

# MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
CITY OF BRANSON, MISSOURI  
July 28, 2020

## INTRODUCTORY

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Branson, Missouri met for a special meeting in the Council Chambers of the Branson City Hall on July 28, 2020, at 2:00 p.m.

## ROLL CALL

City Clerk Lisa Westfall called roll: Mayor Akers presiding, Jamie Whiteis, Bob Simmons, Bill Skains, Larry Milton and Jeff Seay. Absent: Kevin McConnell.

## MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Mayor Akers announced the Regular Board of Aldermen Meeting is at 6:00 p.m. following this meeting. There will be time limits implemented to ensure this meeting doesn't go past 5:00 p.m.

## REGULAR AGENDA

### **BILL NO. 5837**

**Ord. No 2020-0072**

**Amending Chapter 58 of the Branson Municipal Code pertaining to face coverings, public spaces and the spread of communicable diseases.**

First Reading of Bill No. 5837, an ordinance amending Chapter 58 of the Branson Municipal Code pertaining to face coverings, public spaces and the spread of communicable diseases was read by title by City Clerk Lisa Westfall. She stated this item was postponed during its First Reading at the July 16, 2020 Special Board of Aldermen meeting. It has a motion and second on the floor to call for the vote on Bill No. 5837 as amended and is currently in need of a vote on that motion. Discussion. Mayor Akers called for a vote on the motion to call for the vote on Bill No. 5837 as amended. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains and Seay. Nays: Milton. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried. Mayor Akers called for a vote on the First Reading of Bill No. 5837 as amended. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains and Seay. Nays: Milton. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried. Alderman Skains moved to read Bill No. 5837 for its final reading due to public health and safety concerns surrounding COVID-19, seconded by Alderman Seay. Mayor Akers asked for anyone in the audience wishing to speak regarding this matter. Hearing none, Mayor Akers asked for comments from the Board. No discussion. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains and Seay. Nays: Milton. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried. Final Reading of Bill No. 5837, an ordinance amending Chapter 58 of the Branson Municipal Code pertaining to face coverings, public spaces and the spread of communicable diseases was read by title by City Clerk Lisa Westfall and a Staff Report was provided by City Attorney Chris Lebeck and William Mahoney, President of Cox Medical Center Branson. Discussion. Mayor Akers asked for a motion approving Bill No. 5837. Alderman Skains so moved, seconded by Alderman Simmons. Mayor Akers asked for a motion to make Staff recommended amendments. Alderman Whiteis moved to amend Bill No. 5837 as follows: Line 105 by removing "consuming food, drink or smoking";

Line 180 by changing "July 20, 2020" to "July 31, 2020"; Line 182 by changing "August 20, 2020" to "September 8, 2020", seconded by Alderman Skains.

Mayor Akers announced the speaker guidelines and requested speakers limit comments to no more than three minutes. If they are in agreement with another speaker they can say just that and he set a cap of the discussion to 30 minutes. Mayor Akers explained public comments are limited to citizens who live in the city limits of Branson or property tax payers in the city limits of Branson. Mayor Akers asked for anyone in the audience wishing to speak regarding the amendment.

Brian Seitz, 1805 Miller Drive, Branson, Missouri, introduced himself as a candidate for State Representative in the 156th District. He's here once again to make sure a grave mistake isn't made and explained 12 days ago people gathered and overwhelmingly asked the Board to vote against mandated masks for the City of Branson. He explained these people are here with the same request now and over the past two weeks he's spoken to over 100 business owners and close to 1,000 residents and asked them their thoughts on the mask issue. He reported the sentiment was a clear no to a government mask mandate. Mr. Seitz explained as he mentioned 12 days ago, people are not anti-mask, they are anti-mandate and against this becoming like a police state. Prior to this meeting, he mentioned seeing police officers questioning citizens and he feels this will bring a divide between people and an otherwise excellent police force. He expressed people are against a mandate that will force more businesses to close and destroy this tourist town by restricting liberty. The decision to wear a mask or any other form of personal protection should be an individual one; this personal decision should not be coerced, nor citizens, visitors, and businesses threatened with fines and closures. He added, we shouldn't even be here and as everyone knows, this was ready to be voted down two weeks ago. It was a bad recommendation then and it's no better today. He reported the Governor was in Branson recently and said no to a mask mandate. Mr. Seitz mentioned speaking with gubernatorial candidate Sandra McDowell yesterday and she also said no to a mask mandate. God made people free and the Board was elected to insure and protect that freedom, not stifle and restrict it. He asked Alderman Simmons to respect his wife's personal decision and vote no on this mask mandate. He asked Alderman Whiteis to remember the veteran he spoke of 12 days ago who was turned away from stores at Tanger because he couldn't wear a mask, and vote no on this mandate. Mr. Seitz mentioned he and Alderman Skains have had disagreements in the past, but he knows him to be a reasonable and educated man and the public needs him to vote no. He mentioned 12 days ago Alderman Seay wished to hear from businesses before making a decision. He reported speaking to almost every Downtown business, and all but two wanted to vote no on this mandate. He spoke with Mayor Akers on Saturday who told him he was wearing a mask for comfort. Mr. Seitz informed the Board its power is derived from the consent of the governed and asked it to listen to the voices of the people. The people do not consent to a mask mandate, they will not submit and they will be free.

