

Submitted by: Assembly Members Zaletel
and Petersen

Prepared by: Assembly Counsel's Office
For reading: September 20, 2021

**ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AO No. 2021-91**

1 **AN ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY REGARDING**
2 **PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES FOR THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**
3

4
5 **WHEREAS**, on July 27, 2021 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
6 (CDC) updated their public health recommendations given new evidence on the
7 highly transmissible B.1.617.2 (Delta) variant of the virus that causes COVID-19,
8 which is now the dominant variant circulating in Alaska and around the United
9 States; and

10
11 **WHEREAS**, the CDC's updated guidance includes a recommendation that all
12 people, including fully vaccinated people, wear a mask in public indoor settings in
13 areas of substantial or high transmission of COVID-19; and

14
15 **WHEREAS**, the CDC notes that until vaccination coverage is high, communities and
16 organizations should regularly assess the need for prevention strategies, based on
17 five critical factors, including: 1) level of SARS-CoV-2 community transmission; 2)
18 health system capacity; 3) vaccination coverage; 4) capacity for early detection of
19 increases in COVID-19 cases; and 5) populations at risk for severe outcomes from
20 COVID-19; and

21
22 **WHEREAS**, despite drops in case counts this past spring and early summer, the
23 Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), and all of Alaska, has seen a marked increase in
24 COVID-19 cases over the past two months, and the Municipality, and most of
25 Alaska, is currently in high alert status for per capita incidence of new cases of
26 COVID-19, based on the total number of new reported cases per 100,000 persons
27 in the past 7 days; and

28
29 **WHEREAS**, the Alaska State Hospital & Nursing Home Association, as well as
30 representatives from hospitals in Anchorage, have expressed concerns about the
31 capacity of our local health care system to respond to rapid increases in COVID-19
32 cases and related hospitalizations; and

33
34 **WHEREAS**, on September 1st, a record 30 patients were holding in the emergency
35 department at Providence Hospital and the emergency room waiting area was past
36 capacity for safe distancing, so some patients waited in their cars; and

37
38 **WHEREAS**, on September 1st, Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska State
39 Hospital and Nursing Home Association told the Anchorage Daily News, "I want to
40 be clear and on the record: We are in crisis"; and

41
42 **WHEREAS**, on September 2nd during testimony at a hearing of the State
43 Legislature's House Health and Social Services Committee describing the current
44 crisis situation to state legislators, Dr. Robert Onders of the Alaska Native Tribal

1 Health Consortium said “We are not doing well at all,” Dave Wallace, CEO of Mat-
2 Su Regional Medical Center said, “We are in disaster mode here,” and Preston
3 Simmons, CEO of Providence Alaska said “We are being tested like never before”;
4 and

5
6 **WHEREAS**, on September 8th, there were 208 people hospitalized with the virus
7 around the state, higher than at any other point in the pandemic, and 117 in
8 Anchorage hospitals, according to the official Anchorage Municipal COVID-19 Data
9 dashboard; and

10
11 **WHEREAS**, on August 30th, the Anchorage School District had to suspend certain
12 student bus routes on an alternating schedule due to a shortage of drivers related
13 to COVID-19 concerns, on September 1st the ASD Superintendent reported four
14 classrooms in the district have had to transition to at-home learning as a result of
15 COVID-19 spread, and on September 10th the ASD COVID-19 dashboard reports
16 338 active confirmed self-reported positive COVID-19 cases among enrolled
17 students; and

18
19 **WHEREAS**, over the past two weeks hospitals have begun instituting additional
20 restrictions such as pausing all visitation except for several specific exemptions:
21 children under 18 can have one caregiver with them; women in labor can have one
22 partner; and families can visit patients who are dying; and

23
24 **WHEREAS**, in late August, 26 out of 136 COVID-positive people hospitalized in
25 Alaska were vaccinated, according to the Alaska State Hospital and Nursing Home
26 Association, and of 33 COVID-19 patients in the ICU, five were vaccinated, and out
27 of 18 on ventilators, one was vaccinated; and

