

HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE OF CRTF DRAFT NOTES FROM 4AUG2020 MEETING

Present: Kathie Lynch, Ann Birner, James Petersen (welcomed as of today as a voting subcommittee member), Stephanie Seacord, Bianca Monteiro

1) City Council Meeting last night

As background, James explained that henceforth any external, correspondence, public facing documents, etc should go to the full Task Force prior to circulation. Several members of the public spoke for (4) and against (2) a mask mandate. Kim provided key COVID-19 data and relayed recent public assessments of the current situation by authorities such as Dr. Deborah Birx. Ann described the membership and purpose of the Health Subcommittee as well as accomplished, ongoing, and planned work. The Council was referred to our "Facts and Clarifications" memo created in response to misconceptions stated during its July 22nd meeting and provided in the meeting packet. Extension of the CRTF and its work beyond the current date of 12/31/20 was suggested. A councilor requested details regarding authorship of the letter to Governor Sununu (first draft by Ann, members agreed upon final language). A question was raised regarding subcommittee ability to advise on testing availability in the context of school reopening; see item 5 below for a discussion of our role relative to this question.

2) Letters encouraging statewide mask mandate

Letter was sent to Governor Sununu on Friday, and will be presented post hoc to the CRTF tomorrow. Letter has been drafted for surrounding towns with contact information pending. James's signature will be added and the City Manager will join us in signing these letters to her peers, which will be sent after presentation to the CRTF.

3) Public Information

Stephanie and Ann were to have worked on a press release to launch an interview or interviews featuring Bianca on the subcommittee's behalf, but other efforts took priority this week. The subcommittee agreed to start with a press release describing the subcommittee purpose and membership. **Stephanie** will create a first draft for circulation before sending to the CRTF, starting off with info from our applications for CRTF.

4) Weekly COVID data report

The subcommittee agreed to the following revisions and endorsed the use of the report as a public facing document:

- Add titles to US map and NH graph at bottom of page
- Key to make clear the bars on the NH graph as r/t percent positivity data point
- When posted publicly provide email address for questions (health@cityofportsmouth.org). **Bianca** volunteered to support city employees responding these questions.

MA data are concerning especially during this season when we have many MA visitors.

Any subcommittee member who wishes to present the report during a weekly CRTF call is welcome to do so.

5) Autumn Plans

Consensus is that we will serve in an advisory capacity, support the City Health Officer as appropriate, and not take responsibility for reopening of public institutions e.g. schools. A discussion of the expertise necessary for such decisions led to a suggestion that the subcommittee develop a list of local experts to advise us as the need arises. Examples include epidemiologists, infectious disease specialists, etc. **All members**, please send contact information for your nominees for this list. James attested to the appropriateness of this plan. James also provided a mini-symposium on proposed HVAC strategies (e.g. air replacement, polar ionization, and ultraviolet light) intended to reduce transmission of the virus, along with what is currently typical of HVAC equipment in public buildings.

6) Next meeting Tuesday August 11th at 11 AM. **Kathie** will send the invitation.



July 31, 2020

The Honorable Chris Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
State House
107 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: The urgent need to protect New Hampshire citizens and visitors with a face covering mandate

Dear Governor Sununu,

We write in support of the Portsmouth City Council's recent letter to you, requesting that your office issue an immediate statewide mandate regarding the use of protective face coverings.

In May the City Council of Portsmouth established a Citizen Response Task Force (CRTF) of 21 Portsmouth residents charged with "...addressing the needs of re-opening, within the confines of health care advisories." The Task Force has formed three subcommittees including the undersigned Health Subcommittee. Our Subcommittee is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council via the CRTF based on our assessment of emerging scientific and clinical information on COVID-19 and the pandemic. Members bring their education, experience and expertise in medicine, pharmacy and nursing to the assignment. Portsmouth's City Health Officer is an advisory member.

Succinctly, *we write emphatically to endorse the City Council request that you issue a mandate requiring all to wear appropriate face coverings in public where social distancing is difficult.* Such a mandate would elevate public awareness regarding masks and physical distancing guidelines already recommended by you and the State Epidemiologist via public service announcements, social media and other platforms.

