

# METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

## COVID-19 SUMMARY AND LESSONS LEARNED

*October 2022*

# TALKING POINTS

- Business Continuity at the Met Council
- The Pandemic Plan
- At the Beginning... MN and Met Council Timelines
- COVID Crisis Management Highlights
- We Learned
- We Made a Difference
- At the End
- One Met Council
- Questions

# BUSINESS CONTINUITY AT THE MET COUNCIL

Deputy Regional  
Administrator  
*Georges Gonzalez*

Risk Management –  
Enterprise Risk Officer  
*Phil Walljasper*

Business Continuity Program  
*Kathy Matter, Manager*  
*Lisa Belland, BC Project Lead*

- Enterprise-focused program, involving **all** Met Council divisions
- Scope and areas of responsibility include:
  - Program leadership and management
  - Assurance of Met Council alignment and compliance with statutory continuity requirements (*Governor's Executive Orders, federal requirements, etc.*)
  - Risk identification and management collaboration
  - Continuity of operations planning (COOP)... recovery strategy identification and implementation support, incident and damage assessment, plan development and maintenance, plan exercising
  - Crisis communications and mass incident notification management and support

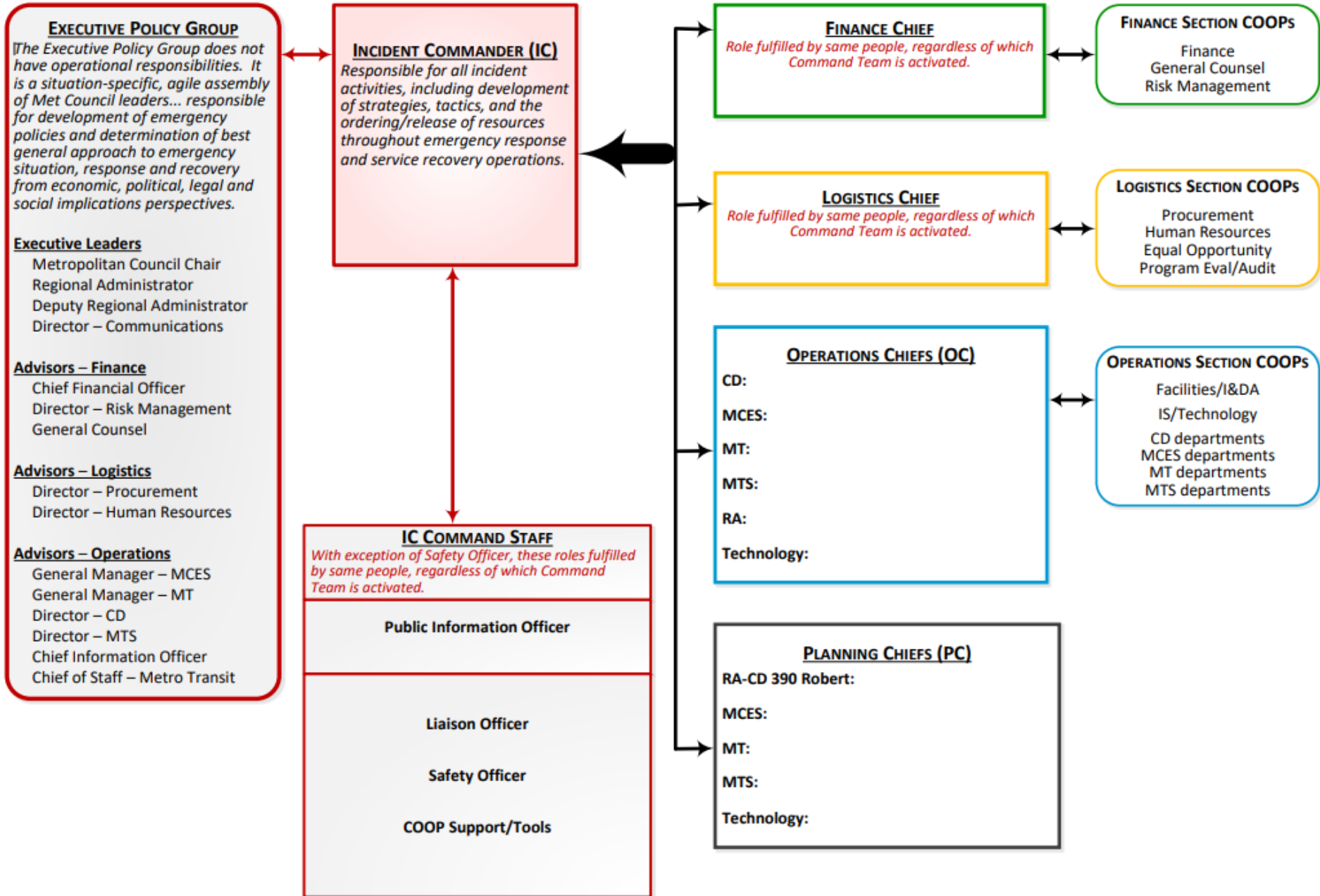
## and Pandemic Planning

# THE PANDEMIC PLAN

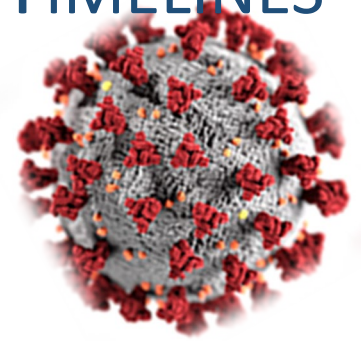
- The Pandemic Plan is an enterprise-focused plan that utilizes the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command Structure (ICS).
  - Use of NIMS is mandated for all State agencies in GEO 19-22 and GEO 19-23
  - NIMS provides the structure and processes to coordinate emergency response efforts of individual agencies working toward common goals in emergency response and crisis management situations
  - NIMS structure and processes have been incorporated into all Met Council COOPs, including the Pandemic Plan
