

Aiken City Council MinutesSPECIAL MEETING

November 19, 2020

Present: Mayor Osbon, Councilmembers Brohl, Diggs, Girardeau, Gregory, Price, and Woltz.

Others Present: Stuart Bedenbaugh, Gary Smith, Kim Abney, Sara Ridout, Charles Barranco, Jessica Campbell, Gary Meadows, Daniel Williams, Colin Demarest of the Aiken Standard, Channel 6 and 54 and about 100 citizens.

The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers at 214 Park Avenue SW; however, the number of citizens that could be in the Council Chambers at one time was limited because of the COVID-19 virus and the need for social distancing. The meeting was streamed live on the City's YouTube channel for the public to view and to comment by email.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Osbon called the special meeting of November 19, 2020, to order at 6:00 P.M. Mayor Osbon led in prayer. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was led by Chief Charles Barranco.

GUIDELINES

Mayor Osbon reviewed the guidelines for speaking at the Council meeting.

FACE COVERINGS – ORDINANCE 11192020Face CoveringsMasksCOVID 19Pandemic

Mayor Osbon stated this was the time advertised for second reading and public hearing of an ordinance requiring individuals to wear face coverings in food and commercial establishments.

Mayor Osbon read the title of the ordinance.

AN ORDINANCE REQUIRING INDIVIDUALS TO WEAR FACE COVERINGS IN FOOD AND OTHER RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS WHICH ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Councilwoman Diggs moved, seconded by Councilman Woltz, that Council pass on second reading an ordinance to require the wearing of face coverings in public places.

Mayor Osbon noted there were some administrative amendments to the proposed ordinance. He asked Mr. Bedenbaugh to review the proposed amendments. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated the first proposed amendment to the ordinance is in the ninth paragraph. He noted that the last sentence in the paragraph referring to "Emergency ordinances" should be deleted. This is a scrivener's error.

Councilman Woltz stated he would like to offer two amendments to the proposed ordinance. The first is that if the ordinance is approved that the effective date be Friday, November 20, 2020, at 12 noon. The second amendment is that it had been discussed that there was no penalty in the ordinance for not following the ordinance. He said he would like to request that a \$25 civil fine be included in the ordinance for not wearing a mask.

Mayor Osbon stated he would ask that Council vote on each amendment separately. The first proposed amendment was that the effective date for requiring masks to be worn in public places be effective Friday, November 20, 2020, at 12 noon. The motion was moved by Councilman Woltz, and seconded by Councilwoman Diggs. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Osbon stated the second amendment deals with including a \$25 civil fine in the ordinance for individuals not wear a mask. He noted that the current ordinance is enforced as a trespassing notice. He asked that Chief Barranco explain the current ordinance and the fine for trespassing.

Chief Barranco stated currently if someone is not following the emergency ordinance requirement to wear a mask in public places, the business owner or someone else could call Public Safety. If someone refuses to wear a mask, the business owner could ask that the person be removed from the business. That can happen at any time. The trespassing is fineable up to \$1,087.50 if convicted of trespassing after notice.

Mayor Osbon noted that the proposed amendment would include a \$25 civil fine for refusing to wear a mask. It is not an escalating fine, but a \$25 fine for each offense. The fine is similar to a parking offense in a no parking zone. Public Safety would answer a call for help and treat it as they have for the no trespassing. They would speak to the person; offer them a mask. Then if they declined the mask, they would be asked to leave the business. If they declined to leave the business, that is when the trespassing is cited.

Councilwoman Brohl stated to make sure that all understand the fine, are we saying that there could be a \$25 fine for refusing to wear a mask and also there could be the \$1,000 trespassing fine if a person is not complying to leave the premises. Councilman Woltz noted that was not the intention. The \$25 fine gives Public Safety some teeth.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated the intention would be to remove the trespass fine and do the \$25 civil fine.

Chief Barranco stated someone could be charged or put on trespass notice at any time. It may not have anything to do with not wearing a mask. If a person is asked to leave a business, Public Safety would notify them that if they return or refuse to leave at the time they could be charged with trespassing after notice separately from the mask issue. Trespassing is a state statute. He said he thought they had only placed one person on trespass notice during the previous time that there was a mask ordinance in place.

Mr. Bedenbaugh noted that there had been 81 calls for service between July 17, 202 (when first emergency mask ordinance took effect) through 12 noon Monday, November 16, 2020 (when the emergency ordinance expired) regarding persons not wearing a mask, with one trespass notice. Chief Barranco pointed out that meant that they were placed on notice, but were not charged with trespassing after notice. They were informed by the officer that the business owner asked them not to return to their business.

Chief Barranco stated there are two separate issues. A person could get a citation for not wearing a mask. If they refuse to leave the premises, that is a separate issue. They could be charged with trespassing after notice. Typically, that does not happen, but it could happen.

Councilwoman Gregory pointed out that if a person does not leave the premises, it does not alleviate the trespassing charge and/or fine. That can come after the \$25 fine for not wearing a mask.

Mayor Osbon pointed out the fines are triggered after a business owner asks a person to leave. Chief Barranco stated a business owner or a homeowner could ask someone to leave their premises at any time for whatever reason. If the person fails to leave, they can call law enforcement to require them to leave, and there could potentially be a trespassing fine. He said he knows that is not the intent with the mask ordinance, but that is the mechanics of the matter if someone wanted to push the issue.

Councilwoman Price noted that Chief Barranco said that the officers approach the person. She noted that when a call is made by a property owner, the officer has the approach where they politely offer that person a mask. They don't just fine a person without some explanation.

Mayor Osbon stated a second amendment had been offered by Councilman Woltz that a \$25 civil fine for refusing to wear a mask be included in the ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Price. The motion was approved by Councilmembers Woltz, Price, Diggs and Mayor Osbon. Opposed were Councilmembers Brohl, Gregory and Girardeau. The motion was approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 3 opposed.

Councilwoman Gregory stated she wanted to talk about food establishments. There is an executive order issued by the State that is very specifically written and lengthy that we can't ignore. She said she would like to make a motion that in the proposed ordinance that any language that refers to food service establishments be removed and that reference be made to pages 8 – 10 in the Governor's Executive Order.

Mr. Smith, City Attorney, stated he was interpreting Councilwoman Gregory's amendment to direct him to remove any reference in the city's proposed ordinance to a food service establishment or restaurant throughout the document.

