

May 8th Virtual Roundtable Discussion

Questions provided to the participants:

1. What was/is your biggest challenge as it relates to the pandemic and what are some effective ways you are meeting that challenge?
2. How is your community or agency partnering with other communities or agencies?
3. Do you have any plans in place for the easing of shelter in place orders?

Participants (in alphabetical order by community/agency):

1. Steve Scott, City Council, Arden Hills
2. Randy Gustafson, Mayor, Falcon Heights
3. Mary Gaasch, Mayor, Lauderdale
4. Marylee Abrams, Mayor, Maplewood
5. Sue Vento, Met Council, District 11
6. Mike Lund, Government Relations, Metro Cities
7. Sherry Gunn, City Council, Moundsview
8. Gary Meehlhause, City Council, Moundsview
9. Carol Mueller, Mayor, Moundsview
10. MarreJo Sager, Board Member, Moundsview Public Schools
11. Keith Stachowski, Parks and Recreation Coordinator, North St. Paul
12. Connie Hayes, Superintendent, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District
13. Mary Jo McGuire, Commissioner, Ramsey County
14. Victoria Reinhart, Commissioner, Ramsey County
15. Jason Etten, City Council, Roseville
16. Lisa Laliberte, City Council, Roseville
17. Dan Roe, Mayor, Roseville
18. Pat Trudgeon, City Manager, Roseville
19. Sue Denkinger, City Council, Shoreview
20. Jessica Kopp, Board Member, St. Paul Public Schools
21. Jan Jenson, City Council, St. Anthony

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Meeting Notes

A. Steve Scott, City Council, Arden Hills

- a. Have cancelled their recreation programs for spring and summer.

B. Randy Gustafson, Mayor, Falcon Heights

- a. Biggest challenge is how to keep city operations going. Have staff coming in to the office in intervals as needed.
- b. Cancelled summer programming. Not having a recreation program has a negative impact on citizens.
- c. Did a 4 hour workshop with City Council – longest zoom call Randy has ever done! 10 items that needed to get done. Looking forward to not having to do virtual calls.

C. Mary Gaasch, Mayor, Lauderdale

- a. Biggest challenge has been moving quickly and adjusting while balancing our community needs for services and keeping staff safe
 - i. Have done a good job responding, with technology needed for working remotely
- b. Continue to offer DMV services. Have a drop-box outside of City Hall. Can be done by staff in a safe manner – glass partitions, social distancing, etc.
- c. Council voted for 3 big road projects, so we want to keep things moving as this will create jobs, but need to do this while recognizing our staff has needs. Haven't had to lay off anyone, for example
- d. "Running a meeting from your dining room is very artificial." Difficult to create that 'rhythm' in a virtual meeting.

D. Sue Vento, Met Council, District 11

- a. Metro transit has altered its hours in order to fit needs of essential employees and their transportation needs getting to and from work. Metromobility has altered its functions to include transporting groceries for individuals.
- b. Continue to have regular staff meetings.
- c. Staff in transportation and wastewater treatment aren't able to work from home, obviously, and that's where the COVID numbers for Metro Council employees has come from. This is a great concern.
 - i. We continue to get regular updates on how many people are being diagnosed with COVID, and consequently, having colleagues quarantine and get tested to protect themselves.
 - ii. It's been a steep learning curve, but the Council did have plans from the last pandemic to assist in their work. Several staff has been working directly with Gov Walz staff. It's been an 'all hands on deck' collaborative effort.

E. Mike Lund, Government Relations, Metro Cities

- a. Rhythm is also jostled. As a lobbying organization, a lot of work is face-to-face at the Capital. Switching to a remote mode has complicated things – with its uncertainty, lack of transparency.
- b. With regard to city challenges, a survey was sent out to city members. Received good responses. Questions were asked about specific costs and what members need – answers revolved around IT costs and equipment, PPE, supplies, extra cleaning, etc.
- c. The biggest challenge financially is the revenue losses. The CARES Act funds only covers direct COVID costs this calendar year, not revenue losses.

- i. There is movement at the federal level around an additional package that may be able to cover some of those revenue losses.
- d. Would be happy to take back any questions to Executive Director Patricia Nauman. There is a summary document Mike put together with the survey responses he can send.

F. Carol Mueller, Mayor, Mound View

- a. Mounds View biggest challenge is keeping their police, first responders & essential personnel healthy in order to continue to provide health & safety services.
 - i. An increase in drug overdoses & domestic violence calls are being seen, as well as fights breaking out, some with weapons. A fight broke out and multiple shots were discharged, but luckily, only a building was hit.
 - ii. Are practicing social distancing as much as possible & using PPE, which has been difficult to get.
- b. Have staggered shifts & rotations for Public Works & Police Departments. The City has purchased laptops so those of our staff that can work from home.
- c. Declared a state of emergency.
 - i. City Council & Commissions have met virtually and all votes are done by roll call. Have purchased laptops so staff can work from home.
- d. The City Council is in the process of approving a sick leave 'bank' policy, allowing a deficit balance of up to 80 hours as the pandemic is worked through.
- e. No revenue coming in from park and rec. We taped off our playgrounds, but parents have still allowed their children to play. We have discussed putting up appropriate signage & reopening our playgrounds, with parents responsible for sanitation & social distancing. Don't have the staff to sanitize this equipment.
- f. Have delayed the hire of seasonal workers.
- g. Their team is staggered, working in shifts.

