

Debra Thompson

From: Kathy Bracken <seanana49@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, November 16, 2020 11:21 AM
To: Assembly; Emergency Operations Center; Stephen Giesbrecht; Karl Hagerman
Subject: In Support of Mask Mandate in Petersburg

November 16, 2020

Members of the Borough Assembly, Manager Giesbrecht, Karl Hagerman, Incident Command Team,

I want to thank you for leading us during this unprecedented pandemic. You have done an exemplary job of organizing and protecting our community over the past eight months, and you have my heartfelt gratitude. This is a thankless and stressful responsibility.

We live in a country that is valued by many because our freedoms. It is important to realize that with freedoms come responsibilities. As citizens of a community, state, country, we are charged, not only by written laws, but also by ethics and, hopefully, compassion, to carry out those responsibilities. It is my opinion that helping to maintain the health and safety of fellow citizens is a major part of that responsibility. This pandemic has brought that responsibility to the forefront.

Many people don't have the luxury to stay home and sit this pandemic out. It is our responsibility to protect them so their operations and businesses can function. We have students who want and need to be in school. It is our responsibility to protect them if we want in-person learning to continue. There are many, many people who are immunocompromised or otherwise at risk—the long list of diseases that increase vulnerability to Covid 19 is astounding. It is our responsibility to protect them. And don't forget the elderly. It is our responsibility to make sure they don't become infected. We can be a caring community and protect each other.

*Alaska's Covid 19 cases have spiked dramatically in the past three weeks.

*Many people in Petersburg travel around the state, and have been in or through areas where there have been many positive cases.

*We have many vulnerable people in our Petersburg population.

*Wearing a mask has been shown to prevent the spread of Covid 19.

*if we keep our people healthy, our economy will be healthy and our schools can remain open.

An ounce of prevention (wearing a mask) is worth a pound of cure, and is so much better than the intervention of a lock down, filling our hospital to capacity, and realizing there's nowhere that can accept medivac patients.

I have been wearing a mask in public for eight months to protect others, just in case I am an asymptomatic carrier of the Coronavirus. It's very easy. I am disappointed in others who ignore the science of masking and do not care to protect others. I have lived with this reality and tried to avoid those people, which is difficult.

I have read much and believe in the research and science of wearing a mask. Research now shows that masking can also protect the wearer, which does not come as a surprise, and it is a bonus to the compassion and caring about others.

In earlier months we were fortunate that many local people did not seem to be catching the virus. Lately, more cases have shown up, and it is obvious that as the cases increase in Alaska and other states, some travelers will have carried the virus with them back to Petersburg. It follows the law of averages that it is very likely that this will increase as the cases elsewhere increase. We have no idea how many cases are presently in Petersburg. I'd wager it's a lot more than the two that are on the dashboard.

What concerns me is that people who have been exposed or who have even mild symptoms are not coming forward to be tested. They don't want to have their lives impacted. I sort of get that, but it is selfish. They are likely infecting others, and one of those people they are infecting could become seriously ill, or even die.

If there's any chance a person may be infected, they should be wearing a mask so you don't infect others. In fact, there is a chance any one of us could unknowingly be infected, which is why we should all be wearing masks.

In response to people who say everyone is going to die someday, which is pretty callous, I would say that they also need to take a look at the living, the "survivors" with potential long-term side-effects.

Long term affects of COVID-19, CDC, Nov. 13, 2020

After seven months of studying people who have had Covid, scientists/doctors are discovering delayed side-effects, which could be long-term complications, such as fatigue, shortness of breath, cough, joint pain, chest pain, difficulty with thinking and concentration (brain fog), lung-function abnormalities, kidney injury, rash, hair loss.

The best way to prevent long term complications, or death, is to prevent COVID-19. Best strategies for preventing Covid 19 infection is to wear a mask in public places, stay 6 feet apart, wash and/or sanitize hands frequently, avoid crowds and confined or poorly ventilated areas.

Meanwhile, over 11,000,000 fellow citizens in our Nation have contracted a potentially deadly virus and are spreading it exponentially, while over 250,000 have died, before their time. These numbers are astounding and heartbreaking—each one represents a person. Meanwhile, some want us to believe this is a conspiracy and the numbers lie. The reality is, the US never got over the first wave, the first wave just went underground for a while and relocated.

While this pandemic has (for real, even though some don't believe it) been infecting thousands of people elsewhere, Petersburg has been very fortunate with our few cases and not overwhelming our hospital and our medical community.

This could change in a matter of weeks. It's easy to say, "These are cases in Anchorage, and other parts of the state." But I would like to know how many people have been to or through Anchorage, or other parts of Alaska in the past weeks. I would also like to know how many asymptomatic people our recent travelers have been in contact with that have not yet been diagnosed as positive.

People travel from the hot spots in Alaska. It's a fact of life here. It's now a risk. How can the people who have traveled **INTRASTATE** protect the residents of Petersburg? Mainly by keeping a safe distance and by wearing a mask. Also, they should test at the airport then isolate.

I believe all Petersburg residents should be wearing a mask in public.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bracken, 44-year Resident, Petersburg, Alaska