Mayor Osbon stated there is a motion to remove any reference to food service or restaurant establishments in the proposed ordinance because food establishments are covered in the Governor's executive order. It was noted that the Governor's orders supersede the city's regulations.

Councilwoman Gregory stated she felt we would be doing our citizens a disservice if we don't educate and allow a clear understanding that whether or not we have an ordinance that the Governor's orders supersede, and it would behoove restaurant owners to follow the Governor's executive order because it is the law.

Councilman Woltz asked Mr. Smith if removing reference to food service establishments and restaurants from the ordinance would prohibit Public Safety from writing a ticket for violation of the mask ordinance in a food establishment.

Mr. Smith stated it would not prohibit Public Safety from writing a ticket for a person in a restaurant. He said we could disregard the fact that we are talking about masks. He said if a restaurant calls Public Safety and says a patron needs to be removed because they are being disorderly, Public Safety can write a ticket. He said if a person is not wearing a mask, Public Safety can give them a ticket.

Mayor Osbon stated that Councilwoman Gregory made a motion to remove any reference to food service or restaurant establishments in the proposed ordinance because food establishments are covered in the Governor's executive order. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Price. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Osbon recognized Mr. Bedenbaugh, City Manager, for comments.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated before Council is a regular ordinance for second reading to require the wearing of face coverings in commercial establishments open to the public. An amendment was made to the ordinance on first reading and that has been incorporated into the ordinance in Section 2. 4) that all persons shall comply with the restrictions set forth in Executive Order No. 2020-63 issued by the Governor and that order has been attached to the proposed ordinance. Also, added on first reading under Section 3. Exemptions was paragraph 12) which notes that the ordinance is not applicable to schools in the Aiken County Public School system located in the City of Aiken.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated the proposed ordinance with amendments is before Council for second reading. The ordinance could be rescinded either by the Governor issuing an executive order rescinding prior states of emergency, or rescinding any states of emergency that are related to COVID-19, or City Council passing a resolution that would

declare that COVID-19 is no longer a serious threat to the public health, safety, and welfare of the Aiken citizens.

An amendment was made to add a non-graduated fine of \$25 for not complying with the mask ordinance. Also, an amendment was made to the proposed ordinance that if it is adopted by City Council that the ordinance will go into effect on Friday, November 20, 2020, at 12 noon and be in effect until the triggers are initiated to revoke the ordinance.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated at the last meeting as part of his comments there were comments from the Aiken Regional Hospital and from our resident Epidemiologist, Dr. Gil Potter. For this meeting their comments will be part of the public comment period with other citizens.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from the audience.

Mr. Bedenbaugh stated Dr. Gil Potter, an Epidemiologist with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control for District 3, is on the phone to make comments.

Dr. Gil Potter, of SCDHEC, stated there are no specific metrics regarding masks. He noted that throughout the state our percentage of positives in testing is between 10% and 15% almost every day they do testing. He said there are a lot of Coronavirus cases in the area and lot of undiagnosed cases. We are at risk from that. He said regarding masks and how effective they can be, there is a published report of a recreational hockey game in Florida. One individual was playing who was pre-symptomatic and did not know he was infected. A total of 14 of 22 players on the hockey teams came down with COVID-19 because one pre-symptomatic individual was playing. On the positive side masks seem to work. He reviewed several situations where masks were used and clients did not come down with COVID-19. He noted that in one test where more than 1,000 persons were interviewed as contacts of cases, they found that individuals who reported high use of masks had a 70% reduction in risk of developing COVID-19 as compared to individuals who did not wear masks. There is a study that shows that counties or geographic entities that are high users of masks have reduced mortality from COVID infections. He pointed out that masks used as an exposure control to keep an infected person, whether they know it or not, from spreading is very effective. He said that cloth masks routinely will also help to prevent transmission of cases to individuals who use masks correctly. He said we also know that some materials work better than others for masks. He said masks are useful for prevention transmission, and they are also useful to prevent an individual from being infected.

In response to a question regarding the percentage of positives, Mr. Bedenbaugh responded that Aiken is in a high category because our incident rate per 100,000 cases is approximately 276.8 over the last two weeks. That is considered in the high range. He noted that anything above 200 is considered a high incident rate per 100,000. That is off the DHEC website.

Mike Stake, of 205 Club Villa Drive W, stated he had a week to reflect on the conversation of the last meeting regarding the mask ordinance. He said he cannot support a regular mask mandate. He said he understood that it was not Aiken that drafted the ordinance, but the Municipal Association of South Carolina. He said he had difficulty having a non-elected group represent him. He said Council was elected to do the job, not the Municipal Association of SC. He said in listening to the persons who spoke for the mask mandate, they seemed to be emotionally charged. They felt he did not care for lives by not wearing a mask. He said it had been asserted that wearing masks could save many, many lives. He noted if we are discussing saving lives, then we could save lives by championing ending abortion and championing ending smoking. He said he says "His body. His choice." He said if a person chooses to wear a mask, wear gloves, social distance, isolate, he supports their choice. They are free to choose. He said he is the one taking the risk if he does not wear a mask. It is his choice. He said he believes in a sovereign God. He chooses faith over fear. He noted that our money says "In God we trust." Fear is an acronym for false evidence appearing real. He said he would choose faith and freedom. He said he would not live the gift of life cowering to the next virus or

the next state of emergency because of government overreach. He said he could not and would not support the position of a mask mandate. He said it is a mask mandate today, a mandated vaccine tomorrow.

Eric Muhlbaier, 1517 Powderhouse Road, representing Aiken Regional Hospital, stated he had had time to reflect on a lot of the comments, and he wanted to acknowledge some of the things discussed last week. He pointed out that the number of cases is rising in our region, state and nationwide. He said the medical community is trying to make a difference. He said there were some concerns from people about being treated differently because they could not wear a mask. He said those comments were taken back to the hospital, and they have been doing some sensitivity training regarding masking when there is an issue and when someone can't wear a mask. He said they are trying to be a leader in the community about masking, but they are also leading the way for sensitivity. There are legitimate reasons why one can't wear a mask, and we should not hold that against our neighbors when they have a legitimate reason. He said the experts that we pay to guide us on this do suggest that masking may help reduce the spread of the virus. He said the hospital would do all they can to support mask wearing. He pointed out that Aiken had been fortunate as we have not been nearly as infected as other parts of the country. He felt that is because a lot of people have done the right thing, such as washing their hands, keeping a distance, not being in crowds, wearing masks, etc. He pointed out that bigger cities are being forced to close businesses. They are not being forced by the local municipalities; they are being forced by the powers to be. If we don't make efforts to try to slow the spread of the virus down and use the tools that the experts say we should, then we are not trying. If we try and wear the masks and have the ordinance in place, we are doing the best we can. He said he was speaking for the medical staff as well as the administration. He said they would encourage everyone to consider that.

