

RESOLUTION NO.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION NO. 2021-

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA RELATED TO PUBLIC HEALTH; MAKING FINDINGS; RECOGNIZING THE CURRENT RAPID SPREAD OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE CITY OF LAKELAND AND THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY; RECOMMENDING THE ADOPTION OF SAFETY MEASURES TO SLOW THE TRANSMISSION OF COVID-19 WITHIN THE CITY OF LAKELAND AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a highly contagious, severe acute respiratory illness that can spread among humans through respiratory transmission; and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (the “CDC”), COVID-19 symptoms can include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea, and can involve other severe symptoms as well; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 2020, Ron DeSantis, Governor of the State of Florida, issued Executive Order number 20-51, directing the Florida Department of Health to issue a Public Health Emergency; and

WHEREAS, on March 1, 2020, the State Surgeon General and State Health Officer declared that a Public Health Emergency exists in the State of Florida as a result of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, on March 9, 2020, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 20-52, declaring a state of emergency for the entire State of Florida as a result of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Governor DeSantis has subsequently issued Executive Orders 20-114, 20-166, 20-213, 20-276, and 20-316, extending the state of emergency declared in Executive Order 20-52 and finding that COVID-19 continues to pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of the State of Florida and its residents; and

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, the City Commission of the City of Lakeland, Florida adopted Resolution No. 5605, declaring a state of local emergency within the incorporated limits of the City of Lakeland due to the threat posed to public health and safety by COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, because the emergency conditions posed by COVID-19 continue, the declaration of a state of local emergency has been extended in 7-day increments since such time, as required by law, and remains in effect today; and

WHEREAS, there are over 150,000 Polk County citizens over the age of 65, representing a particularly vulnerable demographic of the population; and

WHEREAS, deaths in Polk County due to COVID-19 have risen to over 800 cases; and

WHEREAS, the positivity rate for COVID-19 has averaged 15.76% in Polk County over the last 14 days, representing a positivity rate more than three times the rate of July 2020, reaching a peak of 18.3%, and there are now an average of approximately 500 positive cases a day compared to 90 per day two months ago; and

WHEREAS, although vaccinations are now being administered to limited segments of the population, a significant reduction in transmission is not expected to materialize until at least early summer 2021; and

WHEREAS, because of the surge in new COVID-19 cases taking place in the City of Lakeland and the surrounding area, the City Commission convened a special-called meeting on January 11, 2021, at which local health officials, Dr. Steven Achinger, Managing Partner of the Watson Clinic, Dr. Joy Jackson, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Polk County, and Danielle Drummond, President, and CEO of Lakeland Regional Health, were invited to update the City Commission regarding the current situation in the City of Lakeland and Polk County; and

WHEREAS, among the testimony received by the City Commission from the above local health officials, the Commission was advised that: (1) the current surge in COVID-19 cases is placing a strain on health care workers and resources, potentially reducing the availability of resources for non-emergency medical procedures, (2) there were 80% more visits to Watson Clinic Urgent Care facilities in December of 2020 compared to December of 2019, (3) the average hospital stay of a COVID-19 patient is approximately twice as long as that of a non-COVID-19 patient, (4) the physiological effects of COVID-19 are not the same as influenza, with COVID-19 potentially having multi-systemic effects on the heart, lungs, and neurological system, causing blood clots and strokes among other serious complications, and (5) a recent CDC model indicates that asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic persons may account for up to 60% of all transmission of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, each of the above health officials unanimously and fervently recommend that the public wear face coverings, maintain social distancing, and engage in proper hygiene practices as effective measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 from person to person; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the direct health impacts of COVID-19, there are also substantial economic impacts resulting from the pandemic, and it is also a high priority of the City Commission to promote all safety measures possible to ensure businesses can remain open to the public and continue to employ the citizens of Lakeland and the surrounding community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LAKELAND, FLORIDA AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION 1. The foregoing findings are true and correct and are hereby adopted and incorporated herein by reference.

SECTION 2. The City Commission recommends and urges in the strongest possible terms that all citizens, businesses, and organizations of the City of Lakeland conscientiously, and motivated by utmost compassion for the health and well-being of fellow citizens and others, observe the following safety measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 within the City of Lakeland and surrounding communities:

(a) Practice social distancing, which includes avoiding large gatherings, maintaining a distance of at least six (6) feet from others not living in the same home, and utilizing virtual meeting technology whenever possible for business and community meetings;

(b) Wear a face covering per CDC guidelines in all public indoor locations where social distancing is not possible, and consider wearing a face covering at larger outdoor public gatherings as well;

(c) Wash your hands often with soap and water and utilize hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available;

(d) Recognize that COVID-19 transmission is taking place in non-public settings as well and take healthy and necessary appropriate precautions to avoid infecting and becoming infected by others;

(e) For businesses, require the wearing of face coverings following CDC guidelines for all employees coming into physical contact with the public and by all customers entering the premises of the business, subject to exceptions for employees and customers unable to wear face coverings for health reasons, when safety, security, and other business purposes preclude the wearing of face coverings, and subject to other reasonable exceptions as determined by the business.

SECTION 3. This Resolution is intended to express the strongest recommendation possible by the City Commission. Still, it shall not operate or be construed to impose civil or criminal sanctions upon either individuals or businesses failing to comply with the requests expressed herein. This appeal is a solemn call for citizens and businesses to put aside convenience in order to pursue a moral mandate of conscientiousness amidst a very atypical time.

SECTION 4. This Resolution shall become effective immediately upon passage. It shall expire on April 19, 2021 unless extended by the City Commission's further action.

PASSED AND CERTIFIED AS TO PASSAGE this 19th day of January 2021.

H. WILLIAM MUTZ, MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
KELLY S. KOOS, CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND CORRECTNESS: _____
PALMER C. DAVIS
CITY ATTORNEY