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Juneau Assembly extends COVID-19 rules until next March

September 29, 2021 by Bridget Dowd, KTOO (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://www.ktoo.org/author/bridget-dowd/)

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LIVE 221

Updated post by Bridget Dowd– 11:00 p.m.

During a special meeting Wednesday night, Juneau's assembly voted to extend the city's COVID-19 mitigation strategies until March 2022. The current measures are set to expire on Oct. 31.

Prior to voting, assembly members listened to two and a half hours of public testimony and sifted through hundreds of emails from residents.

Most of the comments given during the meeting were opposed to extending the measures. But city officials said when combining the testimony at the meeting with written feedback and one-on-one conversations with residents, there was more support than opposition.

The comments from most of the people who spoke at the public hearing were focused on masking. The assembly clarified multiple times that they were not passing a mask mandate, just keeping the same guidelines the city already uses (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://media.ktoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Ord_2021-42_Exhibit_A_Proposed_Revisions_to_Risk_Mitigation_Strategies.pdf) to determine the community's risk level and what their response should be at each one.

Initially, the measures were going to be extended until June 2022, but many residents who testified said that time period felt too long. Even with the new date of March 1, the assembly can choose to toss the policy at any time.

Wednesday's vote also allows for a penalty to be enforced when people don't comply with mask mandates. That means violators could be subject to a $25 fine.

After some debate about whether or not to keep the penalty, the assembly passed the ordinance without objection.

Original post by Rashah McChesney — 2:40 p.m.

The Juneau Assembly is holding a special meeting on Wednesday (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://packet.cbjak.org/MeetingView.aspx?MeetingID=1606&MinutesMeetingID=-1&doctype=Agenda) to talk about extending its emergency measures designed to combat the spread of COVID-19, and about putting a penalty in place for violating those measures.

The city's emergency measures (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://app.smartsheet.com/b/publish?EQBCT=0a602fc51ee24966abb3721c8fabfb82) include community risk levels that trigger limits on gathering sizes, requirements for masks and restrictions on businesses that sell food and alcohol, gyms and personal services.

City officials are considering extending them through June 1, 2022. Currently, they're set to expire at the end of October.

Cities all over the state are grappling over the balance between slowing the spread of the Delta variant of COVID-19 and easing pressure on the state's overwhelmed hospital system. Anchorage's Assembly held a similar public hearing on Tuesday (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://www.alaskapublic.org/2021/09/29/emotions-high-as-testimony-begins-on-anchorage-assemblys-proposed-mask-mandate/) that drew crowds of people to comment on a potential mask mandate.

In Juneau, the meeting will be held in City Hall Assembly Chambers at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday. However, because indoor gatherings are limited to 20 people and Assembly members and staff will be present — just seven people will be allowed to be physically present in the room. Masks are required.

People who want to weigh-in can do it in advance by emailing boroughassembly@juneau.org, by joining the meeting via Zoom (https://web.archive.org/web/20210930174512/https://juneau.zoom.us/j/93917915176#success), or calling 1-253-215-8782 with Webinar ID: 939 1791 5176; hit the 'raise hand' button online or press *9 on your phone during public comment.

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Local News Reporter, KTOO

I keep tabs on what's happening in Juneau's classrooms for the families they serve and the people who work in them. My goal is to shine a light on both stories of success and the cracks that need to be filled, because I believe a good education is the basis of a strong community.

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