Pearl Haining, Branson, Missouri, mentioned many Arkansas Police Departments will not be enforcing their state mandate because they think it is unenforceable. She reported Springfield has received over a thousand calls in a week about their mask enforcement which is severely hindering their police force and Springfield is now facing a lawsuit because of that. The Board has heard a lot about this bill and about the amendments at hand. It has also heard a lot about statements from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that have been reversed time and again until it has become an embarrassment to the entire medical community. She recalled many people have talked about how the CDC Director said if people put masks on, this virus could be squelched in four to eight weeks. She added, but the same day he also said suicide and drugs pose a much greater risk. Ms. Haining added, the CDC Director also said that same day that influenza is five to ten times more deadly than COVID-19 and she asked why it's the public health crisis of choice. She thanked the Board for suggesting to remove the clause about eating, drinking or smoking, because she found it ironic people were only permitted to take off their masks when consuming choking hazards. However, she also finds it ironic the Board is now suggesting this virus is only contagious when walking past someone in a restaurant. She reported people need to spend several minutes in front of someone, face-to-face, literally spitting on them in order for that kind of contagion to spread and that's ridiculous. She mentioned people have talked about compassion, that they should love like Jesus and she explained Jesus loved the unlovable, spent time with the outcasts of society and even touched those having the most contagious health problems. She feels these people should not be turned away from the City because that's not keeping with the faith and family values Branson claims to champion.

**Alderman Skains left the meeting at 2:37 p.m. and returned at 2:38 p.m.**

Joshua Heston, 312 Wilshire Drive, Hollister, Missouri, introduced himself as co-founder of the Branson Liberty Initiative and Editor in Chief of State of the Ozarks. He feels the health of the community is at stake; not from a virus having a mortality rate a fraction of what was once presented, but from the hostility building within communities fueled by continued attempts to socially re-engineer people. He explained the community is made up of adults and it's not the government's or medical industry's job to be a parent. Daily Mail reported on July 24th that Walmart, Home Depot, Walgreens, and CVS will now serve customers who do not wear masks in order to avoid violence. This is the reality of human behavior and people have been peaceful, but he feels this community has been through enough and further government attempts to parent emancipated citizens can only end badly. He commented the nation is watching today and the mask mandate is unenforceable. He explained how Americans have historically responded to government overreach and bad decisions and pointed out the American Revolution was a crime punishable by death until the war was won. The act of freeing slaves was against the law according to the Dred Scott decision, which clearly wasn't the Supreme Court's best moment. The opposition that fought down segregation was championed by true American Patriots who faced down government and mobs of rabid attackers who would rather throw bricks and bomb houses than face arguments. Mr. Heston said today we are sitting on a powder keg, a silent majority that loves this nation, state and community. These are citizens who love the brave men and women who protect and serve; the police officers who deserve to be honored and respected, not forced into becoming a face diaper patrol. The real cost of this government overreach is dramatic spikes of anxiety, depression, domestic abuse, suicide and hunger and these costs are forced on people by those who will not be at risk. These policies are inconsistent, classist and arrogant and he mentioned working with the grass roots of this community for 13 years and feels the Board must re-earn peoples' trust, otherwise there will not be compliance. He added, its first step is to vote no on this mandate.

