Comments about a potential mask mandate in East Montpelier
Compiled December 6, 2021

Front Porch Forum

Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?

Carl Etnier • Selectboard Member, East Montpelier

In August, the East Montpelier selectboard considered a local mask mandate for businesses that receive the members of the public. Townspeople weighed in almost 2-1 in favor of the mask mandate, but local businesses ranged from supportive to tepid to opposed. And Governor Phil Scott said he would veto any local mask mandate; statute requires administration approval of such local health rules. The selectboard opted simply to encourage businesses to have their customers wear masks.

Scott could have just reversed his position and agreed to approve local mandates, but instead he called the legislature into session to make a new, temporary law that doesn't require his approval of the local mandates. It was an unnecessary expenditure of a lot of tax dollars and people's time, but now at least we have a clear signal that a local mask mandate will not be vetoed.

And now Covid numbers are at record levels in Vermont, significantly higher than they were in August, when we first considered the mandate. Even back then, Covid community transmission exceeded levels where the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends all individuals wear masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status.

On the other hand, how effective will a mask mandate be when it's more politically divisive than it was last year? When the governor says he encourages people to wear masks but opposes local mask mandates and is only willing to approve them to reduce the political pressure on him?

On Monday, the selectboard will once more consider a local mask mandate. What would you like us to do? Please respond to me individually, or to the forum, or come to the meeting Monday at 6:30 pm. The agenda and details on how to Zoom in are at eastmontpeliervt.org.

Mask Mandate

Sanford Woodbeck • Horn of the Moon Rd, East Montpelier

Why is the town office any different than any business? Its the only place around that has a mandate.

Emails to Carl Etnier

From: Patrick Southern
Subject: Yes, please, Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 4:57:02 PM EST

Hi Carl,

I fully support the selectboard implementing a universal indoor mask mandate for our town until such a time that our county no longer meets the threshold for CDC guidance recommending that measure be taken.

My partner is high risk (pregnant) and it sucks that covid is still a thing...

Hope you're well!

Best,

Patrick Southern
545 Center Rd
Montpelier, VT 05602

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From: "Andrew Christiansen"
Subject: Mask mandate
Date: December 2, 2021 at 6:43:53 PM EST

Hi Carl,

Responding to your Front Porch Forum post, I would like to see a mask mandate in East Montpelier. It's not as onerous an imposition as the Governor would make it seem and with the rise of the Omicron variant, it seems like a no-brainer. Currently, I only enter businesses with a mask requirement and avoid as much as possible those that don't.

Andy

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From: Sari Wolf
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 5, 2021 at 11:20:27 PM EST

Hi Carl,

I can't make the meeting as I will be at work until 7pm.
And I have no interest in being in close contact with anyone.

I do want to put in my comment though.

We need to have a mask mandate! Really there is no excuse to not have a state wide, better yet nationwide mask mandate.

Since we have poor leadership on the subject, and clearly vaccines alone is not working, mask up!

I am terrified to go into the credit union, thankfully there is a drive up window.

Going into Duddlies there is a sign to sanitize hands, but not masks sign, how stupid is that.

I don't go places unmasked, and will not go shopping except the coops who require masks.

My friends daughter is on her 6th quarantine at EMES since the school year began, each time due to a close contact in the classroom.

MASKS! Mandate them.

Sari Wolf, RN
223-4715

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From: Alan Rome
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:18:34 PM EST

They should be mandated in my opinion. The irony is that the vaccinated wear masks and the unvaccinated do not, so the situation is absurd. Some guidance and backbone is needed, Alan Rome

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From: Alex Brown
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:57:08 PM EST

Hi Carl,

Thanks for asking for feedback. I'm in favor of a mask mandate for businesses. I'd also note, to the businesspeople who feel they'll lose customers by requiring masks, they may just as likely gain customers who otherwise would not feel safe.

I know this topic makes people bristle, but wearing a mask to shop doesn't seem to me like a big sacrifice. Hoping for peace, hoping we can all respect the impact we all have on each other.

Alex

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From: Cort Richardson
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 3, 2021 at 6:51:12 AM EST

I favor East Montpelier instituting a mask mandate, at least until such time that COVID numbers decline to acceptable limits. Thank you for publishing this survey. -- Cort Richardson

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From: fitch family
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 3, 2021 at 11:03:41 AM EST

I say we have a mandate to keep our vulnerable population safe if people are too lazy or too stubborn or too whatever to put on a mask they can send somebody else or do online shopping I'd like to feel I could go into Dudley's again and be safe. I haven't felt that way in there for a long while

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From: Laura Greenwood
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 3, 2021 at 11:29:25 AM EST

Hi Carl,

Thank you for your post.