Donald Durham, 185 Chantilly Lane, Windsor, SC, stated he felt the meeting was not as publicly informed as it should be. He said he has been in the service industry since the beginning of COVID-19. He said he touches 50 to 100 cars per day with all the stuff in people's cars. He noted that no one in his shop has been sick. He felt that other people's fears are not his concern. He pointed out that he felt masks do not help as things go through the masks. He felt that we should be free to make our own decisions as to whether to wear a mask or not. He felt it was unacceptable for the government to charge \$25 for not wearing a mask. He felt if a person can't wear a mask for medical reasons, they should not be charged for not wearing a mask. He noted that many people die from the flu and car accidents, but he had not seen the numbers for those deaths. He asked that Council not pass the mask ordinance. He said he would not wear a mask.

Mayor Osbon pointed out that the meeting had been advertised; it had been on the front page of the paper several days; it was on social media; those in the hallway are able to watch the meeting on TV monitors, and the meeting is being broadcast on YouTube.

Rhoda Krape stated she had been a critical care nurse and emergency room nurse for a long time. She also has a degree in health care administration, and she served in the military as an Air Force nurse. She said she had been researching the mask mandate a lot because she had been confused by conflicting information from scientists who are pro-mask and scientists who are against the mask. She said she delved deeply into why these conflicts are occurring. She said the reason for some of the confusion is because the science behind the mask mandate is never addressed by the politicians and public health professionals making the recommendations. She felt the media has completely given up on their journalistic duty. She pointed out that the World Health Organization noted in its June, 2020 guidance on face masks that there is no direct evidence that universal masking of healthy people is an effective intervention against respiratory illnesses. According to the WHO "At present there is no direct evidence from studies on COVID-19 and in healthy people in the community on the effectiveness of universal masking of healthy people in the community to prevent infection with respiratory viruses." The WHO also recommended cloth masks should only be used by infected people in community settings and not for prevention. In a paper published by the Emerging Infectious Diseases in May, 2020, they found no evidence to support universal mask wearing as a protective measure in non-health care settings. An international group that examines everything in health care found that compared to no masks, that mask wearing in the general population

or among health care workers did not reduce influenza-like illnesses. The most reasonable conclusion from the available scientific evidence is that community mask mandates have, at most, a small effect on the course of any pandemic. Claims that low mask compliance is responsible for rising counts also are not supported by Gallop data which show that the percentage of Americans reported wearing masks has been high and relatively stable since June. Shifting focus away from mask mandates and toward the reality of respiratory viral spread would free up time and resources to protect the most vulnerable Americans. Until the reality of viral spread in the US is accepted, political leaders will continue to feel justified in keeping schools and businesses closed, robbing young people of the opportunity to invest in their futures and restricting activities that make life worthwhile. The reality is that the virus and all the other viruses that will be coming are here to stay. The best approach for the government is to teach people healthy living habits to improve their chances of fending off all viruses. With all epidemics and pandemics there are people who got sick and recovered, people who got sick and died, and people who never got sick. It is not about who wore a mask or not. It is all about personal health. Of all the developed nations, the US spends the most on health care delivery, and we rank last. We don't fix anything. She pointed out that masks do not work.

Lindsey Gentz, 1815 Pine Log Road, stated she had just read today that a large Danish study for masking to prevent the COVID-19 infection failed with a non-significant and clinically irrelevant .3% risk reduction. Dr. Roger Hodgkinson, a top pathologist and expert in biology, stated that two government officials during a conference call that coronavirus process is the greatest hoax ever perpetuated on an unsuspected public. She said she was present to ask the City of Aiken to not put its citizens through another mask mandate. Everything about the alleged pandemic has been contradictory, lacking any logic and is knocking on the door of tyranny and must not be allowed. If wearing masks worked, then why are we here discussing the need for another forced mandate. If wearing the mask did not work, then why would we be forced into another mandate. In South Carolina a licensed medical doctor is the only person qualified to give medical intervention. A mask is considered a medical health intervention because it affects the function of the respiratory system. A disturbance in the respiratory system can cause headaches, light headiness, difficulty communicating, thinking and increased CO2 levels from a decrease in oxygen intake due to the mask. Wearing masks not only causes physical health complications, but also cause psychological ailments such as stress and anxiety. Wearing masks can increase cortisol levels and lower the immune system which is our body's natural defense. Since masks can affect people physically and psychologically, why are healthy people being mandated and required to wear masks without the recommendation and direction from their physician. Of all the masks and face coverings that are being used, cloth, paper, and medical grade masks, none have been professionally tested and studied for effectiveness against the Chinese Coronavirus. The only mask that has been studied, tested, and confirmed effective is the N-95 mask. In those studies, the N-95 mask was professionally fitted and tested for the individual mask wearer. Realistically any paper, medical or cloth face coverings that are worn by the general public have been and will continue to be useless and ineffective to block the virus. She asked why the City of Aiken would mandate masks when the general public does not have access to professionals for mask fitting and testing. She asked if the City would provide medical doctors at the entrances to all public buildings to make individual mask assessments. Will businesses be providing medical doctors for patrons to make recommendations. If the answer is no, why force another unnecessary mask mandate. She said having another mask mandate sets a very dangerous precedent of politicians playing medicine. It is a sign of public policy malfeasance that lock downs and mask mandates are still being considered. The mask effectiveness is unproven at best and the costs have been astronomical, yet many leaders like the courage to say no, and instead they default to emotional platitudes masquerading as serious and necessary policy.

Elden Cook, Trolley Run, asked Council why they don't listen to the people who voted them in for the positions that they hold. He asked if Council had thought about putting out a survey to find out what the people who elected Council want.

Tucker Jackson, 243 Hudson Drive, read S.C. Code Article III, Section 16-710 which states that it is unlawful for a person over 16 to wear a mask which conceals their identity

on a street or public property of the state, city or county, etc. He read the exceptions in Section 16-7130. He said the excuse for the comments is an emergency. He pointed out there are 5,688 confirmed cases in Aiken County and 91 deaths. He said that is 0.016% death rate. There are many other things that cause more deaths than COVID-19. He said there are people in the media putting fear in the people to be scared and wear a mask. He pointed out many people are not wearing masks, and the mask mandate can't be enforced. He noted that most people wear a mask incorrectly and that worsens the spread. He pointed out that most of the spread is through contact. He said it upsets him to know that our elected people are mandating mask wearing and lock downs for something that kills 0.016% people. He said we can't continue to live in fear over this. He asked that Council stand up for the people who elected them and listen to them. He asked what is more important freedom or safety?

