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**City of Duluth Communications Office**

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**DATE: 8/3/2021**

**SUBJECT: City to require masks in City facilities beginning tomorrow, August 4**

**BY: Kate Van Daele, Public Information Officer**

**City to require masks in City facilities beginning tomorrow, August 4**

[Duluth, MN] Beginning tomorrow, August 4, masks will be required for staff and the public in all City of Duluth facilities.

“Earlier today, an email was sent to staff alerting them of this change,” Chief Administrative Officer Noah Schuchman said. “This is not a decision that we make lightly, and is a short-term step which we feel is in the best interest of our staff, their families, and the public.”

The City continues to track information, data, and recommendations from the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Minnesota Department of Health, local hospitals, and St. Louis County.

“Our staff continues to have conversations with our partners on decisions that they and we are making internally so that we are in step with one another for the betterment of our staff and our community,” Schuchman said. “We all continue to work in tandem to lead by example; we hope that the public will do the same.”

“Most of our staff have made the choice to vaccinate and I find it both frustrating and disappointing that we all have to go back to this,” Mayor Emily Larson said. “That said, as hard as it is to take this step back to preserve worker and public health, we now know how effective masks are and how dangerous the Delta variant is. We need to keep serving the public while protecting public health and this is one simple, effective and powerful way we can do that.

In addition to masking in public buildings, I strongly encourage people continue to vaccinate. Our kids deserve a decent school year, our businesses need to keep their doors open and our hospitals have to have our support to help them manage capacity and hospitalizations. We all need to do all we can to keep this community going.”

The City recently had taken steps to open City Council, Boards, and Commission meetings in person, beginning on August 1. Meetings are scheduled to happen in person, with the public comment being accepted before the meeting in writing or person at the meeting.

In addition to the mask requirement for staff and the public in City facilities, fire stations that just reopened to the public effective immediately will close.

“We are proud of, and deeply grateful to, our staff who have had worked so hard to keep themselves, their families, and the public safe for the last 16 months,” Mayor Larson said. “This news is not easy for them or for any of us. We were excited to see people’s faces in the public places and spaces that mean a lot to our community. This, unfortunately an important step to take for right now.”

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