Audrey Richards, 265 Buzz Street, Branson, Missouri, explained she agrees with Mr. Heston that the nation is watching and she feels embarrassed and ashamed. She's had friends from other parts of this country ask her about living here with these people and they've asked if this is the way she grew up. She explained these are not the values she represents or grew up with which are compassion and caring about the lives of other people. Yet all she hears about is freedom which is more important than endangering the lives of others. She doesn't support this ordinance as written, because there are so many exceptions it's ineffective. She asked if the Board thought coronavirus cares if people are at a wedding or funeral and said it doesn't. She commented a Google search will show 11 people attended a funeral in Alabama and five died, there were six deaths related to a funeral in South Carolina and 24 deaths related to a funeral in Georgia. She tries to have a positive outlook on the City that she's loved for 27 years, but she's so frustrated and angry because this measure is a half way and pleases nobody. She feels it tells visitors that the City wants to protect them, but only half way and only cares half way. It divides the public without actually accomplishing anything. She urged the Board to take a stand and tell people they either have to wear masks or they don't, because the coronavirus is not half way. Whether it is doctors, the CDC, media or the government, people against this mandate are looking for villains where there are none. Ms. Richards believes the only enemy is coronavirus and people have to treat it as such. She reported there's only one defense against it and that's social distancing and wearing masks. She's running for Congress and knows this is going to lose her a ton of votes, but she cares more about the people here and protecting them than getting elected. She suggested the Board make this a piece of legislation that actually fixes the problem.

Joshua Pope, Neihardt Drive, Branson, Missouri, mentioned speaking before and feels he could debunk a lot of the things people have said and mentioned if anyone wanted to speak with him after the meeting they can. He reported in 1918, San Francisco enacted a mask mandate and flu rates dropped drastically, but was revoked too soon and they saw them rise again. He feels this will address Alderman Milton's concern from earlier and mentioned the University of California stated if 80% of people wore a mask, it would have a stronger impact on cases than a complete shutdown would. Back when things were shut down, people were forced to stay home, but they went to Walmart without their masks on or social distancing and it spread. He reported 1,000 deaths a day has been reached across the country which is back to what it was in May. If there were 1,000 deaths a day in Missouri, it doesn't seem like a lot compared to other states, but considering its population it is. That's hundreds of people a day who might have

permanent long-term damage to their organs or will be hospitalized. He feels most Americans haven't experienced the scientific process or seen it in action because science has hypothesis, tests and if things are wrong they get corrected later. He explained that's what people are seeing with the CDC today and it may very well be that its stance is wrong today and this may or may not be seen in the future. If the experts are wrong, the worst thing that's done is people have inconvenienced themselves; if they are right, countless lives will have been saved. Mr. Pope commented, Jesus said if you have 100 sheep and one goes missing, do you not leave the 99 sheep to find the one which is what he believes the City is doing here. Jesus also said once the one sheep is found, the shepherd would call his friends and neighbors and rejoice that he's found his lost sheep. Mr. Pope asked, if we even save one life, should we not rejoice for that? He commented many places are closing down in St. Louis and Springfield and he works in Ozark and a man came up to him and said it's hard to find a place to eat in Ozark with a dining room open anymore. Mr. Pope believes if the City doesn't get a hold of this virus or do something to protect people it could see another shutdown. By taking measures to try and halt this virus and give people time, we can save ourselves from another shutdown. He commented if the Board votes yes on this, at least it can say it tried, but if it votes no and the government shuts everything down again, then it didn't try. He asked the Board to think about that for a moment.

Camille Lombardi-Olive, said she's from Galena, Missouri, and the Mayor informed her she didn't meet the criteria to speak. She mentioned spending thousands of dollars in Branson and she'd like people to know the money she spends in Branson is no longer welcome. She explained she will be blogging about this, because the tourists and visitors are the backbone of Branson.

