



City of Miami Beach, 1700 Convention Center Drive, Miami Beach, Florida 33139, www.miamibeachfl.gov

COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Neighborhood and Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Jimmy Morales, City Manager

DATE: September 23, 2020

SUBJECT: Discussion Regarding First Responders and County Emergency Management on how to Interact with Individuals with Disabilities and Residents of Miami Beach During the COVID-19 Pandemic (Agenda Item # 7 – C4C from 7/29/19 Disability Access Committee)

ANALYSIS:

Commissioner Gongora received a request from the Disability Access Committee to discuss how first responders and county emergency management interact with individuals with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Miami Beach Police Department has a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure for complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This policy is designed to ensure a high level of police service is provided to all members of the community including those with special needs, due to physical or mental disability, and afford persons with disabilities reasonable accommodations and special services if needed. The Miami Beach Fire Department's Public Safety Communications Division is also instrumental in providing communication assistance for citizens that are hearing impaired utilizing the telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) and/or Text Telephone (TTY).

The COVID-19 pandemic has created additional challenges for citizens with disabilities in all aspects of daily life. The primary COVID-19 relief effort that the Miami Beach Police Department has been actively involved in is facilitating distributing food to homebound senior citizens and assisting with the City of Miami Beach sponsored food distributions for the general public.

In March 2020, the Miami Beach Police Department, began a mission to assist with the needs and concerns of our elderly residents. Because of the COVID-19 health risks, many seniors were not able to provide basic essentials for themselves to survive. The Miami Beach Police Department received a list from the Parks and Recreation Department of elderly residents whose welfare they wished to check on. Phone calls were made to these senior residents to check on their welfare. These phone calls confirmed whether or not they had any needs or concerns and addressed them whenever possible. If the senior residents did not respond to phone calls, MBPD personnel responded to their homes to check on their welfare. Any residents with concerns continued to be addressed and assisted. For example, if their building was observed to be a candidate for the mobile food distribution program it was added to the list and served weekly. MBPD personnel worked with the Seniors in Action organization that began supplying food items to be distributed to our senior residents. During this time the sworn and civilian employees began assisting with putting together 1,000 bags of groceries every Tuesday and Thursday. After the

bags were loaded onto a truck, the department then assisted with a police escort and distribution of the food.

Eventually the food drive expanded to serving food in a drive through fashion every Wednesday and Saturday all Miami Beach residents including Seniors and disabled who could drive. This is also required the assistance of the MBPD for safety, order and traffic flow. On these days there are over 500 meals provided to people in need. This program is still in full operation, feeding and reaching out to our most vulnerable citizens.

Information about the City Of Miami Beach's COVID-19 food relief efforts were disseminated through a variety of means including the City's robust social media network, the local news media, and at City Commission meetings. The City's general information number of 305-604-CITY and the Police Department received numerous requests for assistance and were able to provide home delivery when necessary. Most of these individuals had some form of disability with the majority being unable to walk due to an advanced age.

The drive-up food distributions were carried out in vehicles which could allow someone with a physical disability to participate safely and in the same manner as all residents, with a bit of assistance from someone they knew if they were unable to drive. Note that another person would be able to pick up food for an individual with a disability, provided they brought that individual's driver's license. During the food distributions, names were also taken of individuals needing home deliveries.

The hearing and sight impaired are undoubtedly experiencing specific hardships due to the necessity of wearing masks and social distancing. The Police Department is willing to assist in any way possible. The possibility of utilizing clear masks to facilitate the reading of lips for hearing impaired is an option that may be pursued. If a hearing-impaired individual made an officer aware of their disability, the officer could move further back to allow better social distancing and remove their mask so their lips could be read. The types of masks currently in use for first responders are not made of a clear material and testing would need to be done to ensure they meet the necessary safety requirements. MBPD Officers do have gloves available to wear if a visually impaired individual advised an officer of their disability and requested help to cross a street.

CONCLUSION:

The Miami Beach Police Department is committed to following the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act and continues to strive towards addressing crime and community concerns with every segment of our population.