Susan DeBruhl, 1347 Pinehurst Avenue, read a letter from her niece in New York who had a 16-year-old student, who was the first COVID case at their school, to collapse at home. She has serious issues with her lungs because of COVID which will affect her the rest of her life. She noted that COVID is a serious illness. She noted that the positivity rate in South Carolina today has jumped to 17%. Some mid-western states have rates above 50%. She pointed out that CDC wants us to have a positivity rate of less than 5% to be able to go about our lives in a somewhat normal fashion. She noted some countries such as Vietnam, New Zealand, and Australia have managed to maintain a positivity rate of around 1% which is why they are able to go about their lives in a normal fashion. They did that with continued mask wearing. She said she wanted to talk about virtue and ethics. Virtue and ethics are about developing good character. The City of Aiken promotes itself as a city of character. Our virtues come from our upbringing, experiences and education. We can change them by redefining the sort of person that we want to be. People who are concerned about ethical behavior try to identify the rules for good behavior that hold true in every situation. We are taught as children and adults to obey the law and any codes of conduct to standards that apply to our job or other group membership. Living in Aiken gives us membership in the community. There is currently no law in South Carolina mandating masking so that can't guide us. However, many work places, businesses and local governments have conduct or health and safety codes and ordinances which can simplify decision making, and in the case of COVID 19, there are very clear public health recommendations. Rules give us clarity and define what can be done without penalty. Rules can also provide accountability. We know that rules are necessary when we can't depend on people to practice personal responsibility. Considering laws and rules is an important ethical step alongside thinking about our values and the impact of our actions on the community. To some, consequences are important. They try to act ethically towards all groups of people, not just the group that they currently associate with because they know that circumstances can change. She said there are some ethics checks. What values are important to me? What are my duties? And what are the potential impacts of my choice? She said asking a range of questions from all three ethical angles helped her arrive at an ethically measured decision—that she should be consistently wearing a mask when she is out in the public. She asked that Council vote in favor of the mask ordinance.

Joyce Misiag, 40 Inverary Court, stated she has some statistics that she would like to review. They are concerning to her because she has been a nurse for over 40 years. She noted that COVID is something new, and it is disturbing, but we get new diseases and viruses all the time. According to the statistics COVID deaths were up today at 257,623 with a potential of 4 million active cases. The number that have recovered from COVID 19 is 7, 207,253. She pointed out that smoking, according to the CDC, causes more than 480,000 deaths every year. She asked if we would take cigarettes out of every place and make people stop smoking. She pointed out that all of her family smoked except for her. All the members of her family died from smoking related illnesses. There are about one in five annually or 1,300 deaths every day from smoking. She pointed out that a recent John Hopkins study claims that 250,000 people in the United States die every year from medical errors. She pointed out as a nurse she had seen medical errors. Medical errors are the third leading cause of death after heart disease and cancer. She pointed out medical errors are not put on death certificates because they are reported as human errors. She noted that a person can easily get an infection just by going to the hospital and being in the emergency room. Her concern is that we have our liberties and that we wash our

hands which is very important. Masks, as she has known from her nursing career, have not protected her any better than not wearing a mask. She felt everybody should have the right to determine what they want to. If they want to wear a mask, they have that right. If they don't want to wear a mask, they should not be legally bound by it and should not be fined.

Tom Misiag, 40 Inverary Court, stated he appreciated the podium being wiped off, but he would rather have the germs. He said we are being led by false information. It is a ploy by the government to control the people further. It is not about helping people. Setting a fine is taking more control and putting them in jail. He said it is better that we get herd immunity on the virus. He said he is human and needs human touch and being close to people. He said we will destroy civilization and society by separating us. He said he was not going to wear a mask, and they may as well arrest him now.

Amy Clark, 304 Snipes Pond Road, stated Council had pushed hard and rationalized the mask mandate from the very beginning. She said she had heard all kinds of arguments—we need teeth; it is what small business wants; it is what the constituents want; it is the science and data that support it; it shows respect for other people. She pointed out there are holes in all of these arguments. She pointed out that they did not give any real teeth until today by adding further restrictions to outdoor masking and adding a \$25 fine for anybody caught without a mask. She pointed out that both of those are beyond the scope of what the Governor's orders have said. She noted that not all businesses want an ordinance. She stated she told Council last week that two-thirds of all the random small business owners that she polled oppose the mandate. She stated the city's own survey said that there was not overwhelming support for the mask ordinance. As far as constituents, there are some people who support a mandate, but this is also not across the board. A large number of residents oppose a mask mandate. She pointed out that only about 250 people from Aiken signed the initial petition for the ordinance. Whereas, they have had over 546 petitions and growing in a very short time that oppose the mask ordinance. It is never okay to force action on people just because a small group is fearful and noisy about it. She pointed out that they had given Council plentiful legitimate science and data showing clearly that community masking is not the way to prevent COVID transmission. She pointed out that the study cited last week which had initially concluded that masks work has been retracted. It turns out that cases in the mask mandated areas of the study all skyrocketed despite the heavy mask mandate. The researchers concluded that Nature will have its way, and no matter the efforts we make viruses will overcome our efforts and last. This and other recent studies have confirmed that community masking is senseless. All of those who cannot wear a mask have been publicly shamed, verbally assaulted, called murders and irresponsible and can't be real Christians if we don't comply. They have been lectured by Council and others to wear a mask to show respect to others. She asked should that not go both ways. It is mean and discriminatory to condemn people who can't wear masks. It is hatefully to condemn people who have concluded, based on their own research, that masks are futile, especially when a legitimate science reports that. All the rationalizations presented have been refuted. There is no legitimate reason to pass the ongoing ordinance and certainly not to double down on it and make it even more restrictive and punishing. She asked why does Council persist? Why did it start in the first place? She said it seems odd to her that so many South Carolina cities began instituting these mandates about the same time, and all the mandates around the state have similar wording and that it was copied. It appears to be that cities were told to put in mandates by a left wing group called the Municipal Association of South Carolina which strongly recommends that we, and other cities make and keep mandates. It is a group that receives money from our government and then uses that money to lobby government in order to receive favors from the government often in the form of public money. They distributed ordinance templates and directions on how to implement them. City Council did just what they were told, not by the constituents or the state, but by an outside lobbyist group. She pointed out that one of the Council members is on the governing board of the group. She pointed out that transparency is key for all elected officials and this seems to be lacking throughout this process. If the truth is that Aiken has to have a mask mandate in place in order to receive federal and state funding, then just tell us that. Don't waste everyone's time arguing your rationalization for this; just be honest with us. Put the minimum requirements in place as spelled out in the state mandate, and let everyone go on with life as usual. She said trust is on the line here, and

