

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Mandatory Mask Follow Up

**Importance:** High

**From:** Suzi Spelic

**Sent:** July 14, 2020 1:10 PM

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Good Afternoon Mayor Eisenberger and Councillors,

I am following up on my previous email sent to all of you on July 12<sup>th</sup>, as I have only heard back from one of you.

My original correspondence, along with this email, is not an attempt to change your mind on voting for the by-law as it is apparent that there is nothing that our organization or any other group, organization or person can say that will change your thinking. This is another attempt to ensure that you understand how this will negatively affect a big portion of Hamilton residents who have real struggles. It is also an effort in getting more information regarding the actual by-law and why this needs to be a legal matter.

I have watched the Health Committee meeting and I am concerned, as the owner of a mental health not for profit, that some very important and real issues are being overlooked. That those with mental illness and mental health struggles have not been taken into real consideration. When you make something a by-law, you are adding an element of enforcement to it that can be abused and cause great intimidation and fear to vulnerable people. What is the benefit in people calling MLE when they see someone without a mask on? How is this a positive use of our resources in the City?

If you feel that people need to do better in ensuring we do not fall into a second wave of this virus, why has it been determined to use the law and an element of intimidation and enforcement to help make this happen? Mayor Eisenberger, during the meeting you were very focused and seemed to be disturbed with the fact that people emailed their concerns about religious practices. This was actually brought up by a few councillors with confusion as to why this would be a question. The responses to these questions during this meeting, showed to me that there is a disconnect between the perception of the public and the understanding of the councillors. This was a valid question and concern from the community as it is contradictory to wear a mask or face covering and then removing it in the same space to receive things such as communion. This is the same for visiting a restaurant. You are to wear a mask, take it off to eat, then put it back on. If you are not putting others in danger during the times of removing the mask then how are you putting people in danger by not wearing one at other times? The problem is that there are too many contradictory statements being made and there needs to be much more education first.

I am not against wearing masks, for those who can as an extra level of protection and I agree with continuing to recommend this, along with more proven to be effective strategies. I am however, opposed to attaching fines to this and making it a legal issue. As communicated by the MLE during the meeting our bylaw officers are already faced with big case loads and adding these extra items, other bylaw matters will be put off and/or on hold. There was reference to

things such as when the smoking bylaw came into effect, which was a time that a new department and extra people were hired to enforce this. So, I have to challenge that this will not cost our city any extra money and will not have other detrimental effects. I have asked numerous times for information regarding the actual by-law, training of officers to ensure they are handling those with medical barriers appropriately, enforcement etc., and continue to be ignored. If this is something that is being voted on, how can this be done without all of this information? If all of this is available, then why is it not being provided to the public, especially when being asked? You speak about the need for transparency but by not providing people and organizations with this upon request, transparency becomes questionable.

As I mentioned in my previous communication, using the fact that stores/businesses can now have signage posted that they can then say it's not their decision but a law, must be a factor in your decision because they are not wanting to do this as individual policies. Saying that this will stop people from being rude and disrespectful to store employees is not a valid argument as we already know, no amount of signage will stop that. You cannot ask a person about their medical conditions or histories and anyone can just say I am exempt. They can argue about that if they choose and adding the fear of being fined will not change this as it cannot be truly enforced. I am surprised that your legal department has not already advised you of this. Are you depending on the people who do not know their legal rights in complying blindly and paying for fines that may be given? I am sorry, but I cannot truly understand why a bylaw is necessary.

There is a call right now to defund our police department and reduce their resources as well. The only way that a bylaw officer will be able to enforce this is with police back up. Do you feel that the police will show up to give a person a \$200 fine if they don't have a mask on and refuse to give you their ID and medical history? This is not realistic and is irresponsible to think that our police department are not needed elsewhere for real emergencies.

I applaud your commitment to helping us stay safe and I know none of this has been an easy task but when you jump quickly and make snap decisions, you are not doing your job in ensuring you are taking everyone into consideration. Everyday, my life and the lives of others that we support, are drastically effected by fear, anxieties, stress etc., because of what is going on in the world around them now and prior to Covid. It is not fair to advocate for certain people and groups and ignore others. Unfortunately with your lack of communication and follow up, this is exactly what is being done now. We have a number of residents and families who are looking for answers and more information. We are trying to educate them as much as we can but they feel abandoned by those in power. Whether you agree with my opinions, facts, thoughts or not, it is your responsibility as an elected official to respond when residents have questions and concerns, at all times, not just about things that you feel are important or support your views.

When you only hear back from only one councillor, who themselves have been provided with little information but asked to vote on an important issue, that creates more concern for us. I am an advocate for those who are pushed aside to often. Those with mental illnesses that result in isolation, self harm and suicide, all of which are on the rise daily for the past five months. So , if you, in good faith can tell me that their fears about this proposed by-law and what it means for them, is not important then please do so. If this matters to you, then please be respectful enough to show that.

Thank you,

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