- **The purpose of Incident Command (IC)** is to guide the Met Council's enterprise-focused response to and management of a pandemic



# METROPOLITAN COUNCIL PANDEMIC PLAN - NIMS ICS TEAM STRUCTURE AND ASSIGNMENTS



# AT THE BEGINNING... MN & MET COUNCIL TIMELINES



- **6-March-2020...** 1<sup>st</sup> MN confirmed COVID case
- **9-March-2020...** MC Pandemic Incident Command is convened
- **10-March-2020...** 3 MN confirmed COVID cases; 1<sup>st</sup> MN COVID hospitalization; MC Pandemic Incident Command meets again
- **11-March-2020...** WHO defines COVID as “pandemic, with world-wide spread”
- **12-March-2020...** 5 MN confirmed COVID cases; 1<sup>st</sup> MN confirmed COVID death; formal MC emergency declaration issued
- **13-March-2020...** Governor’s Executive Order 20-01 issued (*Declaring a Peacetime Emergency*)
- **25-March-2020...** Governor’s Executive Order 20-20 issued (*Stay Home Order*)

# COVID CRISIS MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

- **MC Pandemic Incident Commander...** initially Mary Bogie; baton passed mid-pandemic to Phil Walljasper
- **First actions**
  - Commenced IC briefing meetings immediately and conducted them throughout duration of Met Council's COVID emergency declaration... daily at first, then 3x/week, 2x/week, weekly, and bi-weekly
  - Conducted multiple role-specific spin-off meetings throughout duration of pandemic
    - Incident Commander... the decision-maker
    - Finance Chief and section teams... the Payers
    - Logistics Chief and section teams... the Procurers/Getters
    - Operations Chief and section teams... the Doers
    - Planning Chief and section teams... the “big picture” Seers and Strategizers
  - Plugged into State of MN's emergency activation of State agencies, attending State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) IC briefings, MN Management and Budget (MMB) agency lead meetings, and submitting required Met Council pandemic status information

