

Maskup, Sahuarita! Anti-mandate, Not Anti-mask

A Message from Mayor Tom Murphy

At a time when there's so much confusion and politicization over a matter of public health, I seek to unite our community as we face the challenge of COVID-19. My decision to not mandate face coverings does not mean that Sahuarita is "anti-mask." The Centers for Disease Control clearly states that masks can function as part of an overall strategy for curbing the spread of this disease. We will be doubling our efforts to educate the public about taking precautions for their own health and that of others.

We encourage our residents and businesses to responsibly follow all the guidelines of the CDC. That said, it's my opinion that we will achieve a better result, if we trust that businesses and residents will choose to do what's best for their customers, employees, friends and families. Social pressure and circumstance are far better motivators than an impractical law. I don't see the Pima County resolution as enforceable, and that is one of the things that most concerns us.

Persons exempt from the resolution are those who can maintain a physical distance from others in a public space. In addition, other exemptions include those whose health condition may be adversely affected by wearing a face covering. In total, the county's mandate contains 10 exemptions. The county has also made a provision for persons to be granted exemption (for other reasons not listed) on a case-by-case basis, as determined by the chief medical officer and health department director. There are probably many legitimate reasons that a person should be exempt from the mandate—many scenarios unforeseen.

Coupled with the listed exemptions, the county is establishing a website (a sub-page of www.pima.gov) through which the public may submit complaints "alleging noncompliance." The website will allow for submission of photographs "depicting violations." According to county memo of June 24, the health department will investigate and enforce based on these complaints, and will post public copies of these complaints along with photos on the website. I think it's reasonable to question the practicality and feasibility of this, and I think the public should have justified discomfort with establishing such a system. It is rife with opportunities for abuse, and for a person's snap judgments of others to turn into unjust accusations.

In Sahuarita, we have a close-knit relationship with the businesses that make up the backbone of our community. We wish to use our positive relationships with our businesses and residents to reinforce the existing spirit of cooperation and mutual trust. Public health is everyone's business. Using these community strengths, we believe education will prevail as the best tool we have. We're taking our lead, as we have from the beginning, from the State of Arizona.

What does the Governor's Executive Order 2020-40 mean for Sahuarita Businesses?

According to Executive Order 2020-40, "businesses shall assist in efforts to contain the spread, by updating and enforcing written policies in accordance with Executive Order 2020-36." This means following the CDC and OSHA guidelines and includes the following:

- Promoting healthy hygiene practices
- Intensifying cleaning, disinfection and reviewing ventilation systems
- Monitoring employees for sickness
- Ensuring physical distancing
- Providing necessary protective equipment
- Allowing for and encouraging teleworking where feasible
- Providing plans, where possible, to return to work in phases
- Limiting the gathering of groups to no more than 10 persons where feasible and allowing for appropriate physical distance between persons according to CDC guidelines (including those concerning the wearing of masks)

How will the Town of Sahuarita enact Executive Order 2020-40?

The Town of Sahuarita is asking businesses to revise their policies in cooperation with the Governor's orders and CDC guidelines, and will focus on education and promoting best practices among our businesses and the general public.

In conclusion, I want to appeal to YOU, our residents and business leaders, to live by the Golden Rule and treat others with the same respect, kindness and consideration as they would want for themselves. We will get through this together by putting aside our differences, maintaining open communication free of judgment, and being considerate of each other's health and welfare.