The benefits of using protective face coverings are well documented by the CDC and the New Hampshire Division of Public Health Services. We appreciate the vocal support and example provided by you as Governor. However, the lack of a clear statewide mandate results in inconsistency and tension in business and public settings. With surging infections in other parts of the country and the high level of tourism in New Hampshire, our progress toward meeting the challenges of this profoundly serious pandemic is threatened.

City of Portsmouth, City Hall, One Junkins Avenue, Portsmouth NH 03801

As “The City of the Open Door,” Portsmouth welcomes visitors from many places. Our local and state economies rely on activity generated from tourism to the Seacoast. In order to protect the health of businesses, employees, first responders, schools and residents, we need clear, protective measures immediately.

The majority of states in our Union now have in place mandates regarding protective face coverings, enacted by Republican and Democratic governors alike. New Hampshire is a notable exception, and an outlier in the Northeast. The wearing of protective face coverings should be mandated by you, our Governor, for the good of Portsmouth and New Hampshire.

Please recognize the urgency of this appeal by acting immediately and decisively.

Respectfully,

Ann Birner

Ann Birner, Pharm D (Chair), Portsmouth NH

Bianca Monteiro, MD, FCCP

Kathryn Lynch, DNSc, RN [retired], CCRN [alumnus]

Mary Morin, APRN

Kim McNamara, MS, BS, REHS, City Health Officer, City of Portsmouth

Citizen Response Task Force, Health Subcommittee

Acting on the authority of the Portsmouth City Manager as directed by City Council



August x, 2020

Town Manager
Street
City, NH Zip

Re: Request that [name of town] join Portsmouth in requesting the Governor mandate the wearing of face coverings in public where appropriate physical distancing is not possible

Dear [name]:

At their August 3 meeting the Portsmouth City Council held the First Reading of a proposed mask mandate ordinance. On July 13, the City Council unanimously passed a mask resolution for the City and endorsed a letter to the Governor (copy attached) requesting that he mandate the wearing of face coverings in public where physical distancing is not possible. The Council also approved the idea of inviting the towns surrounding Portsmouth to join that effort as places affected by the impact of COVID-19 on border regions. We write on behalf of the Council to ask that [town] join Portsmouth in this appeal to the Governor.

The undersigned are members of a Health Subcommittee that is part of Citizen Response Task Force created by the City Council in June, charged in part with "...addressing the needs of re-opening (Portsmouth establishments), within the confines of health care advisories." . In addition to supporting this letter-writing effort, the Subcommittee makes recommendations to our City Council based on our professional assessment of emerging scientific and clinical information as citizens with education, expertise and experience in medicine, pharmacy, nursing and engineering. Portsmouth's City Health Officer is an advisor to the Subcommittee.

The benefits of using protective face coverings are well documented by the CDC and the New Hampshire Division of Health and Human Services. Governor Sununu has provided guidance for safety measures during this pandemic, including the use of masks in public. However, the lack of a clear and enforceable statewide mandate results in inconsistency and tension in business and public settings. As you well know, our region welcomes visitors from many places, and local and state economies rely on activity generated from tourism. Residents from surrounding towns also attend Portsmouth schools, utilize our acute, chronic and long term healthcare facilities, share public transportation and commercial

centers such as grocery stores, religious services and other interactions. Even without tourism, all of our towns are at increased risk because we do not have this basic requirement.

With surging infections in other parts of the country, and given the high degree of tourism in New Hampshire, our progress toward meeting the challenges of this profoundly serious pandemic is threatened. In order to protect the health of businesses, employees, first responders, schools and residents, we need clear, protective measures immediately.

The majority of states in our union now have in place mandates regarding protective face coverings, enacted by Republican and Democratic governors alike. New Hampshire is a notable exception, and an outlier in the Northeast. A patchwork of city and town regulations is unlikely to have the impact of a statewide regulation. ***We believe a statewide mandate is imperative and ask that you to join us in demanding this safeguard for the benefit of our citizens and visitors.***

Respectfully,

Karen Conard
Portsmouth City Manager

Ann Birner
Ann Birner, Pharm D (Chair), Portsmouth NH

Additional Citizen Response Task Force, Health Subcommittee Members:

Bianca Monteiro, MD, FCCP

Kathryn Lynch, DNSc, RN [retired], CCRN [alumnus]

Mary Morin, APRN

Kim McNamara, MS, BS, REHS, City Health Officer, City of Portsmouth

James Petersen, P.E., Citizen Response Task Force Co-Chair