28
29 **WHEREAS**, the CDC recognizes that increasing COVID-19 vaccination coverage
30 remains the most important public health action to end the pandemic; and

31
32 **WHEREAS**, 59.3% of MOA residents age 12 and older have completed the full
33 vaccination series; and

34
35 **WHEREAS**, children under the age of 12 are not eligible for vaccination at this time
36 and the CDC recommends implementing other protection strategies to protect
37 people who are not fully vaccinated; and

38
39 **WHEREAS**, the CDC reports that proven effective strategies against SARS-CoV-2
40 (COVID-19) transmission, beyond vaccination, include using masks consistently
41 and correctly, maximizing ventilation, maintaining physical distance, and avoiding
42 crowds; and

43
44 **WHEREAS**, the CDC recommends to maximize protection from the Delta variant to
45 wear a mask indoors in public if in an area of substantial or high transmission, and
46 to follow basic public health measures such as staying home when sick,
47 handwashing, and regular cleaning of high-touch surfaces are also encouraged; and

48
49 **WHEREAS**, it is in the best interest of the MOA and its residents to update protocols
50 at Municipal buildings to align with new public health guidance, in order to minimize

1 preventable illness and death during the current surge of COVID-19 cases; and

2
3 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage Health Department issues COVID-19 risk assessments
4 and has consistently made the following recommendations to the public: (1) Get
5 vaccinated; (2) Wear a mask in public indoor settings if in an area of substantial or
6 high transmission; (3) Practice social distancing; (4) Wash hands for at least 20
7 seconds or sanitize hands frequently; and (5) Get tested if experiencing COVID-19
8 symptoms or are exposed to someone with COVID-19, regardless of vaccination
9 status; and

10
11 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage Health Department's risk assessment also include
12 recommendations for local businesses that Dr. Savitt, Chief Medical Officer for the
13 Municipality, further indicated should also apply to the Municipal workforce as well:
14 (1) Encourage and continue to support telework when feasible; (2) Encourage use
15 of virtual meetings versus in-person meetings when feasible; (3) Encourage event
16 organizers to consider keeping number of participants small, encourage mask
17 wearing and hosting events outside whenever feasible; (4) Encourage unvaccinated
18 front line workers to get tested weekly and anyone experiencing symptoms of
19 COVID-19 to get tested as needed to ensure continuity of critical services; (5)
20 Consider allowing employees to get tested or vaccinated on work time; and (6)
21 Encourage all employers to review OSHA's Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing
22 the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace; and

23
24 **WHEREAS**, the Pfizer BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, to be marketed as Comirnaty,
25 received the Food and Drug Administration's first full approval for individuals age 16
26 and older starting on August 23, 2021, taking it out of emergency use authorization
27 status for adults, now that it has met the high standards for safety, effectiveness,
28 and manufacturing quality the FDA requires; and

29
30 **WHEREAS**, Mayor Bronson when interviewed about the challenges the Municipality
31 is facing with regard to the effects of COVID-19, especially hospital capacity, he
32 responded "I don't know what more we can do," consistent with his stance to not to
33 institute Municipal areawide mandates applicable to individuals and private
34 businesses; and

35
36 **WHEREAS**, management authority over Municipal buildings is vested in the
37 Executive Branch under the Mayor per Anchorage Municipal Code section
38 25.20.050, and he may exercise control over Municipal land including issuing
39 directives regulating their use; and

40
41 **WHEREAS**, on September 9, 2021, President Biden issued new directives to the
42 Occupational Safety and Health Administration to require all employers with over
43 100 employees to mandate workers to be vaccinated or face weekly testing and will
44 also mandate that the businesses offer employees paid time off to get vaccinated;
45 and

46
47 **WHEREAS**, even though the Municipality has over 100 employees, on September
48 9th in response to the announcement about the new federal directives to OSHA,
49 Mayor Bronson issued a statement that if the Municipality is not constitutionally
50 required to comply with the President's directive, then he would not require it of the