Dr. Bo Bandy, 411 Wilson Street, Branson, Missouri, introduced himself as a chiropractor here in Branson and in order to earn his doctorate he had to take extensive hours of class time in clinical immunology, microbiology, virology, physiology and neurology. He has 12 years' experience helping people walk through all types of health concerns and he knows what works and what doesn't. He knows how to help people get their health back naturally and has been running a private practice here in Branson for 10 years. He explained this is his background and is where he's coming from. Dr. Bandy commented, Mark Twain once said those who read the newspaper are misinformed and those who don't read the newspaper are uninformed and when it comes to the news, unfortunately not much has changed since Mark Twain's days. He explained the human immune system is an amazing piece of engineering and it's part of the adaptation process the body uses for survival. He explained in order for the immune system to work, it has to be exposed to pathogens so people should want to be exposed to pathogens so their bodies can build immunity. People cannot run or hide from a virus and he explained the human body is full of bacteria and viruses that actually help people survive, that's how it works. Dr. Bandy explained the more cases, the better because it just means that more people have been exposed, therefore more people are immune. He added, an asymptomatic carrier just means that person has been exposed and has built immunity. Dr. Bandy reported the human body has four major ways of detoxifying itself which are through sweating, peeing, pooping and breathing. He commented most people in this country are not healthy and by all standards of measurement the U.S. consistently scores lower in health than many other developed countries. People don't eat good food, exercise, get adequate sleep or drink enough water. If a person doesn't exercise they don't sweat, and if they don't sweat they lose a major way their body has of getting toxins out. He explained if a person doesn't eat good food, they're not going to have proper digestion, won't poop as often as they should so their bodies won't be getting rid of toxins. Additionally, if a person doesn't drink enough water, their urine will typically be very dark brown or yellow which means they're not excreting the toxins they should be through their urine. The only way left for that unhealthy person to get rid of those toxins is through their breath; the vapor that comes out of their lungs. He added, and now the Board wants to mandate a mask for that unhealthy person so now they really can't get rid of any toxins. The toxins their body is trying to get rid of is now staying on their face, making them sicker and sicker. Dr. Bandy pointed out the number of COVID-19 deaths have continued to go down and he asked why no one is paying attention to the actual death numbers, because all he hears about is the rising spike in cases.

Heather Erickson, Branson, Missouri, said she works here in the tourism industry and sees firsthand the exact kind of people who are coming to this wonderful town. She expressed her disappointment in the way the Aldermen and Mayor have responded to the current pandemic and explained they were warned months ago, as well as today, by several specialists in the area. She reported the Board

was warned by doctors that this is very serious in nature and needed to do everything in its power to prevent an outbreak in the community. She's appalled by the cowardly leadership in taking the necessary precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but feels there are some options moving forward. She reported 40 people tested positive for COVID-19 between July 14th and July 24th which is 10 days apart. She asked the Board to keep in mind there are likely more people in the community who have not been tested due to financial concerns or otherwise. Ms. Erickson mentioned doing a COVID-19 test that cost her \$167, which she understands is not easy for many people to stomach, but brings into question how many people are carriers and don't know it. She understands all of the Board members have some form of financial stake in Branson's tourism and this isn't only a concern for them, but for all the business owners and workers in Branson. She explained her work relies on tourists visiting here just the same as many others and she has bills to pay, mouths to feed so she understands. She commented, but there's no reliable evidence that mandating masks is going to cause tourists to stagnate or decline, regardless of some Facebook posts people have commented on. She said what will cause a decline in tourism is if the cases continue to rise at the rate they are now, which could deem Branson a dangerous location to visit. The City's website says it is mandating masks inside its buildings, because it believes masks prevent the spread of COVID-19 and she asked why it's not protecting the people who bring in hundreds of thousands of dollars to the City. She questioned why it's only protecting a couple hundred people out of 11,000 residents in Branson and she thinks it's really silly. She commented there are people in Branson confused about what rights they have and some don't even know what HIPAA is. She explained there are civil liberties people give up every single day, such as wearing a shirt, pants and shoes which is a dress code. Ms. Erickson believes this is the same thing as masks which could also be enforced as a dress code, but people probably don't consider wearing pants a violation of personal rights. She asked if the Aldermen were scared of losing money from their own businesses due to a mask mandate and shared she is immunocompromised, but came here because this is so important to her. She thanked the Board for letting her speak today and hopes whatever decision the Aldermen make weighs very heavily on their thoughts.