citizens aren't sure they are being told the whole truth. Aiken Citizens for Freedom has asked an independent investigator to get involved, and he has agreed to do so. She said we pray that he alleviates their concern. Meanwhile the division, the nastiness, the intimidation, and the mistrust caused by the ordinance will continue. She asked Council to vote against the proposed ordinance.

Mayor Osbon stated he would be remiss if he did not address her mischaracterization of the Municipal Association as a left wing. He pointed out that he is second Vice Chair of the MASC. He said the MASC works to help the other 291 cities in South Carolina. He noted that a lot of the smaller cities don't have a City Administrator so the MASC has a lot of services that are offered to the cities. He said he was surprised at the mischaracterization. He pointed out that Ms. Clark had done a great job, and he had been very impressed with everything she had presented and the research that she does. He said he would say her statements about the Municipal Association are not accurate statements for what the organization does.

Ms. Clark stated everyone is free to look it up and investigate it themselves, and everyone can draw their own conclusions. She said, as a group, they do hope and as citizens in the city that they are wrong about it and that nothing odd has happened, that all the ethics are onboard with this.

Councilman Woltz stated this has nothing to do with state or federal funding. He was not sure where that came from. Ms. Clark asked if it was not true that the city must have mask ordinances in place in order to receive emergency funding. Council and staff responded that was not true. Mr. Bedenbaugh stated it is wrong as it relates to the City of Aiken, and that was all that he could speak on.

Ms. Clark stated the city may want to clarify that with the constituents as there is a great misunderstanding if that is the case. She said they have been told by people who would know that the City must have a mask ordinance to receive emergency funding. She said they take their word for it as people that are elected in our county and city.

Councilwoman Price stated she had never heard the Municipal Association of South Carolina described in the manner that Ms. Clark did. She said she knows for a fact how much they do for small towns who can't afford administrators and legal services. There are more small towns that are members of the MASC than cities like Aiken.

Ms. Clark stated she was not trying to insult anyone or call a group a bad group, but she was trying to give a brief explanation of one of the perceived functions of the MASC from her knowledge and public knowledge. She said if she is wrong; then she is wrong. She does not mean to disparage anyone.

Janice Price, 2447 Silver Bluff Road, stated regarding the person in New York who was having lung problems because of COVID, she had heard of persons having medical problems from prolonged mask wearing. She noted that they have been wearing masks in New York for at least seven months. She pointed out that problems from prolonged mask use is one of the issues that those opposed to the mask ordinance have been trying to bring up. She pointed out that they have tried to bring up the fact that there are risks for prolonged mask wearing. We may start to see the problems after the society has been masked for so long. She pointed out the problem is when a person is required to wear a mask for long hours when they work, etc. She pointed out she feels that a lot of the people making public comment supporting the mandate are misinformed. She pointed out that the media gives misinformation and does not show the whole picture. The media has sensationalized the pandemic to where one thinks that everybody in America is dying from COVID. She said it may be more so in some places, but not here in Aiken. She pointed out that last week at Aiken Regional there were eight COVID patients, and this week there are seven patients with COVID. She noted that on the DHEC website she found that hospitals are at 84% capacity. She said she also found that for hospitals to turn a profit, optimal occupancy is between 75% and 80%. She noted that the hospitals may be a little over capacity, but she did not know that was a reason for alarm. She pointed out that the virus cases rose in Aiken after the mask mandate was put in place. She pointed out that things were bad back in July, but they had dropped some. She pointed

out she was concerned to have the virus be known as a major fear. She pointed out there are decades of evidence that show that masks don't work for controlling a virus, but we now have unprecedented use of masks on the population of the world. She pointed out that a group of doctors are saying that mask wearing is not right, but the media is censoring the information. She pointed out that Council is doing the citizens of Aiken a disservice by not researching the information from the doctors that are saying that masks are not effective.

Debbie Roland, 115 Idlewild Drive, stated she would present something for someone who had fear about coming forward. She said last week she spoke about the division that the mask ordinance is having in our city. She spoke about fear, intimidation, and the fact that people are being shammed and bullied. She said she has a copy of a study that was mentioned by other people. She read the conclusion of the study. "The recommendation to wear surgical masks to supplement other public health measures did not reduce the SARS COVID infection rate among wearers by more than 50% in a community with modest infection rates."

Ms. Roland also read from comments that a medical doctor in the community asked her to submit. The medical doctor is fearful of something occurring in his job if he were to come forward before City Council to give his opinion and state facts. She said there are many medical personnel in the community who feel the same way. She read his comments.

"We are mortal. This virus has caused some to realize that. However, there is a 99.4% survivability. The studies so far have shown negligible differences between masks and no masks. Mental health implications are not fully understood, but long term mask use has caused increases in anxiety, depression and claustrophobia in the community. Organizations like the World Health Organization only recommend masking the sick. The CDC has flip-flopped and most recently has said that full time mask use is not recommended. This needs to be about choice. Let individuals and businesses make their own decisions and do not make it into a comply or health issues."

Ms. Roland said she believes that the mask mandates are an exercise in compliance. This is a mandate from the government to see if the people will follow along. It has already been shown that mask wearing does not have a significant impact. She pointed out that Council all have on masks. She asked if they were sterile before they put them on their face. She pointed out that if they had touched them that all totally negates anything that could possibly be of benefit. She pointed out the fine that Council is recommending goes beyond the Governor's mandate and is overreach. Adding in retail and commercial establishments is overreach. She said she heard at the last meeting that Council was trying to follow the Governor's orders with the proposed ordinance so the ordinance would be in compliance with the Governor's order. She pointed out that Council is going beyond what the Governor has mandated. She pointed out that the proposed fine would cause more division and unrest. She pointed out that she did not think that any of us want that for our city. She pointed out that she is part of the Aiken Citizens for Freedom group, and the group is promoting unity and people getting along. She said the mask mandate is not helping that.

