

Department of Public Health

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Health Department Proposes Reinstating A City Face Coverings Ordinance

Ordinance to be taken up at special meeting of the Racine Common Council on Tuesday

City of Racine – Today, Dottie-Kay Bowersox, the City of Racine Public Health Administrator, proposed reinstating the City's indoor face mask ordinance. A special meeting of the Common Council has been called for Tuesday, August 31st at 6:30pm to vote on the proposal.

Public Health Administrator Bowersox issued the following statement with her request for the ordinance:

*“During this time of heightened awareness due to the dominance of the COVID-19 Delta variant and low vaccination rates within the City, it is necessary for an additional prevention measure to be implemented to protect the health of the public. Positive COVID-19 cases have continued to increase over the last four weeks, driving up the City's case rate to 266 per 100,000 people. Anticipating that this trend will continue, and worsen, I am requesting the reinstatement of the City's Face Mask Ordinance. **I understand being vaccinated is a personal choice but personal choices should not stand in the way of personal responsibilities.**”*

This community waited patiently for the vaccine all the while tirelessly using preventative measures so some semblance of normalcy could be achieved while limiting the harm the virus could inflict. Over the last 9 months, three vaccines were approved by EUA and vaccination opportunities made available to as many that were able and willing. The Pfizer Vaccine has received full FDA approval and as such, should be utilized. Vaccinations, while free and widely available, have seen marginal increases since Delta's arrival within the US and Wisconsin. At a vaccination rate of 40.6%, additional precautions must be employed to slow the spread of this virus and ensure the health and welfare of everyone.

*The CDC recommends all individuals, fully vaccinated or not, wear a face mask in indoor public places in areas of the country that have substantial or high transmission of the Coronavirus. The City of Racine has been identified as an area of high transmission. **In the next day or so, we will reach an unfortunate milestone in which over 10,000 city residents have tested COVID-19 positive over the last 18 months.** Getting vaccinated and wearing a face mask in indoor settings will protect not only yourself but family, friends, and those you have yet to meet.”*

The ordinance would require all persons in the City of Racine to have possession of a face covering when the person leaves home or other place of residence and to cover their mouths and noses with a face covering when in any indoor public space, when riding on public transportation, or when riding in a taxi, private car service, or ride-sharing vehicle. The ordinance would apply to all businesses, organizations, and non-profit entities within the City of Racine.

In addition to the mask ordinance, the Public Health department is requesting a new policy for City of Racine employees which would require them to be tested for COVID-19 and show proof of a negative test weekly to the City's Human Resources Department. Employees can be exempt from this testing policy if they are fully vaccinated from COVID-19.

The special Common Council meeting agenda can be found on the City's website here: <https://cityofracine.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx> and includes the attached ordinance and employee testing policy.

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About the City of Racine

With a population of 78,000, **Racine, Wisconsin** is the fifth largest municipality in the state of Wisconsin. It is home to manufacturing businesses that enjoy world-wide reputations, SC Johnson, CNH Industrial, Twin Disc, Modine, and In-Sink-Erator among them. Racine is also home to diverse cultures, a thriving downtown, and world-class beaches along the shores of Lake Michigan.