1 Municipal workforce, pending legal advice; and

2
3 **WHEREAS**, a state report by the Alaska Division of Public Health released in
4 January 2021, on Anchorage’s restrictions last summer, have shown that masking,
5 capacity restrictions and gathering limitations help ease the burden on hospitals and
6 prevent deaths by slowing the spread of COVID-19; and

7
8 **WHEREAS**, on September 17, 2021, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER)
9 declared a public health emergency and Lieutenant General David Krumm stated
10 “the lack of mitigation measures off-base has resulted in alarmingly high infection
11 rates, hospitalizations and deaths in our community”; Now therefore,

12
13 **THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY ORDAINS:**

14
15 **Section 1.** The Assembly hereby finds that a health crisis exists with the COVID-
16 19 pandemic based on the circumstances described in this ordinance, and that the
17 unforeseen rapid increase in COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations have
18 resulted in insufficiency of services by the health care system and local hospitals
19 substantial enough to endanger the public health, safety or welfare.

20
21 **Section 2.** A substantial or high alert level occurs when either of the following two
22 criteria are met: there are more than 50 new cases of COVID-19 per 100,000
23 persons in the MOA over the past 7 days; or the percentage of positive COVID-19
24 tests in the past 7 days exceeds 8%. So long as the Municipality of Anchorage is in
25 the substantial or high alert level for community transmission of COVID-19 and at
26 any time the Municipality of Anchorage again reaches one of these levels, the
27 requirements of this ordinance shall be in effect.

28
29 **Section 3.** All individuals must wear masks or face coverings over their noses and
30 mouths when they are (a) indoors in public settings or communal spaces outside
31 the home; or (b) outdoors at large crowded public events. Unvaccinated individuals
32 are additionally encouraged to wear masks at all outdoor public gatherings,
33 regardless of size.

34
35 A. A face shield is generally not permitted in lieu of a mask or face
36 covering, as face shields are less effective in stopping the spread of
37 COVID-19. However, face shields may be permitted in lieu of a mask
38 or face covering for the following individuals, who must wear a face
39 shield whenever a mask or face covering would be required unless it
40 is impossible to do so:

- 41
42 1. Any individual who cannot tolerate a mask due to a physical or
43 mental disability;
44 2. Individuals who are communicating with someone who is deaf
45 or hard of hearing;
46 3. Individuals performing an activity that cannot be conducted or
47 safely conducted while wearing a mask (for example, a driver
48 experiencing foggy glasses, a dental patient receiving care, an
49 equipment operator where there is a risk of dangerous
50 entanglement).

- 1 4. Employers must make sure employees who are present in the
2 workplace have access to and wear masks or face coverings
3 when with the public or unvaccinated coworkers.
4

5 **Section 4.** This Ordinance does not apply to the following categories of people or
6 activities:

- 7
8 A. Any child under the age of 2 years. Additionally, masks are
9 recommended, but not required, for children ages 2-5. Daycare
10 settings that serve preschool children are encouraged but not required
11 to enforce mask usage for children age 2 and older.
12
13 B. Individuals who are incarcerated, in police custody, or inside a
14 courtroom; these individuals should follow guidance particular to their
15 location or institution.
16
17 C. Presenters, musicians, others communicating to an audience or being
18 recorded, if they are 10 feet from the audience and all members of the
19 audience are wearing masks or face coverings.
20
21 D. Individuals removing their masks or face coverings to eat, drink, or
22 briefly scratch an itch.
23
24 E. Employees within their own fully enclosed office or workspace or
25 within an unenclosed workspace if they are totally alone.
26
27 F. Fully vaccinated employees working in a separate room from the
28 public and unvaccinated coworkers. Employers wishing to utilize this
29 exception must verify their employees' vaccination status in a manner
30 consistent with workplace anti-discrimination laws.
31
32 G. Individuals while they are swimming, diving, or competitively wrestling.
33
34 H. Individuals performing an activity that cannot be conducted or safely
35 conducted while wearing a mask,
36
37 I. Individuals who cannot tolerate a mask due to physical or mental
38 disability.
39

