

City Health Board Meeting Discussion Record
February 5, 2021

Voting members in attendance: Dr. Mary Milroy, Mayor Nathan Johnson and City Manager Amy Leon.

Ex Officio members in attendance: City Attorney Ross Den Herder, Police Commander Jason Foote, Community Development Manager Brad Bies, Katie Huff from Avera Palliative Care and Community and Economic Development Director Dave Mingo.

Leon called the meeting to order and stated the purpose of this meeting is to discuss a new ordinance that would replace the existing mask mandate ordinance. The primary content of the new ordinance would be the same as the current one with the exception of having a sunset date in May instead of March. The new ordinance is scheduled for a first reading on February 8th with the second reading planned for February 22nd.

City Attorney Ross Den Herder further explained that the date in May was chosen to fit the timing of City Commission meetings in May. He also added that the language in the proposed ordinance is the same regarding the Commission having the ability to sunset the requirement prior to the May date if the vaccine rollout or other factors influence removal of the mandate. Leon added that the timing of school being out also added to consideration of the proposed date.

The committee discussed the situation with the current ordinance. Commander Foote stated that the Police Department has not had any issues or challenges with the public regarding the current ordinance. Leon stated that there have been some citizen reports to the city about customers or employees of retail businesses not wearing masks. City officials have contacted some of them with friendly reminders about the ordinance.

Dr. Milroy urges the City Commission to adopt the new ordinance with the May date. She stated that evidence still supports mask wearing as an effective measure against COVID-19 and that people have become more accepting of mask wearing. Also, there are now federal requirements related to wearing masks in federal buildings and on public transit. She continued that mask wearing has worked and we can see the light at the end of the tunnel so it makes sense to adopt the ordinance which will continue what we are doing.

Mayor Johnson stated that Avera has provided more than 4,000 vaccinations to date, which includes many second doses. That number also includes Union County. He spoke with Dr. David Basel who says we have not reached herd immunity. 70 percent herd immunity is the minimum for the population to be considered immune and we are at about 30 percent. He said it is important to continue with masking and also important to stand in solidarity and support each other.

Leon emphasized that if adopted, the provision for dropping the ordinance is also in this version of the ordinance as it was in the last one. The City Commission could end the requirement at any time if they feel the ordinance is no longer needed.

Mingo added that based on what he has read and the trends we are seeing, there is no reason at this time to do anything different than what we are doing. The trends are heading in the right direction.

Bies agreed that continuing with the mandate is the right thing to do and expressed hopes that people who disagree with one another on the issue, can do so with humanity and civility.

Den Herder stated we are trending the right direction so we should continue with what we are currently doing.

Foote agreed that the new ordinance, with the extended date should be adopted and he also looks forward to regular updates from Avera regarding the status of how many people are vaccinated.

Katie Huff agrees that the mask requirement should continue. The hospital capacity issues have improved now. She stated that hospital and nursing home staff that were overburdened and stressed are now getting a bit of relief so let's not change what we are doing now. A lot will depend on the vaccine allocations which is something that nobody locally has control of.

Leon stated she understands and respects all opinions. We have firsthand knowledge that masking has made a difference so she supports the new ordinance with the May date and encourages friendly policing and reminders to each other.

Motion by Milroy and seconded by Johnson to recommend that the City Commission replace the existing ordinance with a new identical ordinance having a revised sunset date of May 28, 2021. Voting aye – Johnson, Milroy and Leon. Motion passes.

Johnson commented that the live public input part of the City Commission meeting process would occur at the second reading and public hearing scheduled for February 22nd. People can submit emails or other written comments at any time and they will be forwarded to the City Commission.

Motion by Johnson and seconded by Milroy to adjourn the meeting. Voting aye - Johnson, Milroy and Leon. Motion passes.