



**Face masks required in City buildings regardless of vaccination status**  
***City Council in-person meetings resume, but with continued remote access***  
***for participants and viewers.***

**(Fredericksburg, VA) May 20, 2021** - On recommendation of Fire Chief Mike Jones and Risk and Safety Program Manager Michelle Ridall, the City will continue to require all City employees and visitors to wear face coverings while in City buildings, regardless of vaccination status. This requirement will apply to attendance at in-person City Council meetings, which will resume on Tuesday, May 25<sup>th</sup>.

The reason for the continued requirement is based on local circumstances. Fire Chief Jones reports that the current 7-day positivity rate for the Rappahannock Regional Health District is 6.7%, compared to the statewide rate of 3.9% for all health districts. Meanwhile, the percent of the City's population that is fully vaccinated – 31.1% -- lags behind the statewide rate of 48.7%. "The elevated positivity rate indicates that COVID-19 is still a presence in our community, warranting continued preventive measures like face masks and social distancing," said Jones, "while the lower vaccination rate tells us that fewer people are protected from the virus."

Jones and Ridall expressed special concerns about a gathering of people in the City Council Chambers, where air exchange systems perform at standard levels, but not at a level consistent with the safe occupation of room by many unmasked people over the course of several hours – typical for a City Council meeting that begins with a work session at 5:30 p.m. and then continues at 7:30 p.m. with a regular meeting that can last for several hours. Governor Northam's latest order continues to require people who are not fully vaccinated to wear a face mask, but there is no means of determining who is, and who is not, fully vaccinated.

"Under these circumstances, the best way to protect public health and safety and promote public access to City Council meetings is to continue to require face coverings for all in attendance. As we transition to in-person meetings, we will also continue to live stream the meeting and offer the option for the community to participate remotely by submitting their comments through e-mail," said City Manager Timothy Baroody, concluding, "The people of Fredericksburg have worked together for over a year to defeat the virus and return to normal. We are so close to the end of the pandemic emergency at this time. Continuing to wear face masks while inside public buildings for a few more weeks will help get us over the finish line."