I'm writing as a 36 week pregnant person that has had to be extra vigilant and basically hide away these past nine months of pregnancy. Pregnant people have significantly increased risk of severe illness, even while being vaccinated, if contracting covid. The increased risks for me are preterm birth, stillborn birth, and hemorrhaging.

I think it's fair to say it's an awful time to be pregnant.

I fully support a mask mandate especially when there is ample evidence that mandates do increase individuals to follow them more than just "guidance." But our country and communities hyper individualism is a hard battle to fight. How do you make others care about their neighbors, or even strangers?

I wear a mask to protect myself but also my family, unborn child, neighbors and strangers I pass by. I deeply worry for the newly pregnant people who have much longer to go and need to navigate the horrors of being pregnant while in a pandemic.

Thanks Carl,

Laura Greenwood
Center Rd.

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From: Sarah Wright
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 3, 2021 at 7:42:42 PM EST

Hi Carl-

I emailed you before about the mask mandate and at this time I still feel that we should have a mandate. I wear a mask at work (medical office), in stores and stay away from crowds. I know we are all tired of this pandemic, but it seems to be getting worse, not better.
I do feel apprehensive when I'm in a shop,or place that has many non masked people.
Hoping for a mandate!
Thank you,
Sarah Wright

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From: Richard Raubertas
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 4, 2021 at 11:02:00 AM EST

Carl,
I opposed a mask mandate in August, and continue to oppose it.

It bothers me that mask advocates are not clear about what their long term plan is. For example, they don't seem to consider whether suppressing cases now just briefly postpones infections, but doesn't prevent them. Vermont currently is in the top 10 states for cases per 100K (although near the bottom for current deaths per 100K, thanks to high vaccination rates). Meanwhile Texas, Florida, and Georgia, notorious for resisting mask mandates, are in the bottom 10 in case rates.* Why? Because they had their (intense but relatively brief) wave of delta infections in September. Vermont is having its (less intense but longer-lasting) wave now. Either way we end up in the same place: almost everyone will be exposed, multiple times, because the virus is not going away.

I was shopping at several stores around the area yesterday and saw most people weren't wearing masks. I don't think all those people are selfish or thoughtless. They are realists. The virus isn't going away, so the world is slightly more dangerous than it was two years ago. That's unfortunate, but it's time to acknowledge it and get on with life. (The governor seems to feel that way too, although he can't be so blunt.)

Regards,
Richard Raubertas

* https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/coronavirus-us-cases-deaths/?itid=hp_pandemic

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From: Betsy Barstow
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 3, 2021 at 2:49:40 AM EST

Hi Carl,
In short I would like to see everyone wearing a mask inside businesses. I do. At the same time I don't know if people will follow a mask mandate due to pandemic "fatigue". a longing for things to be

"normal" again and the misconception that if a person is fully vaccinated then they won't get Covid. So, I don't have a recommendation for this dilemma...I'll try to make the meeting.
Thanks for reaching out,
Betsy Barstow

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From: Ann Stanton
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:02:58 PM EST

Hi Carl,
I would like the mask mandate because that shifts blame from a store to the Selectboard (which I wish were not the case. I hope you don't get threats around this issue. So hard to be a public servant these days!)

I can't figure out why Phil Scott is "wildly popular" as reported in national press since he has really let us down since the summer. My guess is that he's trying to have it all ways and that he's going to go for the Senate seat. After all this time of not supporting the Trump administration, etc., his true colors are starting to bleed through...

Anyway, it's a minor bother to wear a mask, but the only people complaining are a few adults. I was just in the school today and even the very smallest kids were wearing them. It's going to be with us for at least the next 5 years, minimum, so get used to it, folks...

Ann

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From: Bernie Noe
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:05:37 PM EST

Hi Carl, I support a mask mandate. Thanks, Bernie Noe--

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From: Elle Stanforth
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:14:03 PM EST

Nice to see your name Carl! (This is Elle from Goddard)

My family lives in East Montpelier village and we would want a mask mandate.

We have 2 kids who go to the local elementary school. My 10 year old when I asked him if he would like a mask mandate in our town, lit up and said “yes! Of course! Because I think it would make our community safer”

I think we have a responsibility to our community to protect each other. I think mask mandates extend a hand of care to our friends and families.

Let's continue to lead the way of rational, kind actions.

Peace,
Elle Oille-Stanforth

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From: David Hernandez
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:42:37 PM EST

Mandate please. Cases are at a record high. Thank you.

