

Debra Thompson

From: Katie Tekla Eddy <ktekla@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, April 17, 2020 2:01 PM
To: Assembly
Subject: Re: Mandate Regarding Face Coverings

Mr. Mayor & Assembly Members:

I am writing in opposition of the proposed Public Health Mandate regarding face coverings.

I believe that the decision to wear a mask should be up to individual citizens and business owners. The mandate is too restrictive, unrealistic and surpasses the risk in Petersburg. We are not having cases of community transfer, we are not seeing a spike in cases that have filled our hospital or consumed our resources. Do we still need to be cautious - sure. But do we need to additionally restrict and diminish even further the quality of life of our citizens - no. Can we prevent COVID-19 from ever entering Petersburg forever - no.

Large urban cities (New York, Los Angeles, etc.) have mandated face masks and their dense population makes this more understandable. However, their day-to-day exposure to other citizens is far greater than any resident of Petersburg. We do not have public transportation, we are not having gatherings, we are not living in high-rise apartment buildings and we do not have congested foot traffic on our streets or sidewalks.

Our citizens have been following the mandate to stay home, remaining with immediate family only, staying 6 feet away from others and many other rules.

I believe face masks to be a private personal decisions, or the decision of private businesses. If business owners want to require face masks in order to access their location, that is their decision; if an employer wants to have employees wear masks, that is their decision; if a parent wants their child to wear a face mask, that is their decision.

I also see a problem with mask availability and proper use of the masks. When I see people wearing masks, they are touching their faces ALL the time. Adjusting the fit, moving it to drink or eat, scratching around the edges, etc. I do not believe that the majority of our population have access to enough materials to make enough masks to keep them sanitized and in rotation.

How do we keep masks on our children? Younger children are going to struggle with keeping it on, they are absolutely going to be touching their faces and mouth more frequently and will be a higher risk of getting outside germs into their system than if they were not wearing a mask. I have not been taking my children into the stores with me, but I have been into the boat harbor to go to the cabin, or in a parking lot to load up supplies. There is no way my four year old son is going to successfully keep his mask on!

I have heard, repeatedly, that wearing a mask is a sign of respect for those around us, which implies that not wearing a mask is a sign of disrespect. However, not wearing a mask does not mean that we disrespect one another, it is not a sign that we believe this all to be a hoax or unimportant. It is an individual decision, a personal choice about the degree of protection needed, the implied threat we impose on society and the threshold we are able to endure.

Please do not put into place this mandate, we must find a way to make informed decisions, take precautions, but to not live in fear and shame.

Sincerely,

Katie Eddy