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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: City, Councilors announce steps to end citywide mask mandate

BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer

City, Councilors announce steps to end citywide mask mandate

[Duluth, MN] In response to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Governor Tim Walz's guidance announced yesterday around mask-wearing, the City of Duluth is announcing steps to end its citywide mask mandate.

"The mask ordinance was a plan that was executed to keep our community safe," City Councilor Terese Tomanek said. "We know that these last fifteen months have been difficult. We are so grateful for the community's support of this effort. It helped to slow the spread of COVID-19 and saved lives. We are excited to celebrate this big step in starting to get back to normal and more familiar times."

"Businesses and organizations are welcome to create their own policies around mask-wearing that fits their business models," Vice President Arik Forsman said. "We ask for the public's help in continuing to abide by those requirements out of respect for those who work and receive services from within these venues."

The ordinance, which generally requires two meetings for a decision to be made, could be formally repealed as an emergency, which was how it passed initially in one meeting. Original ordinance authors plan to bring a repeal forward at the next council meeting on May 24.

"Beginning today, the City will no longer enforce the mask ordinance," Chief Administrative Officer Noah Schuchman said. "It is also important to remember that the CDC's guidance on easing mask-wearing is for fully vaccinated people, and that some business sectors and nonprofits are still required to wear masks within their spaces and may require the public to do the same."

The Duluth City Council approved an emergency ordinance requiring masks to be worn in public places on July 13, 2020. Duluth joined Winona, Rochester, Mankato, Edina, and Minnetonka in being one of the first cities in the state to issue mask mandates. The State of Minnesota implemented a state-wide mask mandate on July 22.

"This decision is another step that illustrates that Duluth is emerging from the pandemic ready to embrace a return to community life that is meaningful and important." Mayor Emily Larson said. "With the change in seasons and many people reuniting with family and friends again, we are ready and eager to fully recover from the impacts that COVID has left on our communities and across the world."

The City will keep the Emergency Peacetime Order in place due to the pandemic continuing. The City encourages the public to get vaccinated to prevent an upsurge in positive COVID-19 cases. City staff are tracking positive cases and trends in St. Louis County and the state.

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