Cheyenne McKinney, Branson, Missouri, expressed she is against mandates and feels if there's a risk to anything, then everyone should have a choice. She doesn't believe it's fair to force people to cover their faces and not be able to breathe. She added, or for any other reason as people might have a condition that makes it so they cannot wear face coverings. Ms. McKinney expressed she doesn't think it's fair everybody who is worried about people wearing face coverings forcing others, thinking that it might help. She added, it could help, but in the end there are still going to be a lot of people who are not going to be wearing face coverings. She doesn't believe the City should pick and choose who wears a face mask and who doesn't and then think well the lockdown didn't work, so now people have to wear face coverings. She's even more concerned about the fact that people have faith and trust in the CDC and experts, when they're so wishy-washy and under investigation. She added, she doesn't trust anybody who would be under investigation. Ms. McKinney explained she wasn't planning to speak today, but wanted to say she doesn't think it is right for the Board to force this on people. She mentioned China has had face covering mandates for over a decade due to its air pollution, yet was the epicenter of the outbreak. She doesn't know how much more common sense it can take for people to understand the multitude of studies out there that specifically speak on the dangers of the general public's use of face coverings. She explained hospitals have environments that allow people like doctors to be able to wear masks, but most people don't have that air quality or training on the use of masks. She mentioned when she was in the hospital, most doctors didn't properly use masks and half the people here are still touching their faces and moving their masks around. She commented she touched her phone before coming up to speak and then touched her face, put her face covering on and when she takes it off, that's all going to be on her nose and mouth. Ms. McKinney commented she doesn't understand as there's not sound evidence it works at all and mentioned she can find so many studies on the National Center for Biotechnology Information website (NCBI). She mentioned she's getting her degree in physiology and her biology teacher has shared studies proving that vitamin C, vitamin D, melatonin, zinc and iron all help prevent this virus from being deadly.

Bo Dejager, South Drive, Branson, Missouri, inquired if it was such an urgency that people be mandated to wear masks to cut down on COVID-19, why the bill was postponed; shouldn't it have been passed the first time around? He added, obviously it's not as urgent as some people claim and he pointed out for those wearing cloth masks or anything like them that doctors don't specialize in masks, but specialize in medicine. Mr. Dejager mentioned cloth masks may only be containing the wearer's spit droplets which is

the only way COVID-19 is spread. He asked if that's the case, then why is everyone else wearing a mask not stopping droplets from entering the mouth and nose area of others. He believes as far as that's concerned, people would be required to wear an actual respirator that stops the particles that follow, rather than the droplets themselves. He explained there are so many reasons why cloth masks don't work and pointed out socks don't contain the smell of a person's feet and masks are breathable to get fresh air in. He added, a t-shirt, breathes but it doesn't hold body odor in, so that's about as efficient as masks are concerned and he doesn't think it's necessary to mandate them and feels everyone should have their own choice. He explained people take their masks off while in a car or at home and if they coughed or did anything else and then went to a store, they would carry all of those germs into the store. So there's no possible way people can stop all of the germs out there that spread COVID-19; it's going to be places and can't be stopped just because of a mask. He asked what everyone is terrified about, because if a person is asymptomatic, they're generally not going to die because they may just be a carrier. He asked how many deaths there have been since the last meeting and mentioned there's been one death in the Branson area since then, making it four deaths.

Yakov Smirnoff, 480 State Highway 248, mentioned coming to America because of freedom of choice. He was recently in Chicago celebrating his wife's birthday and was there for four days and they couldn't wait to get back to Branson for one reason; they were mandating masks to everybody. He explained it becomes a police state when the government empowers everyone to become an informer. He recalled a time while in the Soviet Union, a thirteen year-old boy informed authorities his father was hiding food, so they executed the father. That little boy became a hero by Joseph Stalin who made him a role model and Mr. Smirnoff explained that's what happens to people when they all of a sudden get this power to say someone's wrong because they're not wearing a mask. He's coming to Branson and hopes the Board will make it an island of freedom and choice in this sea of hatred and fear. He added, people come to this town and they see it is the way America used to be and he thinks it's the way America ought to be.

Doug Clark, 121 A Saint Andrews Street, Branson, Missouri, mentioned attending a meeting at the First Baptist Church last Saturday where the main topic was the rights people have as American citizens that were granted to them by God. He explained people have the right of liberty and the pursuit of happiness and the government was formed to protect those rights from this kind of overreach. Mr. Clark mentioned every time he's addressed the Board he's brought up the PCR test and feels it's a reason for the Board to not vote for the mask mandate. He explained the CDC's 50 page document states the test is not accurate and said he's just giving the Board some sources here. He expressed another thing that bothers him about the universal masking in hospitals in the COVID-19 era is the New England Journal of Medicine basically says masks do not do any good. Mr. Clark reported it's dated May 21st of this year and the reason it's being suppressed is because the medical community is censoring the people who really understand what's going on. He told the Board if they don't believe that, to look a little deeper because the information can't be found on social media. He added, and the hospital isn't going to tell them about some of the other sources that show there is treatment that actually works 100% of the time without doing any of this stuff. He commented it's absolutely ridiculous what we're doing here and mentioned he's been in the Branson area for 25 years. He knows a lot of people who work in the theater business and they're not going to come here and tell the Board how they feel about this. The only thing the Board's going to find out from them is when they close their doors if it puts this thing on them. He reported they're hearing from people calling and asking if Branson has a mask ordinance and why they should come to Branson if it's going to impose one, because they're being harassed where they live. He told the Board it can't expect people to come here when they're going to be harassed again and he feels getting the police involved and fining people doesn't work either, just as Mr. Smirnoff said.