40 **Section 5.** Businesses and building owners shall deny admittance to any individual
41 who fails to comply with this Ordinance and shall require or compel removal of such
42 individuals from the premises. Provided, however, that this regulation shall be
43 applied in a manner consistent with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act
44 (ADA) and any other applicable provision of law. Businesses may choose to allow
45 individuals who request an accommodation under the ADA to wear a face shield, or
46 may consider accommodating these individuals through alternate means of
47 providing goods or services, such as curbside, delivery, or telephonic service.
48

49 **Section 6.** Facilities in the ownership or control of the Municipality of Anchorage
50 shall comply with Section 5 of this Ordinance. The Municipal Manager, Real Estate

1 Department Director, and head of the department with management authority over
2 a Municipal facility is hereby authorized to interpret and apply the exceptions in
3 Section 4.

4
5 **Section 7.** When the Municipality of Anchorage is in the substantial or high alert
6 level for community transmission of COVID-19, as defined in Section B, the
7 Municipality of Anchorage shall:

- 8
9 A. Support telework for employees when feasible.
10
11 B. Notwithstanding municipal code, use virtual meetings versus in-
12 person meetings when feasible. Video conferencing is preferred.
13
14 C. Keep all events and gatherings to a small number of participants,
15 encourage mask wearing, and host events outside when feasible.
16
17 D. Encourage front line workers to get tested weekly and also when
18 experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.
19
20 E. Allow employees to get tested and vaccinated on work time.

21
22 **Section 8.** The Anchorage Assembly requests the Mayor strongly encourage,
23 through public health communication platforms and on his own behalf as Mayor,

- 24
25 A. the use of masks in public indoor spaces, regardless of vaccination
26 status;
27
28 B. vaccinations for those residents who are eligible to get vaccinated;
29 and
30
31 C. observance of physical distancing, limiting gatherings, and avoiding
32 crowds.
33

34 **Section 9.** The Anchorage Assembly recommends and encourages all people to
35 practice effective strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including getting
36 vaccinated, maintaining physical distance, avoiding crowds, and practicing basic
37 public health measures such as staying home when sick, handwashing, and regular
38 cleaning of high-touch surfaces. The Assembly requests the Mayor issue public
39 health information, including periodic briefings, to the public consistent with these
40 recommendations.

41
42 **Section 10.** The Municipality reserves the right to use all available enforcement
43 options to assure compliance with this Order. Violation of this Order does not create
44 grounds for residents to harass individuals who do not comply with it.

45
46 **Section 11.** Definitions.

- 47
48 A. "Mask" means a medical grade mask.
49
50 B. "Face covering" means a cloth, polypropylene, paper or other face

covering that covers the nose and the mouth and that rests snugly above the nose, below the mouth, and on the sides of the face.

1. The following are not face coverings because they allow droplets to be released: a covering that incorporates a valve that is designed to facilitate easy exhalation, mesh masks, lace masks or other coverings with openings, holes, visible gaps in the design or material, or vents.

C. "Face shield" means a clear plastic shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin, and wraps around the sides of the face.

D. "Fully vaccinated" individual is an individual who has received a COVID-19 vaccine where at least two weeks have elapsed since receipt of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine or two weeks since the second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines.

E. "Unvaccinated" individual means any individual who is not fully vaccinated.

F. "Large crowded public events" means events such as live performances, parades, and sporting events bringing together a multitude of individuals from different households where six feet of physical distancing between household groups is not maintained.

Section 12. This Ordinance shall be effective immediately upon passage and approval by the Assembly. This ordinance shall expire December 31, 2021, without further action by the Assembly. The Assembly may, by resolution and without a public hearing if it chooses, terminate this ordinance before the expiration date herein.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Chair

ATTEST:

Municipal Clerk