# COVID CRISIS MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS CONTINUED

- **Accomplishments...**

- Immediately initiated the work of procuring supplies to keep our front-line, essential workers safe in the workplace **and** our customers safe “out there”
- Immediately and seamlessly transitioned our on-site workforce to a teleworking workforce
- Made employees our top priority for the duration of the pandemic... protecting them, communicating with them, and appreciating them
- Leveraged and nurtured critical relationships to the benefit of the Met Council, its employees, and the region... Governor’s Office, multiple State of MN agencies, Dakota County, Ramsey County, the Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul
- MASTERED the art of the pivot... to deliver our services, support services, and technology services, ***uninterrupted***, to the region throughout a 2-year pandemic and periods of civil unrest



# WE LEARNED

- **Lessons learned** via gathered via in-person interviews with majority of leaders who served in ICS roles
- **That we were more ready and more prepared than we knew...**
  - to transition into leadership crisis mode with NIMS ICS
  - to immediately begin the work of procuring critical supplies, in the face of national and regional shortages... successfully keeping our front-line, essential workers safe in the workplace!!
  - to identify, leverage, and embrace new technologies that changed how we do our work
  - to analyze constantly changing, incoming information and to pivot-on-a-dime to adjust throughout the organization
  - to identify service gaps in the region and rapidly mitigate them
  - to identify ways to leverage existing technologies and data analysis and management to benefit the region and the nation



# WE LEARNED CONTINUED

- **That our Met Council leaders were a coveted asset by the State of MN...** and could be (and were) pulled away to serve at a higher level
- **That our advance crisis preparations...** and emergency stockpiling of emergency supplies could be (and were) taken away by the State
- **That we could respond to and manage multiple crises simultaneously...** and successfully!
- **That we need to fine-tune processes around our ICS decision-making and follow-up communications...** for clarity and for enhanced efficiency “next time”



# WE LEARNED CONTINUED

- **That linking the Met Council's response and management of the COVID crisis to the State of Minnesota's provided us with necessary insight and guidance... but it also slowed us down**
- **That the extreme duration of our Pandemic Plan and ICS activation was a pain point for everyone**
- **That pain points in our pre-COVID life became exponentially more painful during COVID crisis management**
- **That practices and processes developed to help us manage the COVID crisis were so valuable that we've kept them for day-to-day operations**



# WE MADE A DIFFERENCE

- Regionally, Statewide, and Nationally
  - CD HRA's development and support of the HRA online system empowered and enabled tenants, building confidence and independence
  - CD HRA's development and implementation of a virtual process and procedures for conducting virtual inspections was adopted by local HRA partners and by multiple HRA organizations in other states
  - MCES... research and development collaboration with U of M, resulting in nationally-utilized process to test wastewater for presence of COVID (*and opportunities to expand even further into other ways of utilizing this kind of data*)



## Tracking COVID-19 in Wastewater

A Metropolitan Council and University of Minnesota partnership

COVID load in Twin Cities metro wastewater  
In copies per day per person



# WE MADE A DIFFERENCE *CONTINUED*

- **Regionally, Statewide, and Nationally**

- MTS... unplanned, improvised-in-the-moment NEW services for the region... transportation for essential healthcare workers and grocery delivery services for the region's most vulnerable and least-mobile citizens
- Metro Transit's collaboration with MDH and Blue Cross-Blue Shield to build and deploy mobile vaccination clinics... statewide
- Metro Transit's completion of 99% of scheduled services every single day... including during the initial and uncertain first days and weeks of COVID



# AT THE END

- **In March-2022** the Met Council's COVID emergency declaration and Pandemic Plan activation was formally ended
- **Incorporated gathering of Incident Command AND work unit-specific lessons learned** into operational Business Continuity Program processes for inclusion in Command COOPs and all division/department COOP Pandemic Supplements
- **Transitioned** the biggest residual COVID issue, defining our “new normal”, to Human Resources and the Telework Transition Team for operational ownership and management

# ONE MET COUNCIL

“I have said it before, and I’ll say it again. It was one of the best cross-divisional functional coordination efforts we’ve ever had here, and I’ve done a bunch of them!”

# Questions



# Contact Information

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