Gary Groman, 350 S. Wildwood Drive, Branson, Missouri, mentioned hearing a lot of arguments about a lot of things, but to him it's simply a health and economic issue. He added, that's what it is to him and if he has a problem with his TV or with his plumbing, he goes to an expert. If he has a problem with his health, he goes to a medical expert. He mentioned in the last year he's been in a hospital more than he's ever been in his life and if it weren't for Cox, he probably wouldn't be here talking to the Board today. He felt they did a good job and when it comes to a health issue, he's going to rely on the health experts. He personally believes that and what he says is based on that belief and he believes masking can help with the spread of COVID-19. He explained that's his personal belief and he respect others' personal beliefs.

He commented people have dealt with a lot and there's a lot of knowledge between now and when this first started. He has a responsibility and knows what he has to do to protect himself and his wife and he wears a mask most of the time. If he elects not to wear a mask or social distance, that's on him and not anybody else. With regards to the economy, he believes there was some conflicting stuff about masking, but a lot of stuff developed early. He mentioned people will say, go to Silver Dollar City (SDC) because it's adopted the same basic philosophy and rules the rest of the amusement parks around the nation have adopted. Mr. Groman said he would respectfully suggest the trend now is towards masking as people are becoming more accustomed to it. He thinks one of the questions the Board has to ask is if there's a possibility Branson will get more people if it passes masking than if it doesn't.

Mayor Akers asked for comments from the Board. Discussion. Mayor Akers called for a vote on the amendment. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains and Seay. Nays: Milton. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried.

**The meeting recessed at 3:32 p.m. and reconvened at 3:41 p.m.**

Mayor Akers asked for anyone in the audience wishing to speak regarding Bill No. 5837 as amended.

Pearl Haining, Branson, Missouri, expressed her opinions on the bill as amended and referred to the change that was added that people no longer have to be consuming choking hazards in order to take their masks off. She supposes that change was added in hopes it would make this bill more pleasing or appetizing to the audiences and business owners. She commented, Yakov Smirnoff who is one of the most prominent and long-standing entertainers in town is clearly against the bill as amended which she thinks speaks volumes about what it will do for the City. Ms. Haining referenced a nationwide poll conducted by Yahoo News asking people if a mask mandate was preferred and she reported 80% of people said no. She explained the poll was over a three-week period, 80% of Americans said they do not want a mask and Branson is relying on those Americans to come to this town and support the families and individuals who live here. She told the Board don't think for a minute that adding any amendments to any form of a mask mandate will attract them. In response to the Mayor's questions, she reiterated it's an official poll by Yahoo News which began July 10th and is still active today with 80% against masks. She suggested an amendment to the ordinance by completely revising the sign so it would read: Please stop, we Branson literally don't want your business unless your mouth and nose are covered. Even if you think you're in perfect health, our City Council thinks you're lying and there is 6/100 of 1% of a chance that we could catch a very specific virus from you. However, if you are really convinced of your health, we might make an exception for you if you can prove you have a different, extremely serious health problem. But really, we are grossed out and afraid at the thought of you coming in, so please go away. Ms. Haining suggested the Board make these changes.

Dirk Myers, 118 West Hensley Street, Branson, Missouri, introduced himself as owner of Service with a Step Consulting and Dirk D. Myers Photography. He also waits tables on the side while trying to get his businesses off the ground. He reported the CARES Act ended last week and people who were getting unemployment partially or completely, are not going to get that benefit anymore. If the Board enacts a mask mandate today and Branson goes the way of Silver Dollar City, he asked which one of the Aldermen voting yes would take care of all these people who've had their hours reduced again. Mr. Myers explained the Board doesn't have the ability to give these people more money, but today it has the ability to take more money away from them and their families. He wants the Board to know there are a lot of people who really care about this City and the people who visit it and they've gone to great lengths to make sure things are clean. He asked the audience by a show of hands how many not wearing masks make sure to give people their social distance. He pointed out the Board didn't have to do that for them, because they're already taking care of it. Mr. Myers asked the Board to trust them, just as they trusted the Board and he guarantees if the Board votes yes today, every person who votes is going to remember it. He urged the Board to please do the right thing and vote no.

