

Town of Fairfield News

10/1/2021 - 10.1 Interim Mask Policy Update



Dear Fairfielder,

I wanted to provide you with an interim update before my regularly scheduled newsletter next Friday. The first topic is regarding the Town's mask policy and the second is on the upcoming Charter Revision Commission public hearing Wednesday, October 6.

MASK POLICY UPDATE

In consultation with the Health Director and Emergency Management Director, on Monday, August 23, I put into effect a town wide mask policy and asked neighboring towns to join me as an added layer of protection against the very contagious Delta variant. This was on the heels of Fairfield being moved into the red category by the state and the high transmission category from the CDC the week of August 16. Hospitalizations statewide and in Fairfield County were climbing and the variant was peaking.

We put this temporary measure into effect while all indicators were trending in a negative direction. I made it clear that we would continue to monitor all data and lift the mandate when multiple indicators consistently trended in a positive direction. ([Read more from the August 27 newsletter](#)).

Both National and State Public Health professionals have advised the peak of the Delta variant wave is likely behind us and our Health Director also advised me that, while conditions can always change and future increases could occur, it currently appears that this wave peaked in the Town of Fairfield about two weeks ago.

This week, Fairfield County has been downgraded by the CDC from high transmission into the substantial category, and the Town has been downgraded by the State from red to orange. Our [case rate](#) is at 11.9 per day/100,000 residents. The state's positivity rate is currently at 1.26%.

Over the last several weeks, we have seen a consistent downward trend across case rates and hospitalizations, which has also been seen statewide and across the country. Another very important metric is Fairfield's vaccination rate, which has climbed since putting the mask mandate into effect. Fairfield is 67% fully vaccinated and 71% have received their first dose.

Ninety eight percent of the highest risk populations, that include residents 65 and older, have received their first dose of the vaccine. Additionally, those who meet CDC criteria as moderately to severely immunocompromised have been eligible for a booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna for the last month and a half, providing further protection. Residents who received the Pfizer vaccine are currently eligible to get a booster dose. There is currently NO recommendation for the general population regarding a booster dose if they received Moderna or Johnson and Johnson. The age group with the lowest vaccination rate is 18-24, currently at 63%, which we expect is likely higher due to data that shows many university students vaccination rates are counted in their home states and not in Fairfield. Fairfield University is 92% vaccinated and Sacred Heart University reports being over 90% vaccinated.

[Vaccination](#) is the most important defense against severe illness and hospitalization from COVID-19. While vaccine "breakthrough" cases have occurred in Connecticut, the majority of those cases, are reporting symptoms to be mild and have not resulted in severe illness or hospitalizations. Of the 2,343,473, persons who have completed their vaccine series, 0.58 percent of Connecticut's fully vaccinated residents have contracted the virus. The most severe cases tend to be in unvaccinated individuals.

Compared to being vaccinated, being unvaccinated currently has the following relative risk:

- 5 times higher of being infected with COVID-19
- 14 times higher risk of dying from COVID-19
- 40 times higher risk of being hospitalized with COVID-19

As a result of all of the above mentioned positive trends, and in consultation with the Health Director and Emergency Management Director, I have made the decision to lift Fairfield's current indoor mask mandate effective immediately and follow the CDC guidance that recommends masks be worn

indoors and when in close contact with others. Any resident who feels more comfortable wearing a mask while indoors should continue to do so.

Many residents have written to me regarding masks in schools. I have repeatedly shared through my newsletter that the requirement for students to wear masks in schools is a mandate from the Governor's Executive Order and town leaders DO NOT have the authority to change that policy.

Businesses have the authority under the Governor's executive order, to continue requiring masks for their employees and customers. I hope our residents will be respectful of the decisions of businesses that chose to require masks or not, and to also be respectful to residents in Town who choose to wear a mask, or not.

I have done my best to guide our Town through the pandemic and make thoughtful, informed decisions for our community. We have all been through a lot together over the last 18 months and emotions continue to run high. I'm asking our community once again to please be respectful to each other regarding differences of opinion because in the end, we are neighbors.

I hope you have a nice weekend.



I wanted to also let residents know that the Health Department will be hosting two flu and pneumonia vaccination clinics on:

Thursday, October 7th from 10am – 7pm

Friday, October 8th from 10am – 5pm

[Click here](#) for insurance and pricing requirements, and more information.