G. Keith Stachowski, Parks and Recreation Coordinator, North St. Paul

- a. Most Parks & Rec staff working from home. Have a skeleton crew working at city hall - public works/utilities. Just like other cities, working in intervals – longer hours, less days. Police and Fire Dept. remain fully staffed.
 - i. Haven't had any scares yet. Have a larger elderly population who prefer in-person interactions – don't have computers and access to online services. North St. Paul has a program where residents can put bills and permits in the mailbox or meet someone at the door.
- b. Parks are closed, buildings closed, but trails are open. Receiving a lot of question from youth groups who would love to use fields and parks.
 - i. At earliest, looking at mid-June to open fields for adult athletics. Many youth programs throwing in towel early.
 - ii. Discussing whether to open their beach system.

H. Connie Hayes, Superintendent, Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District

- a. Have some very unique hands-on challenges. Have 3 main service delivery areas:
 - i. Tech center in Century College allowing high school students to receive education certificates and job-ready skills. Students attend for 1.5 hours/day.
 - ii. ALC Programs at 3 different sites. Assist high school students who cannot thrive in a regular high school environment.
 - iii. Federal Setting Level 4 Special Education Program
- b. Hands-on Assessments challenges. Trying to have students come to a smaller site rather than on campus at Century College.

- c. ALC students – they do have a lot of homeless students, as well as EL students.
 - d. NE Metro Schools’ membered districts are asking them to increase services this summer. An enrollment increase has posed a challenge. Has required additional purchases of laptop computers.
 - e. Biggest challenge – Federal Setting level 4 Special Education Programs. For students who need to be at a separate site for the whole school year. Need extensive services. May have serious challenges in behavior due to mental illness.
 - i. Goal is to help these young people deescalate and cope with their challenges – family challenges, behavior challenges. This program has largely been interrupted. Many families have said they simply won’t participate in the education programs.
 - ii. Educators trying to connect with families every day, but were not prepared as to how to manage this.
 - iii. A big worry is these students falling off the edge and their education level not recovering.
 - f. Creating mental health challenges for staff. Connie has taken over role as cheerleader, providing encouragement to staff.
 - g. Economically: Have kept staff on through the end of this school year. Unsure about fall and the state budget.
 - i. Worry about losing staff and having to fill positions. The learning environment requires unique training for staff. If staff numbers drop, this paves way for injury to students. May see a dramatic rise when school begins again.
- I. Mary Jo McGuire, Commissioner, Ramsey County**
- a. Biggest challenge is keeping the county running with all the services that Ramsey County provides. Immediately went into a “how will we do our work?” mode, in which departments determined whether employees work in-person (safely) or stay at home.
 - i. They knew being in this ‘mode’ was going to be for the long haul - wouldn’t last just 2-4 weeks, but 2-4 months. Now it’s 4-6 months.
 - b. Biggest issues are food insecurity, housing and homelessness, and jobs. These are a challenge because at the same time services need to be provided, the least revenue is being received.
 - c. A big question is how do we mobilize who we need to work with? There’s a lot of groups that Ramsey County needs to ally with: RCLLG, Suburban Ramsey Collaborative, Suburban Ramsey Emergency Coalition, etc. Many groups Ramsey County needs to ally with. Many people asking Ramsey County what they can do to help. Ramsey County appreciates all of their partners
 - i. Public policy action groups and committees have been formed to engage the public and Ramsey County’s partners.
 - ii. Just like all the other communities, Ramsey County is learning how to be most efficient – be quickly but safe – for their citizens.
 - d. Focus on how technology will improve their organization. Using headsets for their board meetings.
 - e. Have series of town meetings where community can give input. Really trying to engage cities and school districts.
- J. Pat Trudgeon, City Manager, Roseville**
- a. Immediacy of decisions is the biggest challenge; the dynamic changes so quickly.