Patrick C. Kansoer Sr., Hollister, Missouri, introduced himself as having a business presence in the Ozark Craft Mall on 76 Country Boulevard. Mayor Akers inquired if he paid property taxes in Branson and Mr. Kansoer Sr. explained he doesn't, but has a business presence in Branson. He asked if the Mayor was going to muzzle him and said if he was, he would leave the podium. The Mayor explained the speaking guidelines he gave prior to the meeting and Mr. Kansoer expressed the Mayor obviously wants to muzzle someone who has something to say. He believes if the Board passes this ordinance, it's saying to over 8 million people who come here that Branson is a pest hole of a virus and do not come. He added, if that's what it wants to be known for and if it wants to preside over the death of a beautiful place, vote yes. Otherwise, vote no.

Anna Stilloski, 220 W. Pacific Street, Branson, Missouri, said she's here to read for Nathan Horsman who couldn't be here this evening. She stated the lifeblood of this community are the 12,000 residents who live here year-round and call Branson home. First and foremost it is they who must be protected; the silent majority is depending on the Board to get this done so people can move forward into the fall season. The vast majority of tourists who come in the fall are most susceptible to this virus and they won't feel safe coming if Branson doesn't enact measures to protect them such as this mask mandate. We've heard from medical health professionals like Dr. Shawn Usery, who was heckled while informing the Board about the virus, its effect and the effect it will continue to have on the local health care system if people don't start wearing masks. We've also heard from Mr. Mahoney, President of Cox Branson, who laid out facts along with his professional opinion regarding masking and why it's important. The Taney County Health Department is overwhelmed, working around the clock to try and keep up with the case numbers. Mr. Horsman believes people need to lend the Health Department and doctors and nurses a hand to help in any way they can. Most importantly, people need to do this for the residents of the community and he feels everyone can benefit from instituting a mask ordinance now. He suggested giving it a try to see where this is at in a month because it's the least people can do. Differences need to be set aside for the greater good of the community and everyone should do their part to slow the spread of this virus. Branson has always prided itself as a safe, fun, family-friendly place to visit and that's not what's being seen here today or at the last meeting. He asked to Board to figure out a way to roll this out, get everyone on board and do its best to encourage tourists so they feel safe coming here. Branson can be promoted as a mask-friendly place where people of all ages can continue to come, have a good time and wear a mask until the virus is under control. Mr. Horsman feels a lot more people will come to Branson, knowing it's doing its best to keep them safe. Many businesses have taken it upon themselves, at corporate and local levels, to make it a policy people wear a mask if they choose to enter their doors. They all should be applauded for doing so and he wishes it didn't have to be mandated, but feels it's apparent some people's minds need to be made up for them. He trusts the Board will make the right decision because they are reasonable, rational thinking individuals. Mr. Horsman is confident and has faith in the Board that no matter how tough the decision, it will do the right thing for the community. He thanked the Mayor and Board and thanked Anna for being his voice to speak today since he could not be here. He loves everyone in Branson, whether they agree with him or not, and he wants everyone to be safe. It hurts to see even one death when people can prevent it and it's just a piece of cloth.

Anne Marie Stone, 131 Dove Court, Branson, Missouri, works at Walmart and talks to customers everyday; she sees their reaction to the masks, sees how people are struggling to breathe, sees the ridicule people receive for not wearing masks by those wearing masks and the condemnation is outrageous. She commented, every single day people are dealing with the stress of this everyday thing and there are mental health issues coming about just because of masks. Ms. Stone explained people are coming against each other, they're divided, angry, stressed and now it's getting to the point where people are being fined in places like Forsyth. She pointed out people are having enough struggles financially and now the Board wants to put fines on people for not obeying something that is proven not to help. The Board has had enough medical information to show them a mask will not stop the virus and explained if someone can blow a candle out while wearing a mask, the mask is not going to stop COVID-19. She urged people to get smart and expressed she's really tired of the stupidity and fear-mongering of putting a mask on. The mask will not save anybody; it's a proven fact medically that cannot be denied. Enough people are running around in fear right now because leaders are telling them that they have to be in fear and put a mask on. Ms. Stone commented this is harming not only Branson, but the whole country at large because it's in fear. She mentioned people are moving out of places like California to Branson which she hears all the time at

Walmart because customers talk. Ms. Stone mentioned having to stand out front of the store, counting people coming into the store for no reason at all. She's being made to stand out in the sun, wearing a mask that she can't breathe out of, in 90° temperatures and humidity up to 65°. She asked where the intelligence is in that and where her health was being considered and said it's not.

