



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **WHITEFISH CITY COUNCIL PASSES EMERGENCY ORDINANCE TO REINSTATE LOCAL MASK MANDATE**

WHITEFISH, MONT. (Jan. 5, 2021) -- On Monday, January 4th, Whitefish City Council passed [Emergency Ordinance 21-01](#), which will require the continued use of face coverings, should Governor Greg Gianforte lift the existing statewide face covering directive. This ordinance was drafted in response to Governor Gianforte's indication that in his initial days in office, he plans to lift the mask directive administered by former Governor Steve Bullock. Emergency Ordinance 21-01 will remain effective for 90 days following the anticipated elimination of the existing statewide face covering directive.

Due to the overwhelming consensus of current medical and scientific evidence indicating that wearing face coverings reduces the transmissibility of COVID-19, and the comments received during the public hearing, the City of Whitefish will continue to require their use. Whitefish City Manager Dana Smith explains, "The City remains committed to following the recommendations of our public health leaders to protect its citizens, visitors, and our most vulnerable population."

Mayor John Muhlfield comments, "In Montana, it's not a one size fits all approach to managing this pandemic. We are a unique town with a large tourist base, and by taking this pre-emptive and proactive measure, we are hoping it will help keep our ski lifts turning and our businesses and schools open."

The ordinance requires that "all businesses, government offices, or other persons responsible for indoor spaces open to the public shall require and take reasonable measures to ensure that all employees, contractors, volunteers, customers, or other members of the public wear a face covering that covers their mouth and nose at all times while entering or remaining in any indoor spaces open to the public."

Additionally, "All points of entry open to the public shall have a clearly visible sign posted stating: 'Mask or face covering use required for ages five and older.'"

For any outdoor gatherings, "Where social distancing is not possible or is not observed, sponsors shall require and take reasonable measures to ensure that all persons attending an organized outdoor activity wear a face covering that covers their mouth and nose at all times."

Furthermore, "At all outdoor gatherings, whether or not it constitutes an organized outdoor activity, all individuals are required to wear face coverings while in attendance where it is impracticable to maintain six feet of physical distance at all times, or where attendees are not observing at least six feet of physical distance from others."

Notable exceptions to this ordinance include:

- Children under the age of five. All children between the ages of two and four, however, are strongly encouraged to wear a face covering in accordance with the provisions of this emergency ordinance.
- Persons consuming food or drinks in an establishment that offers food or drinks for sale while seated.
- [Further exceptions can be found here.](#)

The town of Whitefish has remained steadfast in continually encouraging its citizens to slow the spread of COVID-19. Notably, the Whitefish COVID-19 Task Force installed 72 [banners in downtown Whitefish](#) featuring masked community members, organized over 50 [videos encouraging covid-safe behavior](#), and worked with Whitefish restaurants by providing compostable takeout containers, encouraging more robust dine-out programs. Over 400 community members have also committed to being covid-safe by [pledging to Be a Friend of The Fish](#). The task force is led by Whitefish City Manager Dana Smith with Mayor John Muhlfeld and City Councilor Frank Sweeney also as contributing members.

The Whitefish COVID-19 Task Force was formed to distribute a unified messaging campaign across the community to slow the spread of COVID-19. The program is funded through Montana's share of the CARES Act that was made available to the State's cities, towns and counties. For more information, and to take the pledge, visit [WhitefishCovidCares.com](#).

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