plan developed will serve as an effective means for the County to move through the next phases of the pandemic response to ensure the health, welfare and public safety of Santa Clara County.

In order to support the process as outlined in this referral, it is also recommended that the Board of Supervisors designate two Board members to serve as the ad hoc COVID-19 Subcommittee. The subcommittee will receive updates from the County Executive, the Public Health Officer, and the head of the Emergency Operations Center. This is necessary to ensure the Board of Supervisors is regularly updated on the status of the pandemic response and development of the recovery plan. Meetings will be scheduled and held per the subcommittee’s determination, typically three times a week. The subcommittee would consist of the chair of the Health and Hospital Committee given the nature of the emergency and the response, as well as the president of the Board of Supervisors. Between Board meetings and Committee meetings, communication between the Subcommittee and the administration will support the process as outlined in this document, serve as a sounding board for staff, and strengthen the relationship between County operations and the EOC.