

Debra Thompson

From: Chet Billi <chetbilli12@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, April 19, 2020 2:02 PM
To: Assembly
Subject: Face Covering Mandate

Members of the Assembly:

As a 3rd generation resident of Petersburg, I am especially thankful for selfless leadership in this time of crisis. I can only imagine the pressure you all face in the midst of the urgent situation we currently find ourselves in. You are tasked with making the most important decisions in regards not only to the safety of our community, but in ensuring our general welfare. I know that you are aware of the great trust that has been placed in you to make these decisions in coordination and cooperation with the community. Your awareness of the fact that cooperation depends on a reciprocation of our trust in you is what gives us confidence in the decisions that you make. When we are assured of your best intentions for us, the community is more than happy to follow your lead.

I am writing out of concern that our trust in you is not being reciprocated. The Pilot published an article on the 17th about the three mandates you will be considering. This is a quote from that article, in reference to the face covering mandate under consideration:

"It would be great if everybody would just adhere to the health alert that's in place from the state right now, but there's still a number of people that are not getting it," said Hagerman. *"We're just trying to help those people make good decisions."*

As a member of the community, I feel obligated to share with you my concern about the relationship between us and our public servants. Mr. Hagerman's statement, particularly the underlined portion, indicates to me that the trust we have placed in him is not being reciprocated. Even more concerning to me is that this statement indicates that his lack of trust is rooted in a contemptible view of certain portions of our community. In other words, I get the impression that he thinks his fellow residents are too stupid to make their own decisions, and therefore decisions need to be made for them. I do not mean to insinuate poor leadership, and I am fully ready to accept that my interpretation may be wildly inaccurate.

I feel strongly that the Assembly should assure itself of its motivations in the interest of maintaining the integrity of your relationship to us in the community. If a representative does not trust those he/she represents, how can they effectively represent them? Leaders who are skeptical of those they lead become disconnected from them. This disconnection manifests itself in the rejection of community input, which will in time breed resentment among the community and cooperation between the public infrastructure and the community will be much harder. I know that Mr. Hagerman is not a member of the Assembly. Nevertheless, I am personally skeptical of advice that comes from a place of mistrust.

You are on the Assembly because of your love for this community, and a noble urge to serve your family and friends that make up this community. This will not be the last issue that the Assembly will deal with, and I think it's important for the future of good will and prosperity in our community that the Assembly is respected and trusted.

I do not support this mandate. I do not believe that forcing what we may consider "under-educated" community members to adhere to our whims will be beneficial to the Assembly, or to the community as a whole. The resentment that is already brewing not only in our community but across the nation does not need to be compounded. I think the Assembly should instead continue to educate the community from its place of compassion. I believe inspiring the cooperation of the community instead of forcing compliance is the most effective way to bring our community through this crisis. Yes, there are still people who don't

wear masks, but there are less and less of them everyday.

You are correct in the assertion that we will get through this as a community, and it is important that when we do come out on the other side that the community comes out together. I am asking you to have faith in your fellow citizens, because we have faith in you.

Sincerely,

Chet Billi