

A Letter to the Community from Montgomery County Mayor Jim Durrett Regarding Face-Coverings

This has certainly been a challenging year for many of us. We did not think we would ever be in a position to mandate what people do. Yet, the government's role does in fact make mandates. The government sets speed limits, creates zoning, develops ordinances, and sets policy, but in this generation, the government has never told people to wear a mask and social distance. A mandate that some of us believe infringes upon our personal freedoms.

We have received many, many phone calls, emails, and social media messages regarding the wearing of masks. I can honestly say that it is about 50/50 in favor of and in opposition to wearing masks. People are just as passionate about wearing masks as they are opposed to wearing them. We listen to and read them all, but when making decisions, we do not count those "for" and those "against." Instead, we look at the data to determine what is best for the community as a whole.

Possibly one of the greatest challenges in this pandemic is reviewing the data. We can all find articles and experts who say masks work and we can also find those who say they don't work. From there, we develop our own personal opinions.

We now have data that demonstrates that following safe social practices has reduced our number of new COVID-19 cases. We have seen the rate of positive tests start to decline and our 14-day trends of new cases have dropped significantly. We have also seen our percent of recoveries increase and our hospitalizations decrease. We know that the way the data is being tracked related to active cases is based on an early understanding of COVID-19 and, that it is flawed. We have been in numerous conversations with the state of Tennessee leadership and we now see they have adjusted the data accordingly. The adjustment has resulted in a positive, more accurate reflection of where we are with COVID-19.

Although we are lifting the personal mandate, we **STRONGLY** urge the general public to continue to wear masks and to social distance. Our data is where it is because I believe most people in Montgomery County realize that masks and social distancing work and they are doing their part to make a difference.

We will continue to require people entering all local County and City government facilities as well as Clarksville-Montgomery County School System buildings, to wear masks. I have spoken with City of Clarksville Mayor Pitts and Director of Schools Milliard House and they agree with this action.

Again, we strongly encourage that our residents continue to wear masks and social distance. It is paramount that we keep commerce thriving, keep our children engaged in learning, and protect those who are most vulnerable. It should not be about individual inconvenience, but about what we can do to help each other.

September 4, 2020

Montgomery County Mayor