

As citizens of Broken Arrow, we request the City Council take additional steps to protect our community from Covid-19. Broken Arrow is in the second-highest concentrated infectious location in the State of Oklahoma. Our state is in the top three most infectious states in the nation. This shameful statistic results in an increasing number of our friends, neighbors, relatives, and employees who are being stricken with this disease.

The City of Broken Arrow Instagram posts are updated only once per week. The most recent figures dated December 18 show 8699 cases, 1155 active cases, and 73 deaths. The previous week of December 11, records 7902 cases, 1110 active cases, and 70 deaths. All of the numbers are increasing and have been doing so for some time. In addition to those reported statistics, the research from science and medical journals indicate that some people who appear to have recovered from Covid-19 will suffer long-term disabilities, such as brain impairment, lung impairment, the inability to walk or speak, cardiovascular problems, and a number of other conditions which may afflict the “recovered” for the rest of their lives. Often, these long-term maladies affect people with initially-mild cases.

Reducing the rate of infectious spread is the one positive step that can be taken to protect the population and keep businesses open and solvent. Irrespective of certain City Council members’ attempts to twist the facts, the current lack of policy is a failure to protect Broken Arrow citizens, particularly those who must work in the public and risk exposure to the airborne virus from the unmasked public repeatedly throughout the day.

The White House Covid Task Force, the Centers for Disease Control, and the National Institutes for Health, in addition to local and state health departments and physicians, all consistently produce figures from quantitative scientific research, showing measurable effects of mask-wearing in cities. The results of this research prove that wearing masks does indeed slow the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Wearing masks is currently the best method of slowing the spread (along with hand-washing and social distancing), pending the vaccination of a majority of the population. It will likely be mid-summer before the spread is under control due to vaccinations. In the meantime, public health agencies all agree that the rates of infection and death will continue to rise and overwhelm the ability to provide hospital care. At the same time, with hospitals being swamped, citizens who need emergency care for heart attacks, cancer, and other life threatening conditions may go untreated.

Because of all these facts,

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate to help prevent the spread of this virus to more people in our community.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate to keep businesses open and to aide and support businesses in their efforts to make their customers safe.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate because Broken Arrow is not an “island” within the Greater Tulsa area, and the infectious climate here contributes to area hospitals and ICU units being overwhelmed and medical personnel being taxed to a breaking point.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate to keep schools open and students, teachers, secretaries, and bus drivers safe.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate because the first goal of any level of effective government is the protection of the community it is called to govern.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate because our masks protect you, and your masks will protect us. Endangering the health and life of others by refusing to wear a mask is an assault on community standards of health and well-being.**

*****We support a city-wide mask mandate because caring for the health of one’s friends, neighbors, and family is the Oklahoma Standard.**

We request that the City Council reconsider a mask mandate at its next meeting. The science is proven; it is not a partisan or political issue. Nor does it infringe on anyone's individual Constitutional rights. That is a false argument. In times of war, Americans have always banded together to fight the enemy. Whether it is saving up tin foil or giving up nylon hosiery or buying groceries or gas with a ration card as in World War II, or simply wearing a mask to curb the spread of this deadly virus, we need to band together now to fight this invisible enemy. If the asymptomatic knew they were contagious and if infection were visible, the situation might be less dangerous.

To this end, we request an action agenda item be added to the next council meeting agenda to once again, in light of the current infection trends, consider and vote to support a city-wide mask mandate. Such a mandate should remain in place until the infection rates are under better control in Broken Arrow, Tulsa County, and Wagoner County as determined by the appropriate health department authorities. Some Council members have voiced a concern over the enforcement of a mandate. However, are there not other ordinances and laws in place to protect the health and safety of citizens? The passage of a mandate will no doubt result in a higher percentage of citizens wearing masks than what we now have.

One last request is that the City Council meetings be controlled in a professional and courteous manner which enables both councilors and citizens in attendance, and specifically those who address the council, to have a respectful atmosphere in which to participate and have their voices heard. The recent shouting down of those who have the floor to speak should never be tolerated. Such behavior is rude and very unbecoming to our city image.

Please do the right thing. It is your responsibility to protect the citizens of Broken Arrow.
Thank you for your consideration,
Citizens for Broken Arrow