

(ATTACHMENT)

**Josh McElhaney
Councilman Ward 2
City of Grove, Ok**

**Public Statement:
Prepared by Josh McElhaney
Friday November 20, 2020
(Read by City Manager: Bill Kiefer)**

Good Morning,

My name is Josh McElhaney, current city council member for Ward 2, and longtime resident of the city of Grove. I would like to welcome the residents of Grove, business owners, city staff, and fellow members of the council. I want to thank each of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this special meeting.

To begin, I would like to personally say thank you to our local physicians, doctors, nurses, EMT, Police, Fire Fighters, respiratory specialists, and any other individuals that have been, or are currently on the front line during this pandemic. I know your jobs have not been easy thus far, and I commend you for your efforts.

In regards to the reason we are having this special meeting today, a city wide mask mandate was voted on and passed on Tuesday November 17, 2020 . I have two points of concerns that I would like to address. Then I would like to end with a few recommendations and language in the mask mandate ordinance itself, if the city wide mask mandate stands as is.

My first concern is that only one side of the story was told during Tuesday night council meeting. On Tuesday November 17, 2020 a regular scheduled city council meeting was held at 6:00 pm.. Unfortunately, due to being exposed to a positive case of Covid-19 I chose to follow the recommended quarantine, and not attend the meeting. However, I was able to listen to the meeting via phone, but was not allowed to speak due to my absence.. As I listened I only heard medical opinions from Dr. Ratterman and Dr. Schuaf on why the city of grove needed a mask mandate. The question I encourage the public to ask our council today is why other medical professionals like Dr. Bechtol, Dr.

Allsup or even Dr. Audrey Crawford, who works just as closely with their patience, was not invited to speak during the meeting.

My second concern is that I believe a city wide mask mandate will do more harm than good to the city of grove, the residence and our local economy, including tourism. In addition I do not believe we will be able to police a mask mandate as a city, based off of concerns from our city manager, and chief of police. This will put it back onto our local businesses to enforce. I fully support our local businesses that require a face covering to be worn and will abide by the rules. However, I think there is a larger population of individuals inside and outside of the city that do not support a mask mandate. For example, since March 2020 until November 2020, we have seen the largest income tax revenue increase from previous years. From my understanding it was due to tourism based on the fact that we as a city did not have a city wide mask mandate in place at the time, like Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Edmond. My fear is that if this mask mandate stands, it will drive any new and old business away from Grove and more businesses will have to close, like Crawford's Bakery and 1909 to name a few.

In conclusion, if the current Mask Mandate stands, I would like to make the following recommendations and language highlighted below in the ordinance, based off the city of Tulsa. Furthermore I do not want to tie the expiration due to any current Covid risk Color matrix, but only an expiration date.

C. Face Coverings Mandate Under Certain Circumstances

Except as otherwise provided herein persons located within Public Service Areas of Places of Public Accommodation or an Educational Building are required to wear face coverings at all times when present therein. Except as otherwise provided herein, persons in any Public Setting wherein social or physical distancing cannot be maintained are required to wear face coverings. The following persons, locations and activities are exempt from this requirement:

1. Persons who fall into the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidance for those who should not wear Face Coverings due to a medical or mental health condition or developmental disability;
2. Children under 10 years of age;
3. Restaurant patrons while they are eating or drinking;

4. Persons exercising in communal outdoor spaces, or persons walking or exercising with

other persons from the same household in communal outdoor spaces, as long as Physical Distancing is maintained. Persons congregating in communal outdoor spaces with other persons not in their same household are required to wear Face Coverings when Physical Distancing is not maintained;

5. Settings where it is not practical or feasible to wear a Face Covering, such as dental

services medical treatments while swimming or when engaged in athletic team activities where the level of exertion makes wearing a Face Covering impractical;

6. Occupants in a personal vehicle, personal office, or similarly private space while other

persons outside of the person's household are not present;

7. Private homes and

8. Offices and workplaces that are not Public Service Areas where Physical Distancing

between employees and other occupants can be consistently maintained during hours of operation."

"E. Expiration of Ordinance

This ordinance shall expire the earlier of: January 31, 2021; the expiration of all Civil Emergency Orders related to COVID-19 issued by the Mayor; or repeal, modification or extension by the City Council through a subsequent ordinance."

Sincerely,

*Josh McElhaney
Ward 2 Councilman
City of Grove*