

City Council mask ordinance goes into effect May 18

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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The Gallup City Council took up the topic of face coverings at its May 12 meeting.

The ordinance has three mandates, which includes requiring anyone over two years old to wear a mask or face covering while in a public place. This first mandate exempts people who are in vehicles by themselves or with immediate family members, as well as people engaged in recreational activities that don't place them in close proximity to non-family member.

City Attorney Curtis Hayes said an effective face covering covers both the nose and mouth and fits snugly against the person's face to reduce the viral load that is secreted.

This mandate also does not apply to employees of businesses because they are required to wear masks or face coverings by the New Mexico Department of Health Public Health Order that went into effect May 11.

The other two mandates cover businesses and restaurants that offer drive-thru or curbside pickup services, which now require customers to wear masks or face coverings before pulling up. The businesses must also post a notice advising the public that they must wear a mask or face covering while inside the business or using the drive-thru window or curbside pickup service.

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If any customers do not follow the mandate, they will be denied entry, removed from the premises, or denied service. People and businesses who violate the ordinance will be subject to a fine between \$100-500 per offense.

Dist. 4 Councilor Fran Palochak said the people of Gallup have to take the ordinance seriously if they want to reduce the spread and have stores open up and social events happen again.

“If we as a community do not practice the social distancing, or wearing masks in public, if we don’t take this seriously we will never get a handle on it,” she said. “I’m asking the public, please take this very seriously.”

When asked about having to deal with potentially infected homeless people on the streets, City Manager Maryann Ustick said the city received a significant number of masks from the governor’s office, and police officers will carry some of the masks in the car with them and distribute them as needed to people on the streets.

Mayor Louis Bonaguidi said the ordinance and recent lockdown showed the council is taking the threat of COVID-19 very seriously.

“We have got to get the numbers down,” he said. “It’s evident McKinley County and the City of Gallup are leading the state in COVID cases, and we have to take it seriously.”

The council voted to approve the face covering ordinance with 5-0 vote. It goes into effect May 18.

By Cody Begaye
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