- i. “We are a very public-facing organization; we welcome people in, we want people to see us, to participate in our events and use our equipment... and we had to immediately change our mind-set there.”
 - b. Roseville able to pivot pretty quickly with technology, but still was a transformation.
 - c. Roseville has been able to still provide core services revolving around public safety, providing building permits, etc. Even providing non-core services, such as having a license center, a drop-box, even providing 1:1 service (making sure to limit the number of people in).
 - d. Even though most are working from home, still able to provide core services. Have a great leadership team, have met every day since March. Painful at the beginning but with support are getting through it.
- K. Sue Denkinger, City Council, Shoreview**
- a. The community center and city hall will remain closed. They are following a phase-opening approach provided by MDH in terms of planning for reopening.
 - b. Have not cancelled their Summer Discovery Program yet, which provides full-day activities for K-8 youth.
 - c. Staff is reviewing ways in which social distancing and safe public health can be addressed when the community center and city hall reopen. Community center is the hub of Shoreview.
 - i. City staff working from home. Meeting have been virtual since April. Public utilities and other critical responsibilities covered by staff, but shift times are staggered.
 - d. City is looking at establishing a loan fund for small businesses impacted by Pandemic. Also looking at a potential emergency rental assistant program if the need is imminent – in its initial discussion stages now.
- L. Jessica Kopp, Board Member, St. Paul Public Schools**
- a. They came into school closures off of a teacher’s union strike, and there has been some emotional and practical challenges as a result.
 - b. Distance learning is switching their delivery model to children in classroom to children in homes.
 - c. They are fortunate to be a 1:1 iPad district (all students K-12 have an iPad)
 - i. Has been a steep learning curve for educators in transferring content onto online platforms.
 - d. Provide breakfast and lunch to thousands of students. The program has evolved from a pick-up site to door-to-door delivery using their school-bus drivers. Great way to repurpose staff roles.
 - i. Paraprofessionals have been a part of delivering meals.
 - e. Technology Distribution: Have curb-side tech support so families can drive up to a window, hand off their iPad, and receive tech support.
 - f. Graduation is a huge challenge – how do you make that meaningful? Working on a virtual graduation. Won’t be everything people want; working hard to make it meaningful.
 - g. Looking to make decisions about summer and fall in order to give families time to adjust. Considering hybrid models. Receiving daily/weekly direction from MDE and the Governor. Planning ahead is a challenge
 - h. Upside: Their board and staff is more connected, talking more often in small groups, helping and sharing information. “I think we’re going to come out of this better at our jobs.”

M. Jenson, City Council, St. Anthony

- a. Have kept city council, public works, and municipal liquor stores open.
 - i. Innovative Disinfectant usage has dramatically assisted in keeping these places open. A paint sprayer is used to effectively disinfect areas – can even be used for fire trucks. Doesn't damage electronics. St. Anthony Fire Dept. learned this method from the Tulsa, OK Fire Dept.
- b. Have put up glass walls in offices to keep germs curbed as well.
- c. Parks are kept open but encouraging social distancing. Residents are adhering to the signage – St. Anthony Police did an audit to confirm this.
 - i. Park shelters are closed, but bathrooms are open and sanitized regularly.
 - ii. Spring sports cancelled – might go into summer. Have 'Music in the Park' event that was just cancelled. Village Fest, in the first week of August, will likely be cancelled.

Comments/Questions:

RCLLG Survey

- On the RCLLG website, there is a survey asking members to clarify what they think the organization is/how it should function. Will help ensure RCLLG's focus going forward is in the right direction.
- **Lisa Laliberte, City Council, Roseville** – Our goal is to deliver connection, shared information, and collaboration to our members. By answering the questions on the survey, you will help formulate the priorities that form RCLLG's collaborative work. This helps shape RCLLG's strategic plan and goal.

MN Air National Guard Flyover

Steve Scott, City Council, Arden Hills

- Wanted to ask if we had the opportunity to watch the fly-bys that were done by the Minnesota Air National Guard. A tribute to health-care professionals who continue to risk their lives on a daily basis.
 - The pilot who flew Thunderbird No. 5 was a woman pilot. 32-year old Major Michelle Curran is a 2009 graduate from St. Thomas University.
 - This was only the fifth time in the team history's a woman has flown.

Homelessness

Marylee Abrams, Mayor, Maplewood

- What are everyone's thoughts on the homelessness crisis? What kinds of things can we do and do better to collaborate?
 - Safety nets just aren't set-up for homeless. A sports facility in Eau Claire County, Wisconsin was opened to assist. There's just not enough shelters available unfortunately. Some have turned people away.
 - We're hearing that the county are opening up hotels. May not be exactly helpful, as businesses might not be willing to open up their spaces – it's a short term fix. There's homeless pockets in each community. What should we be exploring for a bigger solution? Can the County help?

Victoria Reinhart, Commissioner, Ramsey County

- The issue is not new but we are not paying attention to it. We have opened up temporary housing, working w/ a number of nonprofits. Hotels have been pretty open but this is just a temporary fix. Keeping in mind social distancing and sanitary conditions. It's an issue that communities are struggling with.
- There is a subcommittee on Homelessness working through issues.

Mary Jo McGuire, Commissioner, Ramsey County

- We are working with the Gov's office on this issue. We are in many conversations with the Governor on this issue. The legislature is aware and discussing how can we work on this together, but we need our partners (each community) helping with this.
- What We Can Do: Call legislatures and let them know how important this is for funding.
- Food Insecurity: Many communities have food shelves – Mounds View Ralph Reeder can always use food and cash donations, as well as volunteers. Spread the word or do something yourself, such as volunteering.

Jan Jenson, RCLLG President – Closing Comments