

Debra Thompson

From: Barry Bracken <bbracken_99@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, July 27, 2020 10:22 PM
To: Assembly
Subject: Letter on mask mandate

Thank you for serving as members and Mayor of the Petersburg Borough Assembly. Having served on the City Council and numerous boards and commissions, I'm well aware of the time and effort you put into that office.

In listening to the Special Assembly Meeting on July 24, it seemed to me that many members of our community are not taking the threat of a once-in-100-years global pandemic nearly seriously enough. There have been outbreaks in seafood plants in Dillingham, Seward, Anchorage and Juneau, not to mention the massive outbreak on the factory trawler in Dutch Harbor. There has been community spread throughout Alaska. Petersburg has been lucky so far, but who is willing to gamble that we aren't next? This disease is a serious threat to all of us and, I believe that to downplay the potential for extensive harm to our community is naive and foolish. After all, even a tsunami is not much of a threat until it makes landfall. However, much like a tsunami, if you wait until it reaches your shore, it's way too late to react.

Next, again speaking as a past member of the City Council, the decisions you are required to make are not a popularly contest and, while you should take public comments into consideration, you are elected to represent the best interests of the community as a whole and are in no way bound to take those recommendations. I recall numerous times that a group of people objected to or supported a specific action which was not ultimately adopted in the way they requested, because the body, after deliberation, did not feel that it was the best decision for the community. I also think it is very important for each of you to inform the public regarding exactly why you vote the way you do on **every** issue.

Finally, a comment on masking, social distancing, and large public gatherings; the suggestions that Alaska is better off now than we were in March is outrageous. The infection numbers, hospitalizations, and deaths are all at record highs for the nation and the nation leads the world in all of those categories. The geographic distribution has changed, but Alaska now has one of the highest rates of new cases **per-capita** in the nation. These are not statistics that I'm proud that my country or my state are leading in, but those are the facts. So much of this tragic toll could have been prevented by exercising a few very simple procedures. If directives had been taken seriously and followed, or continued instead of relaxed too early, perhaps we could be free to be less restrictive now. If anyone feels that these few simple steps are an infringement on their freedoms, they are only thinking about themselves and have absolutely no concern for others. During this debate I've heard people talking about how a mask mandate is an infringement on their rights. To put this in perspective, I'd counter, "How is one person's right not to wear a mask more important than another person's right to breath virus-free air?"

If we all work together we can get through this. Personally, I'm very concerned by how cavalier many in this community are or have become. Based on my observations, masking in public here is 50% at best and often much lower. I will gladly go on record in support of mask, social distance, and crowd size, and yes, even curfew mandates, if deemed necessary, to protect our community from further spread. The Assembly, Manager, and IC should be able to make that call if/when needed to protect our community. Resistance will only lead to a prolonged pandemic and more needless suffering. So, please do your job as an Assembly and pass and enforce whatever ordinances necessary to help keep the community you were elected to serve safe. We are in a very dangerous and unique situation and it should be treated accordingly.

Thanks again for all you do,
Barry Bracken, resident

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