

East African Community Briefing, Thursday May 21, 10:00AM

PURPOSE: The City will share important COVID-19 information with and gather input from community members, leaders and stakeholders about their communities' needs and priorities so that we can respond appropriately and ensure that our communities know where to access the correct information. This input will also shape how the City shares information with the public.

CITY'S COMMITMENT: To ensure that community leaders and organizations know where to access the proper and most up to date information related to COVID-19.

City update of COVID-19 response

Minneapolis Health Department

Commissioner Gretchen Musicant

- Thank you and happy to be here.
- This is an important conversation from our prospective, the way this virus is playing out in various communities It is so important for us to understand the similarities and differences and approaches we take to help people be safe.
- We have been working over the past couple weeks with health care providers, community representatives and operators of the some of the high-rise housing in the Cedar Riverside area to improve accessibility to resources.
- I know, there is great deal of interest in testing and we trying to make that happen as soon as possible.
- We are aware that Eid is around the corner when people are accustomed to gathering
- we are working with malls to make sure that those are safe environment as people go back to do shopping due to the change in governor's order. We are now Stay Safe.
- It is important that changes of messages around the governor's order need to get to people.
- Also, later today the mayor will announce and executive order to masks and we are trying to make sure that proprietaries of indoor spaces have the resources and knowledge of the executive order.
- There is a mask drive on Monday (Memorial Day) where fire station will be collecting hand-made masks and we will be distributing among communities.
- Thanks for being here together.

Heather Gillich (heather.gillich@minneapolismn.gov)

- All questions or concerns related to COVID can be sent directly to email set up by health department Covid19@minneapolismn.gov We are taking requests for items including masks.
- Forms for requests can be found at <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/community>
- Health department currently has an open application for a program For Safe Routes to Health Foods, focusing on increasing access to health food, transportation and safety for families and individuals. We have funding at amounts of \$2000, \$5000 and \$8000.
- More information here: call to take questions on Thurs May 21st at 1 PM: (Dial in at: 1-877-685-5350 and enter passcode: 6126733557). The RFA is due at 12pm Friday, June 5th via the City's [eSupplier](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/finance/procurement/index.htm) portal: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/finance/procurement/index.htm>
- RFA information and the links to apply can be found here: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/health/GrantsRFPs/index.htm>

Questions/Answers

Question:

My name is Mustafa with Black Immigrant Collective. Is there an outbreak in Cedar Riverside? And what are all hearing?

Answer: (Luisa- epidemiologist at city of Minneapolis Health Department

- We have seen several cases in Cedar Riverside both in Riverside Plaza and MPHA buildings in the area. It is highly densely populated area and it is hard for people to isolate and distance. We have in the area total of 97 cases in those buildings.
- My contact for follow up questions: luisa.pessoa-brandao@minneapolismn.gov
- You can also use the COVID-19 email address: COVID19@minneapolismn.gov

Question: I am also Black Immigrant Collective. Is there any support for those tested positive to quarantine outside of their homes? And what does that look like so that they put rest of their families at risk.

Answer:

- (Gretchen): We have been working in collaboration with Hennepin county on the kinds of support available when people are asked to isolate or quarantine. Hennepin county's housing support is exhausted by the homeless. For those who have a home of some sort, we have set of advice that we give to folks. This happens when we do the contact tracing.
- (Luisa): We walk people through if there is a situation where there is only bathroom for the family to assign one adult person that cleans. Identify one person helping the case and everyone else tries to separate them in the home. It is a challenge.
- (Gretchen): There other supports for people who difficult to access medications because of the need to stay home and we are working with Hennepin County to make this a possible approach.

Question (by chat): Curious if there is data desegregation on the demographics of impact on immigrants.

Answer:

- Luisa: we have some data that would allow us to do some desegregation and are looking at the best way to provide it given that it is only available for those people with whom an interview has been completed. Feel free to reach out to me by email.

Community Planning and Economic Development Department (CPED)

Gap Funding—rental assistance

Andrea Brennan: Director of Housing Policy and Development, CPED (andrea.brennan@minneapolismn.gov)

- One of the city's housing response for the Covid-19 was to create Emergency housing assistance program. That program went live, and we began receiving applications on April 22. We launched an outreach campaign to get the word out.
- Application period: April 22-April 27. Application methods: 1) online application through our portal; 2) we also provided an option to leave voice mail messages in various languages and we had folks lined up to retrieve those messages and call people back in their own languages and fill out application manually.
- Received almost 8,000 applications for emergency housing assistance. The amount available was \$3 million and estimated that we can serve up to 1,500 household.
- We found duplicates in the applications and people who did not reside in Minneapolis. The numbers of actual applicants went down to 6,500.
- We assigned random number to this list and we are working on the first 1,500 household. We are making referrals to our partners.
- They will get in touch with people and collect documentation required for the program.
- Partners will determine eligibility and send their approvals to the city for approvals.
- We began those approvals last week and checks will be going out starting this week.
- We will continue the process until all funding is depleted.
- People will receive communications regarding their eligibility via emails or mail.
- Also note that Hennepin county has approved new housing emergency program with \$15 million from CARES Act.
- City housing fund is focused on rent payment and NOT mortgage payments.