Colton Schmidt, The Preserve Apartment Complex, Branson, Missouri, commented he's against this ordinance as proposed and amended entirely. He presented the Board with a few statistics and pointed out there hasn't been a Taney County Health Department update as of the last meeting on July 16th. So his statistics are from the following day, July 17th, and he reported as of the 17th there were 146 cases and three deaths. He noted the Taney County Health Department updated its numbers at 2:00 p.m. today and reported 260 cases and 4 deaths. He explained the case increase is 114 cases and the death increase is 1, which is a 78% case increase. The death to case ratio from July 17th was 2% and the death to case ratio today is 1.5%. Looking at these numbers he calculated the death to case ratio from July 17th to today to be 0.08%. He mentioned the thing people are hearing is that the death rate sits around 2%, but if that's the case, with the 114 cases seen over this time period there should have been 2 to 2 1/3 deaths instead of just one. To him that says citizens, business owners, visitors and everyone in Branson are doing their part without having to be mandated to wear a mask. Mr. Schmidt commented, without having to do any of that people are doing their job and the number of deaths is going down. He explained the deaths are what people are really afraid of, because cases are kind of good since it means people are being exposed, they're growing antibodies which helps prevent deaths. Mr. Schmidt commented he's speaking on behalf of plenty of businesses, citizens and visitors of Branson and he urged the Board to vote no. He stated he just presented the statistics and facts that have been provided by the County and he asked the Board to please vote no and said God bless the Board of Aldermen, Branson and America.

Clay Cooper, 3216 West 76 Country Boulevard, Branson, Missouri, said he's been in Branson for 34 years as he moved here when he was 16 years old to live a dream of playing country music in Branson. It's turned out to be a lifelong career and now him, his wife and his boys all perform and have 95 employees. He mentioned Walmart now requires everyone to wear a mask and while there the other day, he decided to take pictures of everyone wearing their mask incorrectly. Mr. Cooper explained he got about 30 pictures and he showed the Board examples of how people wear their masks incorrectly such as hanging them off one side of their face, wearing them under their chin or not covering their nose. He believes the problem with this is it's given those people a false sense of security; that they don't need to social distance because they're protected with their masks when they're not really since they're not wearing them right. His show is running about 50% to 60% down and he has a \$23,000 monthly mortgage, \$8,000 per month electric bill, 95 employees and he's not even sure how it's still running to be honest. Mr. Cooper mentioned looking out into a crowd of 200 to 250 people and only seeing about 8 to 12 people with a mask on. So out of 250 people, what that tells him is the 50% of people who are coming are not wearing masks and the 50% staying home are maybe high risk or don't want to wear a mask, so they're not coming. He believes if masks are mandated, he will see an additional 30% to 35% or maybe even more of those 50% not coming. He hears it every night in the line from people who say they live in Illinois and it feels good to be here and like they can make their own choices. He knows the Board has heard this, but it's true, because he hears it every single night. Mr. Cooper explained he's not a person who carries the Constitution in his back pocket, but he does believe in having that choice. He mentioned having an employee who contracted the virus, but never left his house without a mask or gloves on from day one. Now this employee's mind is boggled and they can't believe how they caught this virus because they've been so careful. He added, so that raises the question how does the mask protect people and on behalf of his family, business and his 95 employees and their families, he asked the Board for a no vote. He believes if masks are mandated, Branson won't have to worry about the virus because there won't be any people left to spread the virus.

Mayor Akers asked for comments from the Board. Discussion. Mayor Akers called for a vote on Bill No. 5837 as amended. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains and Seay. Nays: Milton. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried. Ordinance No. 2020-0072 was duly enacted.

## ADJOURN

Mayor Akers asked for a motion to adjourn. Alderman Skains moved to adjourn, seconded by Alderman Seay. Voting aye: Whiteis, Simmons, Skains, Milton and Seay. Nays: none. Absent: McConnell. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.



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E. Edd Akers  
Mayor



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Lisa Westfall  
City Clerk