Ms. Roland then reviewed comments that she was given that were attached to the petition in opposition to the mask mandate.

Michael Buzan, Hitchcock Estates, stated that Dr. Fauci had done a study on the Spanish Flu from 1915 to 1918. He wanted to find out if masks were safe. He discovered that 80% of the people that died from the Spanish Flu did not die from the Spanish Flu, but died because they got bacteria and pneumonia from wearing a mask. He said that study is gone now because it has been censored. Regarding the COVID 19 testing, he pointed out that 90% of them are false positives. Of the COVID cases of people that died, only 60% of the people actually died from COVID. He said 130,000 deaths from COVID are from influenza, pneumonia, heart attacks, etc. He noted that the golden fringe around the flag means we are incorporated. That means the jurisdiction is over incorporation of those incorporated. He said he is a citizen. That is common law, not statutory. He said Council is overreaching their jurisdiction.

Brad Kerr, 102 Hartwell Drive, stated he would give Council some scientific information. He said he is a nuclear engineer. He distributed some information to Council from the U.S. Navy. He noted a recommendation from the U.S. Navy based on a research article, that it was concluded that the non-NINO SH approved dust masks should not be used in work places for respiratory protection against inhalation hazards because the level of protection they provide cannot be assured as evidenced by the large variability and infiltration performance. Even more importantly the authors emphasized that users of the dust masks should be warned against wearing them for protection against nano particles. He pointed out of interest in the report is they were testing the filtration of the masks, not the air gaps around it. The path of least resistance is where the nano particles will go and the virus particles will take the path of least resistance. If there is not an air tight seal around a person's face, then the effectiveness is even not what the report says which is 55% - 70% effectiveness. The report says if one wants effectiveness, they need to be wearing a mask with a 99% filtration. Those masks are \$100+, not the cheap masks that Council and others are wearing. He said from the perspective nano particle physics masks don't work. The particles will go where they want, when they want, and how they want. He said from the perspective of medical science, the mask increases the possibility of bacterial respiratory infection. There is no physical or medical science basis requiring wearing a mask. He pointed out from a psychological perspective the number one need is for people to feel safe, so it was decided if you wore a mask you feel safe. If you wear a mask, you will have some control over the destiny of your health. He said wearing a mask was a psychological perspective solution, not a science based solution. He said Council can choose to follow the propaganda or follow the science. They are two different paths and the two paths are before Council at this time. He said his recommendation is don't wear masks.

Rebecca Przywara, 615 Whippoorwill Court, stated: better to die free than live as a slave, die with honor rather than live in dishonor, I will die a martyr rather than renounce my faith, give me liberty or give me death. Throughout history there have been intangible values that are worth more than life itself. We see this in times and cultures around the world. She said living in this COVID year, she has realized that she is one of those who hold the philosophy of quality of life over quantity. She said she would rather live embracing experiences, people, joy, and suffering than just exist in fear. Seeing people's faces whether a smile or frown, red cheeks or pale, a hug, a wrapped arm around the shoulder, high five, being with people in their personal faces that is living that is life. Human life always has the risks of death, injury or suffering, but it is a balance by the great joy and happiness and love that comes out of those bad and good interactions with those around us. We each make our own choices as how much risk we are willing to accept. She said sky diving is not for her. Being around people who may or may not have COVID, a virus with a high recovery rate, 99%, she considers that a reasonable risk. Others hold to a different level of risk and a different philosophy of life. The marvelous thing about America is that all have different ideas about faith, life, philosophy, and associations with other people has always been respected and encouraged. We live together and respect the others ideas without forcing ours on them. No one's philosophy or religion is better than another. They hold equal value in our nation and lives. She said the ordinance is not about equality under the Constitution. Someone else's philosophy of life is now subjugating hers and others philosophy of life. Someone else's level of reasonable risk is now added into our life superior to hers and others. She said she and others have become second class citizens. She said we must encourage our own beliefs and our own philosophy of life. We are being bullied by our own elected officials who are supposed to protect our liberties, our lives, and our businesses. She said there should not be a frantic effort to avoid all risks of death. That is impossible. She noted that Council had heard all the stats of all the other types of death. People and businesses are quite capable of making wise decisions that are best for themselves and those with whom they interact. We are a nation birthed by a revolution against tyranny. We are not a nation of rulers, but of self-determination. Something so intrusive and permanent should be put to the vote of all the citizens, not just the businesses, but all the citizens of the City of Aiken and not decided just by City Council.

Kirk Downey owner of four Firehouse Subs, two of which are in the City of Aiken and are not doing as well as the two not in the City of Aiken. The addresses are 3555

Richland Avenue and 152 South Aiken Lane. He said he would like to speak out against the mask mandate under the new ordinance proposed. He said we all know that we are living in unprecedented times. Information about the novel Coronavirus is often unknown or changes quickly. Official U.S. health policy regarding the masks has even flip-flopped. The only option that we have to protect the health of our community is to make decisions based, not on what we cannot know with any certainty, but based on what we do know about our community and the response that we have observed to the previous mask mandate. He felt that instituting a new mask mandate in Aiken would be detrimental to the health of our community and our fight against COVID 19. He said if Council assumes that increasing the number of community members correctly wearing face coverings in all public interactions does work to reduce community spread of COVID 19, he would argue that mask mandates issued by local governments are not only ineffective, but could lead to worse outcomes for those who are concerned about transmission of the virus that they hope to reduce through mask wearing. Individuals who do not care about or who actively oppose the mask mandates but are still required to wear a mask to work, shop, or be in public are frequently seen wearing masks incorrectly according to current accepted health standards such as below their nose, ill fitted, etc. He said masks are a sanitation nightmare in the restaurant business, but because of the mask mandate it offers the appearance of greater safety regardless of whether it is being effectively followed. Businesses have not been incentivized to create safer environments for vulnerable individuals by offering them an experience in which they are protected. This creates a problem for those individuals that do care about such mandates and wear their masks properly. They are exposed to the poorly masked individuals and increase their chances of infection. The mask mandate does not create environments that are reasonably more secure for these vulnerable people than if the mandate did not exist in the first place. The mask advisory is a more effective solution. Under an advisory, businesses are able to create more workable solutions for safety. A business could institute hours during which only customers who are properly masked and distanced would be allowed to enter as well as a promise from the establishment to increase sanitation efforts during that time. He said that is an example of how individuals and business owners could create a system which creates more comfort and safety than just a blanket mask mandate. It also gives stores the option of having a mask free set of hours so those who cannot or will not wear a mask can enter the business without offending others instead of shopping at the same time as those who desire a mask to be worn. Businesses would be under no obligation to serve non-masked individuals nor would stores be required to serve masked individuals. It would be up to each individual and each business all of whom want to protect their safety and the safety of the community where they conduct business to make their own risk assessment. Issuing an advisory instead of a mandate also increases the chances of increased mask wearing by individuals who oppose the mandate out of principle. He noted that when we compare the spread of the virus in multiple countries and states, there are no statistical correlation between the spread and the mask mandates. Mandates appear to have no effect on the spread of the virus as it was referenced in the Danish mask study. He asked that Council consider that our country was founded upon the idea of families and businesses making their own choices and not Council requiring those for them.