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From: Carl Davis
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 5:46:32 PM EST

Hello Carl,
Carl Davis here, I live on RT14 in N. Montpelier.
As a citizen in E. Montpelier district I support a mask mandate.
I feel an obligation to protect the employees of establishments as well as other citizens in our community. It's part of the social contract. A town ordinance takes the onus off the establishments employees. And it's the obligation of leadership to make the tough calls and accept the backlash. (Perhaps I should be cc'ing Gov. Scott on that point.) Nevertheless, his administration passed the buck to you.
You can quote me on this email, I will share the ire from those in opposition.
Thank you for posing the question and taking the time to read this.
Sincerely,
Carl

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From: Hale irwin
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 6, 2021 at 4:32 PM EST

I live in Middlesex.
Anyone against masking indoors in public is crazy!

Hale

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From: Alison Byrnes
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 6:01:46 PM EST

Hi Carl,

Our family is definitely in favor of a mask mandate. As a two teacher family with a child in daycare, we already have quite a bit of exposure and would love to lessen it as much as possible when inside businesses. I am pregnant and due in a few weeks and if my husband tests positive, he can't come to the hospital with me for delivery. We're vaccinated and boosted (although our toddler is not and our newborn won't be) but still want the community to do everything they can to protect us and everyone!

Thanks,
Alison

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From: Deborah Post
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 7:07:06 PM EST

I'm 100% in favor of a mask mandate for the town - as soon as possible.

Deborah Post

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From: Maureen
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 7:14:59 PM EST

Hi-
Thanks for reaching out to get public opinion. Personally, I typically wear a mask when I enter a public indoor place and am fully vaccinated and boosted. However, I am in favor of encouraging mask use indoors but against a mask mandate for the town.
Maureen Dougherty

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From: eftacc
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 7:42:26 PM EST

Hi Carl, my personal opinion is that a mask mandate is a good thing. One year ago when we all wore makes our infection and transmission rate were the lowest in the country. Now that most of us have been vaccinated and relaxed and no longer mask we are having the highest local infection and

transmission rate of the entire pandemic. Let's go back to what works. Masking is a simple way to protect each other. I am all in favor of East Montpelier having a local mask requirement.

Gene Troia

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From: james sloan
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 8:19:48 PM EST

I oppose any mak mandate.
Jim Sloan

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From: Ernest Broe
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 9:04:19 PM EST

Hi Carl,
Ernest Broe here, I live on Center Rd. I am 83 years old and have had all 3 Covid shots. I don't like wearing a mask just because so many people are refusing to get the shot and are often the ones getting sick. Why are those of us that took the steps to control the virus being asked to wear a mask, we aren't the problem.
Let those that refuse to get protected by the vaccine get sick, it's their choice. Don't ask me to wear the mask because of the actions of those other citizens.
If it is mandated in town I will not spend one dime here even if I have to wear a mask in Walmart. I'm just plain sick of this mess. Thanks for asking. Ernie

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From: Ruth Coppersmith
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 9:29:35 PM EST

Hi Carl,
Tough situation! I guess I am in favor of a local mask mandate though I think it is unfortunate that the governor proceeded as he did, so instead of a statewide decision now we have members of small communities fighting with each other over mask mandates. Sad. I don’t envy you and the selectboard but I do support a local mask mandate. (I live on the Caláis side of Adamant).
Ruth

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From: Shari Young
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?

Date: December 2, 2021 at 9:48:54 PM EST

I absolutely support a mask mandate, as I did when the selectboard considered this a few months ago (I emailed you then when you asked for input.)
The local hardware store & post office employees included.

Shari

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From: Terrence Keeney
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 9:54:28 PM EST

Carl,
I appreciated your FPF posting today. This is to let you know that Sarah Gillen and I are both in favor of a mask mandate. Personally we both always wear masks indoors and would appreciate it if all others in a place of business (or anywhere indoors) would do so as well.
Terry Keeney

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From: Mica M
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 10:15:58 PM EST

Hi Carl. Thanks for asking this question. I am very very very supportive of a mask mandate and extremely frustrated that Scott has made such a stupid and dangerous decision to prevent this until now. I honestly can't understand why we don't have a statewide mask mandate. The numbers are unbelievably bad now. Anyway, I hope it can be passed.

Thanks, Mica
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Mica McDonald (they/he)

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From: Karen Saudek
Subject: Re: Mask Mandate in East Montpelier?
Date: December 2, 2021 at 11:06:23 PM EST

Hello Carl,

I vote yes for the mandate.

Karen Saudek
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