Question/Answer

Question: We are receiving some tenants are being harassed by landlords. What is the city doing about it?

Answer: (Andrea): City supports Mid MN Legal Aid and anyone having an issue is encouraged to contact them. See here: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/housing-coronavirus>

Question: How many months of rental assistance will people receive? And were the landlords notified since renters are getting harassed as mentioned by someone earlier?

Answer: Total amount for eligible household \$1,500 and if the household is large then it will be \$2000. Landlord will only know about it when the tenant receives the funding. This funding could be for any missed months or the current one. Additional questions on gapfund for housing can be directed here: gapfund.housing@minneapolismn.gov

Gap Funding—Small Business

Miles Mercer, CPED, Manager of Business Development

- My team administer Lending programs for small businesses.
- Program that was part of Gap Funding, the city's forgivable loan program to provide immediate relief to small business. These micro loans ranged from \$5,000 -10,000.
- We realized that there was other financial support from various governmental levels and we thought about ways to fill the gap.
- Since we knew we could not help everyone, we structured our no-interest program on certain geographic area of the city. These were areas that had economic challenges even before the covid-19.
- To ensure this support goes to the smallest and most vulnerable business we have, we put some requirements on business sizes.
- Self-employed people were also given an opportunity to access those loans.
- Approx. 1,200 applications received. We are reviewing documentation to verify business revenues.
- We have assigned random numbers and will process applications till all funding available is depleted.
- 119 borrowers have been notified that they received the loans.
- We are working on the final group and we believe we will be able to fund 40-50 more borrowers until we reach our budget.
- We also notified majority of those who were not selected.
- Small Business team can help answer questions: contact the City's Small Business Team at 612-673-2499 or smallbusiness@minneapolismn.gov
- Also note Hennepin County Small Business Relief fund:
<https://www.hennepin.us/economic-development/-/media/economic-development/docs/2-2020-05-18-HC-SBR-SEE-Guidelines-for-translation-NEW-DATES.pdf>

Regulatory Services

Robert Sayers, fire inspector and tenant navigator (robert.sayers@minneapolismn.gov)

- We address aggressive tactics and retaliations some of the landlords use.
- To clarify, it is still legal for landlord and property owners to request and require rent payment. No laws currently that protect you from payments. However, we encourage people to contact Mid MN Legal Aid if landlords use those tactics.
- I would like you to know that our role in the city is to fight for tenant rights. We would like to humanize our process with a goal to ensure that people are treated with dignity and respect.

- Often, we intervene with retaliatory landlord and tenants and we often find resolution to the matter as third party.
- Contact numbers for concerns about aggressive landlords:
 - 311 (City of Minneapolis)
 - Home Line (free legal advice): 612-728-5767
 - Mid Minnesota Legal aid: 612-332-1441
 - Minnesota Attorney General: 612-296-3353

Facilitator acknowledged presence of CMs Schroeder and Fletcher and staff from the mayor's office.

CM Jeremy Schroeder—Ward 11: I want to thank everyone for being on the call. This is something that help us get honest feedback on how lives are now and what the city can be doing to assist. COVID-19 is affecting everyone but it is hitting our immigrant community and seniors especially hard. The city is dedicated to coming out of this pandemic in a way for everybody that builds up the work the city is already doing. And I want to thank everyone on the call and hope you stay safe. jeremy.schroeder@minneapolismn.gov

CM Fletcher Ward 3: Echo comments of CM Schroeder and wants to ensure community has time to speak (steve.fletcher@minneapolismn.gov)

Community partners update/concerns re COVID-19 response

- **Comment:** Amira Adawe: Commissioner Musicant trying to work with community. Businesses asked to come up with preparedness plan. City and State could provide support/esp. for enforcement. Ideas for strategies. There is no active enforcement—it is complaint based.
- **Response:**
 - Mayor Frey passing a measure to require use of masks indoors
 - Mohamed Ismael—CPED Business Licensing division—encourage people to call 311 to receive business licensing support
- **Comment:** Girma, Oromo Community (tokuma6@hotmail.com, 952-297-4254): appreciate this event. It is informational and helpful. We provide food to community and are interested in working with Minneapolis. When we heard reports that Oromo are not getting good service, I was encouraged that information about the housing support was made available in Oromo—that phones answered in Oromo. However we did apply for the recent grant through Department of Health and were not approved-want to understand why we have been denied grant. Also apart from Legal aid, 311 is there any other # to call for legal assistance?
- **Response:** will make a connection with Health Department on grants question and will follow up with you directly regarding legal support.
- **Comment:** Additional resource—Hennepin County Office of Multicultural Services. Resource helpline available from 8AM-8PM, 7 days a week. Call 612-348-3000. Working with all residents of Hennepin County. We provide essential services to people who are homebound

Wrap up/next steps

- Notes after this meeting will be available at:
<http://www.minneapolismn.gov/coronavirus/communitybriefings>
- Anticipate that there will be another E African Community Briefing within 1 month