



Vail crowds returning but without social distancing

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

VHA ANNUAL MEETING

JUNE 24, 2020

Preventing the Spread of COVID-19

When the COVID-19 virus first appeared in the valley, Vail quickly became one of the first “hot spots” in the nation. While the virus has since been controlled here, mainly due to visitors leaving when the mountain was shut down, locals “staying at home” and adequate testing, the nation is still in the grips of a pandemic. With an effective vaccine, under a best-case scenario, still many months away, the only way to combat the spread of the

virus is through either isolation (i.e., lockdowns) or social distancing and the use of face coverings. While face coverings were initially dismissed in the early stages of the pandemic, that may have been more a matter of mask unavailability (for even health care workers) than any scientific reason, and there is now a growing consensus that face coverings are effective in helping to prevent spread of the virus. With lockdowns mainly for extreme situations and incompatible with “re-openings,” that means that for most instances public authorities are left with social distancing and face coverings to combat virus spread.



Respect the elderly, who are the most vulnerable, if they respect others, why isn't the reverse true? Self absorption?

The Local Health Care Order. As most know, even though the CDC recommends that people wear masks when out in public, [Eagle County's Public Health Order](#) relies primarily on social distancing for containment of the virus. While face coverings are recommended for those 65 years or older and for those who have compromised immune systems, there is no general face covering requirement in the order, so one of the two tools available to contain the spread of the virus is not being utilized in Eagle County. There is not even a recommendation, much less a requirement, that customers or employees of businesses wear face covering. That might be acceptable if social distancing could do the job, but in Vail, that seems at best to be a haphazard solution.

Social Distancing Is Not Being Practiced. Already in Vail, it seems that social distancing is not being uniformly followed in public areas. Through either inattention, carelessness or lack of concern, people are not

maintaining proper distancing in public gathering areas, i.e., the core of Vail and Lionshead, and it's only going to get worse as crowds increase. And it's just not here; many other areas of the country are also discovering that social distancing is being ignored with resulting case increases. As a result, face covering may be the only effective means of preventing community spread, but so far, there is no general Town-wide requirement to wear masks, and observation of Vail's main streets shows few are voluntarily doing so.



Why a mask if it's only used for shopping indoors? Awareness of social distancing on the streets is everyone's responsibility.

The Stakes Could Not Be Higher. Now, with summer upon us, businesses reopening and Vail seeking to encourage visitors to return, the combination of more people and places to congregate could once again lead to the spread of the virus. Unfortunately, many of the visitors in the coming weeks and months will be from areas where there is still community spread. More than 20 states have rising numbers of cases, some at alarming and even record rates, and there is no way to prevent visitors from those areas bringing the virus into the valley. Even screening out sick people is no guarantee because of the large number of asymptomatic carriers. And regardless of where visitors come from, there will be no forewarning that the virus is being brought here since reintroduction of the virus will only be discovered after incubation has occurred, and then it may be too late to stop community spread. That could be devastating for the local economy, not to mention the horrific impact on

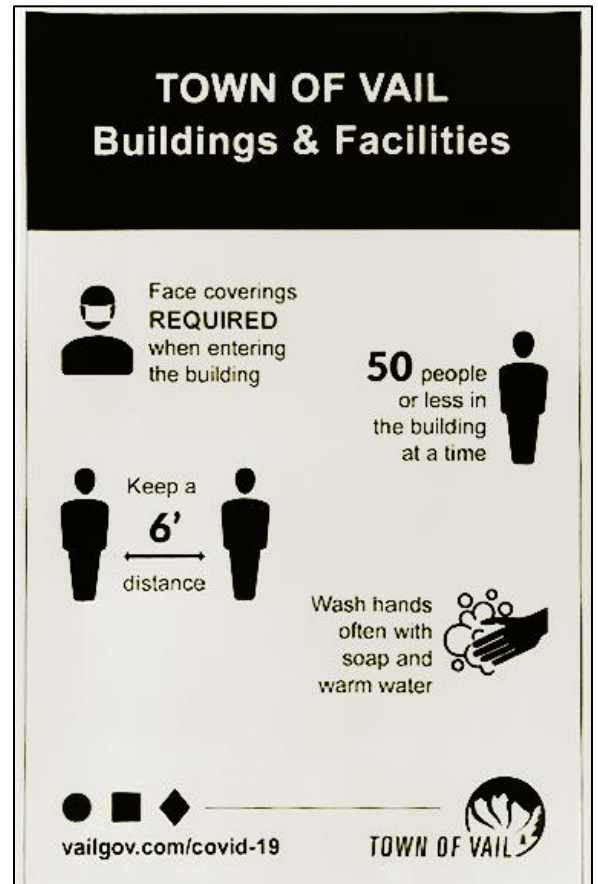
those contracting the virus. It, therefore, becomes paramount that the authorities do all they can now to prevent a new surge of the virus.

