



Masking Up in the Library

Joann Russell [REDACTED]
To: sparkinson@greatfallslibrary.org

Sat, Oct 24, 2020 at 9:24 AM

To the Great Falls Public Library and the Library Board:

Members of my Book Club were informed the other day about some disagreement with, and opposition to, the current position on masks for visitors to our Public Library. I would like to comment on your policy for the Board Meeting which is scheduled for the coming week.

A good number of my friends rely upon our library for access to the monthly reading selections of our group. They are continually reserving and sharing books, as well as visiting the library personally. The Public Library and all of its services and events is an integral part of our community, welcoming ALL persons who seek to read, learn, listen to presentations or watch films, inspire children to read and students to study and do research...and so much more.

In these unbelievably difficult weeks and months of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and while we wait for the therapeutics and vaccines that will help us, our Governor has told us to put on a mask to protect others as well as ourselves to at least some extent. Our Great Falls Public School leaders have required masks for staff, students, parents, and others when they are in contact with each other within certain distances. We see notices on the doors of our local, county, and state offices, grocery stores, businesses, restaurants, bars, coffee houses—and many other places—to “mask up” before entering.

I don't like masks. I become uncomfortable and sometimes have to lift a corner of it to breathe in some fresh air and reduce my anxiety. When the number of COVID-19 cases spikes, I don't have to worry about a mask because I don't go ANYWHERE. I have my groceries delivered or pick them up curbside, I order what I need online, and a few times we have ordered takeout meals from our local restaurants. All this is inconvenient and frustrating.

If we visit our library just to pick up a book or do a quick search on a computer, it is not an undue burden to mask up. If we intend to spend much of the day there, it is more than reasonable to wear a mask. Opening up America is not the same thing as deliberately exposing others to our coughs and sneezes, or other things that could be problematic for us.

I will wear a mask if I come to our Public Library. I will NOT visit the library if others are allowed to be there without a mask. Your mask policy is certainly contingent upon factors which can change and be modified or removed. There is NOTHING unreasonable about how you are working to protect staff and visitors at this point in the Pandemic and at this point in time in general. Students, seniors, health-compromised individuals, and anyone who shops at all around the city is already used to wearing a mask. The point is, wearing a mask is what allows us to leave our homes at all ! Surely, this is better than having more lockdowns.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts on this issue, and thank you for serving on the Library Board.

Jo A. Russell
Great Falls, MT

Sent from my iPad