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION & PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, October 6 | 6:30 p.m.

Instructions to participate are at the bottom of this email.

I ENCOURAGE OUR CITIZENS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS

FUNDAMENTALLY IMPORTANT PROCESS FOR OUR TOWN'S DEMOCRACY

Why Should You Get Involved?

The [Town Charter](#) is Fairfield's governing document that outlines our form of government, elections and budget process, and guides us on the duties of elected and appointed officials including key department heads, boards and commissions. Charter revision is the fundamental process by which you can have a say in our democracy on a local level. It happens infrequently, so I hope you will take the time to get involved now.

Background:

Fairfield's government is comprised of the cooperative effort of over 400 elected and appointed Town officials and board members. The vast majority are volunteers elected or appointed to boards and commissions.

As outlined in the Charter, Fairfield operates with three main branches of government: The Executive branch, comprised of the three member Board of Selectmen, elected every four years, with the First Selectwoman, the highest elected official, acting as the Town's chief executive officer in charge of the administration of all town operations. The Town's Legislative branch is the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) comprised of 40 members in ten voting districts with four representatives elected per district every two years. Finally, the Board of Finance is charged with overseeing the Town's financial interests and policies. Members of the Board of Finance are elected every six years, with staggered terms.

There are dozens of other boards and commissions that oversee areas such as Education, Zoning, Parks & Recreation and Conservation - just to name a few.

While the Town Charter is the key document that allows our municipality to govern our community, the [Town Code](#) details many of the specific regulations that Town officials and Town departments undertake in the Town's daily operations. The Town Charter and all town ordinances, rules and regulations have been approved, adopted, ordained and enacted and are codified and consolidated into titles, chapters and sections in the Town Code.

What's the Process?

The last Charter Revision conducted in the Town of Fairfield was in 2006, 15 years ago, and it is generally recommended that municipalities review their Charter every 10 years.

State Statute governs the process by which a municipality can amend its' governing document. For this process, the Town has retained the assistance of Steven Mednick, an attorney who has many years of experience assisting towns with charter revision. Attorney Mednick will work with the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) throughout the 15 month process.

To begin Charter Revision (consistent with state law), the BOS developed a charge for a CRC and appointed a committee of seven qualified members, with equal representation from Democrats and Republicans, and 1 Unaffiliated member. The members of the commission were chosen based on experience and/or a deep understanding of our town government. I want to thank these residents for stepping up to serve on this very important commission:

Bryan Cafferelli, Chair (R)
Chris Brogan, Vice Chair (D)
Marlene Battista (R)
Jay Gross (D)
Pamela Iacono (R)
John Mitola (D)
John Wynne (U)

For the seven member commission, only two appointees were allowed to be members of an existing municipal board or commission.

How it Works:

After the commission holds meetings and public hearings gaining input from the community, the commission will present recommendations to the Board of Selectmen (BOS). The BOS can either accept or reject the recommendations or they can send it back to the commission with questions or revisions. If the BOS has suggested changes, the process continues until the BOS gives final approval. The entire process will be open to the public and documented.

Ultimately, after the BOS approves the final recommendations, Fairfield residents will have the opportunity to have their say when the items are placed on the November 2022 ballot.

To watch Attorney Mednick's presentation to the Board of Selectmen outlining the process, click [here](#).

How Can You Get Involved:

On Wednesday, October 6, the Commission will host a virtual public hearing to listen to input from residents about our charter.

To Make a Public Comment, join the Webex meeting as follows:

- Via a web browser: <https://tofit.my.webex.com/meet/online>
 - From the Webex app, connect to meeting #: 126 145 0736 #
- Or,
- Call 510-338-9438; 126 145 0736 #

Please Note:

The public can also send their comments before or after the meeting to Pru O'Brien at PO'Brien@fairfieldct.org with Charter Revision Commission in the subject line. As you would in a public meeting, please include your name and address with your comment. All comments received and verified will be included in the minutes with your name and address. Your email address will be excluded.

To sign up to receive agendas or notifications on future Charter Revision Commission meetings, [click here](#).

MORE INFORMATION:

[Current Town Charter](#)

[Charter Revision Commission Web Page](#)

To listen to the first organizational commission meeting, and a presentation from Attorney Mednick on Home Rule, [click here](#).