Should Masks Be Mandatory? While there is currently no mandatory requirement to wear face covering in Eagle County, the TOV, Vail’s biggest businesses and many smaller businesses have stepped up to mandate the wearing of masks to enter their premises. Thus, to enter the Vail Municipal building, one must both wear a mask and maintain social distancing. To enter the Vail Hospital, one also must both wear a mask and maintain social distancing. When Vail Resorts reopens the mountain on July 1, both masks and social distancing will be required. It would be ironic if the TOV employees and officers, the employees and guests at Vail’s two major businesses and the employees and customers at many other businesses were protected by masks and the rest of the community was not.

Understandably, the TOV wants visitors to return and has launched initiatives to make that happen. But, to be successful, i.e., avoiding a resurgence of the virus, Vail’s reopening must be done in a safe and healthy manner. Masks could be a major step forward, but unfortunately, wearing masks has been turned into a political wedge issue that is being used to keep “score” when it should be a matter of community togetherness with all working together for the health and safety of everyone and the protection of the entire community. Nor should we be lulled into a sense of security by the low numbers currently being reported. With people beginning to return to Vail, this is exactly when it is critical to be pro-active in preventing resurgence.

[Requests have been made to the Eagle County Public Health authorities to make masks mandatory](#), but it remains to be seen whether they will do so. The VHA, therefore, urges the TOV to add its voice to that request and petition the health authorities to make masks mandatory or mandatory wherever distancing of 6’ or more cannot be consistently maintained where people will congregate. It needs to be recognized that the core Vail areas (as well as a few other places in the county) are particularly vulnerable locations for the spread of the virus, and at least there, extra steps need to be taken to prevent virus spread.

If the public health authorities do not take those steps, the TOV should use its own power and authority to take its own steps to protect public health by requiring that masks be worn in Town public areas where people congregate, essentially in the core areas of Vail and Lionshead. The TOV should also enlist its “Redcoat Guests Hosts” to hand out free masks to all visitors so that there will be no excuse for anyone not wearing a mask in Vail. The Town’s actions could also be further reinforced with signage at the I-70 Main Vail exit and with large signs (similar to those at the Vail Municipal Building) at the parking structure exits. Doing all this would not only make Vail a safer place but it would have the added benefit of showing the world that Vail is taking all precautions to make it a safe place to visit.



Where we go with all of this is still to be determined. And we cannot lose sight that looming out ahead are the predictions of a second wave of infections coming in the fall, with all that might entail, which makes it even



Prevention is more than social distancing, wear a mask, save others and yourself from the potential of needless suffering.

more imperative that a resurgence this summer be prevented. If this is a matter that also concerns you, you should make your views known to the Town Council and the Town Manager at: towncouncil@vailgov.com and srobson@vailgov.com.

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VHA Annual Meeting

Mark your calendars. The VHA will hold its Annual Meeting on August 5th at the Grand View room atop the Lionshead parking structure. The Town Manager, Scott Robson, will be the featured speaker, and he can be

expected to have much to talk about. Because of social distancing requirements, only a handful of people can be accommodated in that room, so ZOOM conferring will be available as the means for most to attend. Meeting notices will go out next month with directions on how to join the meeting.

VHA welcomes your participation and support.

For further membership information, please send an email to vailhomeownersassoc@gmail.com and for [subscriber contributions](#).

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