



R-19

Date: May 17, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Council

From: Councilwoman Cindy Allen, Second District
Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, Ninth District
Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District

Subject: Review of Food Facility Health Inspections Process

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Request the City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services Department to report back to the City Council within 45 days to provide an overview of food safety program education and enforcement at food facilities and to propose recommendations to substantially address concerns raised by local restaurant operators and residents.

DISCUSSION:

Public health and safety is the pre-eminent priority, and regular spot inspections of food facilities in the City are necessary to maintain public health and confidence in our restaurants, caterers, and other food facilities. This item does not seek to diminish the authority or importance of the public health concern. What this item seeks to accomplish is to communicate the Health and Human Services Department's proactive, educational, and professional approach to gaining compliance with public health concerns within food facilities in our city. These operators are small business owners, families, community partners, and donors who support youth sports leagues and neighborhood associations, and their innovations in food and continued presence in Long Beach are helping drive the City's economic and tourism resurgence.

Over the past two years restaurants and caterers in Long Beach and across this Country have suffered challenge after challenge, and the situation has not returned to pre-COVID-19 conditions, nor is there any assurance that it will. As the City embarks on a new regulatory process regarding mobile food preparation through the use of food trucks and sidewalk vending carts, it is critical that local food facility operators and City regulatory staff are treated with the dignity and respect they are due. In fact, clarifying the City's compliance approach with regard to brick-and-mortar operations may help provide positive direction to the approaches to be taken towards compliance for mobile operations as well.

City Council offices have heard from numerous restaurants, cafes, and other operators about the difficulties they face in hiring knowledgeable staff, training them, and retaining



them. Other factors certainly are predominantly at play causing these difficulties. Sharing the City's gentle and compassionate approach to health and safety code compliance and reserving health permit suspensions for only the imminent health hazard cases would likely help relieve at least some of the stress from food facility business owners.

This matter was reviewed by Grace H. Yoon on May 4, 2022.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The recommendation requests the City Manager to work with the Health and Human Services Department to provide an overview of food safety program education and enforcement at food facilities and to propose recommendations to substantially address concerns raised by local restaurant operators and residents. The requested action is anticipated to have a moderate impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and is expected to have a moderate impact on existing City Council priorities. There is no local job impact associated with the recommendation.

EQUITY LENS STATEMENT:

Staff will consider issues of equity and access with any program proposals or presentations brought forward to ensure the City's commitment for everyone reaching their highest level of health and potential for a successful life, regardless of background, neighborhood, or identity.