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Use of Masks in Public Spaces

August 4, 2020

Recently there has been a lot of media coverage related to the use of masks. The Town of Redwater has taken a proactive approach during the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate exposure to the virus and to date have been successful in our approach. We have put in place measures to protect our staff and operations to ensure delivery of services. We have also implemented new measures as part of our relaunch strategy for the Town Office and worked with the gym as well. We are actively working on plans to reopen Pembina Place.

Calgary has passed a bylaw to require the use of masks in all public spaces. Edmonton has similar measures requiring masks to be worn in publicly accessible areas of businesses/retail and including their transit system. Some exemptions apply:

- Children under 2
- Those who are unable to place, use, or remove a face covering without assistance
- Those with mental or physical concerns or limitations, or any other protected ground under the Alberta Human Rights Act, that prevent them from wearing a face covering
- Eating or drinking while seated in designated spaces or as part of a religious or spiritual ceremony
- Engaging in water activities or physical exercise

These municipalities have many more resources to ensure compliance than Redwater. Other municipalities like Jasper have rejected such a bylaw. Redwater encourages the use of masks in a public setting. Administration believes public education is the best approach as we do not have the ability to enforce this type of bylaw 24/7, nor would it prove effective. Many residents currently wear masks when in a public setting and especially when 2 metre social distancing cannot be met. We commend those that do and encourage those that do not to utilize a mask to protect others including their families. Town Council has had some general discussion about this topic. Council may consider this as an agenda item in early September but have yet to confirm. People tend to become complacent about the risks associated with COVID-19, however we must remain vigilant. Working collectively, we can limit the potential exposure of our residents.

Respectfully,

Larry Davidson
Town Manager