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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: April 13, 2020

To: The Honorable Chairman and Members  
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator 

Re: **Pima County Assistance to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona**

Early in our discussions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, food accessibility and food security was an issue based on hoarding activities that had exhausted food and other supplies in a number of retail outlets. This problem has somewhat decreased, but food accessibility still is an issue.

The number of individuals seeking food assistance through the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona has increased from an average of 692 per day before the COVID-19 pandemic to 1,401 per day just last week (20 percent of whom are first time visitors to a food pantry). For this reason, Pima County has partnered with the Community Food Bank to improve food accessibility, primarily to food bank outlets throughout the southern Arizona region. These details can be found in the attached April 10, 2020 memorandum from Assistant County Administrator John Voorhees.

We will continue to work with all parties to improve food accessibility and security, particularly for those who seek such assistance through the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c: Michael McDonald, CEO, Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona  
Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy County Administrator  
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works  
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer,  
Health and Community Services  
John Voorhees, Assistant County Administrator  
Jeff Guthrie, Director, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security



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# MEMORANDUM

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Date: April 10, 2020

To: C.H. Huckelberry  
County Administrator

From: John Voorhees  
Assistant County Administrator

Re: Pima County Assistance to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

In response to your task from last week to work with Supervisor Bruce Bracker of Santa Cruz County, members of Pima County (PC) government, Santa Cruz (SC) County government, Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona (CFB), and Department of Emergency Management and Military Affairs (DEMA) met via teleconference on Friday April 10, 2020 to discuss how our local government could bolster the capacity of the CFB.

## **The Problem**

Produce warehouses in Nogales are frequently unable to sell all of their produce before it expires. For years, those warehouses have collaborated with CFB to distribute their unused supply to those in need throughout southern Arizona. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, produce warehouses in Nogales, AZ have had increased difficulty selling and distributing their products. Shortages of warehouse staff, drivers, and lower demand have complicated the distribution process in Nogales. The CFB is often unable to accept all of the produce that the warehouses have available. Staffing issues within CFB have also complicated their partner distribution network. Supervisor Bracker has requested County support to distribute excess produce from Nogales, AZ throughout southern Arizona.

## **The Project**

CFB and the warehouses of Nogales request manpower and vehicle support to bolster their current operations within the City of Tucson and the rural communities of Pima County. The task can be scaled to the community's need and the capacity of Pima County to support. Today's phone conversation focused on providing rural support to Nogales, Arivaca, Sells, and Ajo.

## **The Responsibilities**

This potential support project is enormous. The Nogales produce warehouse can process up to 7 million pounds of produce per month (roughly 210 tractor-trailer loads). The County will not need to provide that level of support. The availability of Commercial Driver's License (CDL) certified personnel, on-site staff, and equipment (tractor-trailers, forklifts, lift-gate vehicles, cool storage) drives the capacity of the County's community support. Pima County will provide personnel from available Public Works and Library staff to assist with warehouse

C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

Re: Pima County Assistance to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

April 10, 2020

Page 2

processing, distribution site unloading, and overall organization. The County will also provide up to seven CDL and Forklift qualified drivers to assist the warehouse and distribution effort. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will provide operational level support to the project. The EOC will work with the Joint Information Center (JIC) to publicize this project for community awareness at the appropriate time.

The EOC also requested support from DEMA. If approved, DEMA (through Task Force [TF] Logistics) has the ability to provide tractor-trailers, refrigeration trucks, forklifts as well as trained staff to operate them. TF Logistics has been providing supply chain logistics for Basha's grocery stores around the state for the past 4 weeks. They are very capable to accomplish this mission. The EOC also requested a member of TF Logistics to bolster the EOC Logistics team as the dedicated command and control agent for this effort.

Santa Cruz County has secured access to a large warehouse that can be used for staging the produce. SC County Emergency Management will provide additional equipment support where needed. It is Pima County's understanding that SC County will take the lead in all deliveries to the communities located within SC County's borders.

CFB has and will continue to provide volunteers and local expertise to synchronize the government's efforts. The organization has a vast network of community partners who can identify the need and manage the site-specific tasks.

### **The Proposed Action**

The CFB project will implement a "crawl, walk, run" phased approach to mission execution. The goal is to begin the effort on Wednesday, April 15. On that day, a single truck (tractor-trailer or Box truck depending on the demand) will deliver produce to Nogales High School. If time and conditions permit, a second truck will deliver goods to Arivaca. During subsequent delivery periods (the frequency of deliveries is to be determined), the project will add distribution sites in Tucson, Ajo, and possibly Sells. The project team will assess mission success at each phase before adding complexity. Within the City of Tucson, the project will provide further distribution to multiple drop off points in a simplified "hub and spoke" operation. The successful implementation of this process will depend on the availability of local CFB, community, and Pima County staff assistance as well as a robust publicity effort to ensure community awareness.

### **The Unknowns**

The concept of assistance is still in its infancy. Shipments of produce are dependent on the available supply. Age of the produce and availability of cooled warehouse space will determine whether the produce can be used at all. A slow methodical start to the project's implementation will enable staff and CFB partners to refine the distribution network before becoming overwhelmed.

C.H. Huckelberry, County Administrator

Re: Pima County Assistance to the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona

April 10, 2020

Page 3

The EOC will submit a request for TF Logistics assistance on Monday morning. It is unknown to what extent the National Guard will be able to assist. If the National Guard has excess capacity the mission may accelerate through the "crawl, walk, run" phases quickly. If County and CFB staff must execute the mission without DEMA support (or limited support), the distribution effort may be very limited.

The project team did not confirm distribution sites yet. CFB has at least one community partner in each town/city mentioned. It would make sense to utilize existing infrastructure to accomplish this task if the sites can accommodate the increased traffic. The project team will endeavor to confirm distribution sites by Monday, April 13. If multiple drop off sites are built into the plan for the City of Tucson, a central distribution warehouse will be needed. That site will need to accommodate at least a tractor-trailer load of produce (preferably in a cooled facility). Some sites will require a loading dock to accommodate tractor-trailers. Others simply need a forklift or a lift-gate truck. CFB should be able to provide much of these details in order for the EOC Planning and Logistics teams to vet the potential sites.

Finally, the duration of the support and the complexity of the project will depend on available staff from Pima and Santa Cruz Counties as well as local partners in the effort. All of which will be driven by the community's demand for the produce.

#### **Conclusion**

The project is possible. The right people are communicating. With the proper coordination and resources, this project could provide needed healthy food throughout Southern Arizona. A progress meeting is scheduled for 2:30pm on Monday, April 13.

Jcv

CC: Jan Leshner, Chief Deputy County Administrator

Carmine DeBonis, Deputy County Administrator for Public Works

Jeff Guthrie, Director, Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security