Mayor Osbon pointed out to Mr. Downey that one of the amendments to the ordinance was to remove all references to food service establishments and restaurants within the City ordinance as the Governor's executive order applies to food service establishments and restaurants and DHEC would control those establishments.

Councilwoman Brohl noted that Mr. Downey had brought up a couple of good ideas. He advocated an advisory to have mask free hours for people who cannot wear masks to be able to come at a certain period of time. It was noted that the grocery stores did something like that early on. She said it sounded like a fairly good solution.

Councilwoman Gregory stated she certainly wanted Mr. Downey's businesses to succeed. She encouraged him to refer to the Governor's executive order for the state.

Jason Neely, 100 Doubletree Drive, stated he is a business consultant and works for 400 different businesses in the CSRA. He said he was a retired structural fire fighter. He said after 911 they found themselves in a position where they went underneath Homeland

Security working with police officers, and the military in response to emergencies in the United States and our security. He said being a structural fire fighter he is also a medic. He said he had been to chemical schools, bomb schools, etc. He said he went to school for 12 years. He said he has several degrees. He said there were several that were assigned to Secret Service. He said he had dealt with some of the most-deadly, crazy biochemical hazardous materials. He said masks don't work. He pointed out that for the last 75 years cloth masks in the fire service do not block smoke particles. He said smoke particles are like driving a bus through the middle of the smoke compared to a virus. He pointed out that Brad Kerr covered that very well as to size of the particles and why they don't work. He said the efficacy of the information and its accuracy is the most important thing. He pointed out that there is a lot of misinformation from CDC and WHO, and they have admitted it publicly. The Surgeon General stated that masks are dangerous and cause problems and other diseases such as pneumonia, etc. In the medical world in managing crises, you are to help people and you are to mitigate crises, not cause more damage. In relationships with businesses and their patrons and clients in our community, it is about trust. Having to physically wear a mask is doing more damage when it has been proven that they don't work. 99% of the people wear them incorrectly. It is stated on the box that cloth masks do not prevent COVID 19. When you go back to relationships with people, that trust is being lost. He said a lot of his clients don't feel that the mask mandate is helping. Businesses out there are struggling and going under. He asked if we are to choose to cause more damage because the mask may or may not help and it has not been proven that it does. He said that is not how it should work. He said consider balancing the scales. He said with the opportunity that a mask may help, look at what you are doing—causing more damage. It is crushing businesses. Having the autonomy for a business to say they are going to do something that will protect them, their store and employees, they are going to do this. He said there are other options than a mask mandate. He asked that Council choose wisely. He said they are crushing relationships and trust is being lost.

Ms. Kristen Hamic, of 63 Medwell Hill Road, feels City Council has already made their decision and do not care what the public thinks or how they feel. She said there had been evidence, statistics, and things proven to Council from those present who have done a lot of research. She pointed out that she had just had a relative die from COVID. When the mask mandate went into effect, he did not leave his home, but he got COVID. She asked that be explained to her. She pointed out masks don't work and Council is going to make people wear masks. She said these mandates are not working. She stated she will wear the mask if it is a mandate, and she will teach her children to follow the rules as well. She will not waste a police officer's time by not wearing a mask, but she is praying Council makes the right choice and listens to all the evidence that has been presented to Council. She feels division is being caused. She feels City Council is not listening to the citizens.

Mr. Jimmy Hamic, of 63 Medwell Hill Road, read a letter to the editor that his friend, Soren McMillan wrote to the newspaper. The letter stated that mask mandates change the community in a negative way. People need to be able to think for themselves and not be told they have to wear masks. Masks prevent people from smiling at each other and also hard to read body language.

Ms. Debbie Nix, of 139 Westwinds Drive, stated she is concerned with the culture in Aiken at this time. She is confused as to how this can be called a pandemic when everyone is still doing everything they want to do, such as going to the stores, etc. She said the survival rate for COVID is 99.6%. She said she had had COVID. She does not understand why we are using masks. She stated she spoke with a nurse at the hospital her mom is in, and the nurse told her there are therapeutics now for COVID, and she has not lost a patient yet. Ms. Nix stated she feels Council likes helping people. She feels if it were a real pandemic, nobody would be out. Everyone would be inside and not coming out.

Ms. Naomi Boles stated she is the wife of an Army veteran and mother of two children. She loves the City. Aiken is the center of her everyday life. It is where she shops for groceries, and where she takes her children for their home school and social activities. She asked Council to please not pass the mask ordinance. She stated healthy and

asymptomatic people do not transmit COVID and do not need to wear a mask. She said this was a contested topic, but since has been widely agreed upon, including the World Health Organization which stated in June, 2020, that asymptomatic carriers do not transmit COVID-19. She stated studies show that masks are ineffective for many reasons. She referenced several studies regarding proper use of masks and stated if they are not worn properly they are ineffective against COVID 19. She said she is a survivor of domestic violence and was once smothered by someone she loved. Because of that experience she cannot have anything over her face. She stated she cannot wear a mask. She said she was present because that is how important that is to her. She stated that if Council passes the mask mandate, she will be forced to take her business somewhere instead of the City of Aiken. She asked Council to not pass the mask mandate. She said there had been a mask ordinance for months, and it did not work. She said the virus is following the normal highs and lows, and it will continue to. Forcing people to wear masks or enacting a fine will not change that. She asked that Council not govern out of fear or to follow a precedent. She asked Council to set a precedent of our own, one of faith and freedom. The virus has a recovery rate of over 99%. She asked that Council not destroy the economy and the legacy of this town by enforcing an unproved safety measure that is hurting more people and places of business than it is helping.

