

## The latest message from the Mayor about COVID-19



Dear Ridgway Community –

With the recent release of the Governor's "Safer at Home" guidelines, the state's plans for a slow reopening have begun to take shape. The specifics of the latest set of health orders are complicated, with many levels of detail to wrap our heads around. Because of that, I'd like to share some thoughts.

First off, I know we're all tired of social distancing and staying at home. The longer it goes on, the harder it gets to take. At the same time, many business owners are hoping to reopen, at least to some degree, in order to get some cash flowing back into their businesses after being closed for many weeks. That's really what "Safer at Home" is all about: while those who are in the more vulnerable categories are indeed safer at home, the rest of us can begin to venture out in a very limited way, but only if we still follow basic social distancing guidelines, wear masks, and practice careful hygiene.

There seems to be some debate about mask use in particular. The reason we're being asked to wear masks while we're out in public, especially when inside businesses and other public-accessible spaces, is that the basic 'formula' for getting COVID-19 is exposure + time. In other words, the longer you're in close proximity to someone who has the virus, especially indoors, the greater the chance you will be infected. And remember, researchers now think that as many as 50% of people who get infected might never show symptoms. Wearing a mask, even a homemade one, is simply good practice, and can help prevent more people from getting the disease and possibly dying, not to mention overwhelming local and regional health facilities. While initially we were told that only people who are infected needed to wear masks, it's now been shown that having everyone wear them, at least when we're in areas where social distancing can't be maintained (and especially indoors), can definitely reduce the chances of infection. And reducing the chance of infection is the key to being able to slowly reopen.

To be clear, if we aren't able to keep the infection rate down in the coming weeks, and we have a spike in cases, we will likely have to go back to the stay-at-home regimen, and that will be a serious blow to our local businesses. So please, do your part while you're out in public; wear a mask, maintain that 6-ft distance where you can, and keep your hands clean. Everyone will benefit, and most importantly, it will save lives.

Thank you all for everything you're doing to limit the impact of COVID-19 in our community, and your support of local businesses. I wish everyone continued good health!

John Clark  
Mayor  
Town of Ridgway