

PLEA FOR HELP....PLEASE

Last Monday evening the City Council of the City of Berlin held a public hearing on a very important public health initiative to TEMPORARILY require face coverings when indoors in our business community, restaurants, places of worship or anywhere indoors where there are gatherings of people. I am making this plea to help our community to get to the other side. Wearing face coverings when within 6 feet of our friends and neighbors is the right thing to do. Coos County is now, on a per capita basis, the hottest spot in the state of New Hampshire. In the Colebrook-West Stewartstown area, there are over 80 cases and now 2 deaths. Community transmission is widespread and the health care infrastructure needed to treat people is maxed out. The "horse has left the barn" and face covering requirements will only have mixed results for the next 8 or so weeks. Businesses are closed up and who knows how many will be able to reopen. This is real and it is past crisis stage.

I am making this plea for help here in Berlin because our age demographic is actually more at risk than our northern neighbors. We have two nursing homes with a combined capacity of over 150 residents. We also have two correctional facilities that are currently housing over 1400 inmates and employ over 650 people. We have an elderly population, many who participated in sacrificing their living standards to support the nation's effort during World War II. We have kids participating in remote learning and not in school, not an ideal situation for many at risk kids. Students are being robbed of their high school activities and socialization. They get no "second bite" of their high school apples.

There are many businesses who won't survive this tragedy not of their own making. Now is the time to support one another. Berlin has always come together in difficult times. This pandemic is one of those, particularly now that it lays at our doorstep.

By the time this plea is printed, the City Council will hopefully have passed a face coverings required ordinance. This isn't to make criminals out of folks, it isn't meant to make political statements, but to come together at a time of great urgency. No one likes wearing a mask. ALL of us enjoy our freedoms guaranteed to us by our nation's constitution. As a civilized society, however, we have basic responsibilities to each other. Our shared responsibility to one another in time of crisis will define who we are as a community. PLEASE PLEASE, let's all make the small sacrifice. Let's show New Hampshire what Berlin can do when we check our differences at the door and roll up our sleeves.

Paul Grenier, Mayor