Ms. Destiny Page, of 911 Alfred Street, stated she was speaking on behalf of her peers at school and the children in her neighborhood. She stated they want to be able to go to school without living in fear of getting COVID. She feels wearing a mask helps prevent the spread of COVID and that Council should continue the mask mandate.

Mr. David Kerlin, of 106 Ridgemoor Drive, stated there have only been two people that have spoken at the meeting in favor of wearing masks. He stated it was bad that the citizens were made to stand in the hallway for a long time waiting to speak to Council to tell them how they feel about wearing masks. He said leave the people alone who do not want to wear a mask. He said the doctor stated it seems that masks help. He said Council wants to make a law to fine citizens who are healthy over what seems to help. He said we are talking about fear, not science. He said people are scared. He feels people should wear masks if it makes them feel safe or stay home. He believes COVID is real, but he is not scared as he is healthy. He said if Council really wants to protect the vulnerable citizens, then mandate that everyone eat healthy and exercise. He feels the City should recommend that citizens wear masks and not mandate it. He asked that Council not make wearing masks a mandate that is punishable by a fine. He pointed out that the people who care showed up for the Council meeting tonight; they emailed Council. City Council is not supposed to make people fearful and not drive fear in other people.

Mr. Carl Withers, of 109 Long Ridge Loop, stated he is against the mask mandate. He believes the citizens are responsible. He feels it should be the citizens' responsibility to wear a mask, not the responsibility of City Council to make it happen. He said there are no documents that masks work to control the virus. He stated he hopes that City Council will listen to the citizens and leave it to the responsibility of the people regarding wearing a mask.

Ms. Crystal Sanders, 4267 Storm Branch Road, asked why decisions were being made out of fear. She stated masks may be causing more harm than good because of the stress they cause. People that wear masks are less likely to social distance. She said another thing that causes fear is the constant bombardment of numbers. She asked that Council please stop creating fear and a false security.

Ms. Crissy Bowers, of 1579 Quarry Pass, stated Aiken has more constituents who disagree with the mandates than not. It is very stressful on the population. She stated people are being scared. She stated people are not paying attention to what is going on. She said there are many people who are continuing to go about their lives and not concerned about the virus. She stated the concern comes when the mandates come about. She said she will wear a mask in private businesses and their request to wear a mask if she wants to shop there. When the government lays out blanket mandates, it paves the way for more oversteps of people's constitutional rights. It is a very dangerous place to go for seven people to make a decision on something that should be voted for by the

citizens of the City of Aiken. She stated she hoped Council has been listening to the people who have spoken.

Ms. Corey Harper, of 1528 Pine Log Road, stated the City of Aiken voted. City Council works for the citizens and the City of Aiken citizens are telling Council to not have this mask mandate. If people want to wear masks, then they will wear masks. If businesses ask for masks to be worn, that is fine as well. She pointed out she had not been downtown for some time because she does not want to wear a mask. She stated when there are 600 citizens that sign a petition asking Council to reconsider the mask mandate, that speaks volumes. She said there were not that many people asking Council to have the mask ordinance. She pointed out that the people who spoke against the mask ordinance presented facts and scientific evidence of where wearing a mask stands in November. She pointed out that we have a handle on COVID now. She stated the City of Aiken does not need City Council to tell them to wear a mask. They don't need the government to step in and tell them what to wear. She asked Council to please reconsider and not extend the mask mandate.

Mayor Osbon asked for comments from City Council.

Mayor Osbon stated Council has before them second reading of an amended ordinance requiring the wearing of face coverings in establishments open to the public.

Mayor Osbon reviewed the amendments to the ordinance. He stated the ordinance would go into effect November 20, 2020, at noon if it passes. The trespassing charge will be replaced with a flat \$25 fine, not to be escalated. The language will also be amended to remove any references to food service establishments and restaurants so as not to contradict or confuse what was said by the Governor's executive order.

Mayor Osbon called for a vote on the motion made by Councilwoman Diggs, seconded by Councilman Woltz, that Council approve on second reading the amended ordinance requiring individuals to wear face coverings in commercial establishments which are open to the public. He noted that Councilmembers Woltz, Price, Gregory, Mayor Osbon, and Councilmember Diggs voted in favor of the motion to approve the ordinance as amended on second reading. Opposed were Councilmembers Brohl and Girardeau. He said the motion passes 5 in favor with 2 opposed.

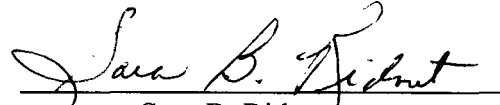
Councilwoman Brohl stated this has been a very divisive topic. She thanked everyone who has attended all of the meetings. She said it had been impressive to hear the work that some citizens had done. She pointed out that one citizen asked do we want freedom or safety. She quoted Benjamin Franklin in stating "If you give up your freedom for safety, you do not deserve either." She also quoted President Ronald Regan stating, "We are never more than one generation away from extinction or freedom. We don't pass it on to our children in our bloodstream, that's not how it happens. It must be protected, fought for, handed on down to them, and for them to do the same with their children, or one day we will speak during our sunset years telling these children and their children what it was like to live in the U.S. where men were free." She stated she understands everything that was said. She was impressed with how level headed the people were that talked about this and how much it took for them to be present for each meeting. She wishes she had more than one vote. She thanked those for coming and speaking.

Councilman Girardeau stated the citizens' comments were very impressive. He stated people did a lot of homework. He said someone suggested that we did not get enough information out. He stated that Council received hundreds of emails and a lot of people were for the mask ordinance and lot were against it. He had phone calls from his mentors that asked him to vote in support of the mask ordinance, but he had others that called and asked him to not vote in support of the mask ordinance. He heard all of them. It goes both ways. He stated everybody on City Council is doing what they think is best. There is no money involved and no one is getting paid. There is no bias. Each Councilmember, individually, is doing the best they can with the information they have. We all love Aiken, and we are doing it for that reason. He stated the ordinance passed and everyone is in it together now. Let's go forward, being positive and being together, on it. We cannot afford to be so divided amongst this ordinance. Everything will get better. It will

not stay forever. He asked for the community to get together and do the best they can. He stated the mandate ran out on Monday, but when he went in businesses, people were still wearing the masks. He said the ordinance passed. We need to do the best we can and have a great holiday season and get out and support the small businesses. He said that is what he is concerned about.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Councilman Woltz moved, seconded by Councilwoman Gregory, that the meeting adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.


Sara B. Ridout
City Clerk