

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2021**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Special Meeting at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom video conferencing. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

**1. Roll Call.**

***Council Members***

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman  
Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman  
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll  
Mr. White Osgood {excused}  
Dr. Stewart Beckett III  
Ms. Mary LaChance  
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh  
Mr. Jacob McChesney  
Ms. Lillian Tanski

**a. Pledge of Allegiance**

***Led by Dr. Beckett***

Chairman Gullotta called for a moment of silence to honor the recent passing of Glastonbury Police Department Officer Francis Perrone.

**2. Public Communication and Petitions pertaining to the Call.**

Ms. Carroll read the written comments received:

***Shana Berger of 45 Acorn Ridge Road***, supports implementing an indoor mask mandate as soon as possible, both as a physician and as a parent. Glastonbury's rate of transmission is now considered high, and her child is too young to be vaccinated. Glastonbury schools did a great job last year with keeping school in session, and she would like that to continue this year.

***Lisa Thibodeaux of 414 Eastbury Hill Road***, does not support an indoor mask mandate. She stated that Glastonbury's reported case rate is very low, and a mandate is a gross overreach of power. She called on the Town Council to represent all Town residents, and not make decisions based on just their personal feelings.

Ms. Carroll noted that she followed up with Ms. Thibodeaux to clarify some of the data she shared. Ms. Carroll explained that the math cited was a measure of prevalence, of which Glastonbury's is quite high, and growing. Ms. Thibodeaux responded, stating that the percentage is still very low, and thus, no reason to panic.

**Melissa Albrecht of 665 Manchester Road**, does not support the mask mandate. She stated that science has not proven that wearing a mask stops the spread of the virus. She and other residents will take their business to other towns which do not mandate masks. Healthy lifestyles should be encouraged because everyone is going to have to learn to live with COVID-19.

**Audrey Quinlan of 90 Candlelight Drive**, hopes that the wearing of masks in Town will be discretionary.

**Pamela Lockard of 10 Southgate Drive**, strongly encourages the mask mandate. While she has shopped almost exclusively at Glastonbury stores, she is now changing her shopping to towns that require masks because of safety concerns. Shopping among so many unmasked individuals is too risky at the present time.

**Bette Pisarski of 270 Overlook Road**, believes that a mask mandate for all Town public buildings, including schools, is necessary.

**Gina Larosa of 127 Cedar Ridge Drive**, supports the mask mandate. She asked everyone to be selfless in this matter, not only to protect themselves and their loved ones, but everybody in the community, from the threat of the Delta variant. While she is vaccinated, she still wears a mask indoors.

**Thomas Chi of 118 Fairway Crossing**, supports a mask mandate in indoor public spaces, both as an emergency physician and as a parent of children in the Glastonbury Public Schools system. He has cared for dozens of COVID-19 patients and spent thousands of hours learning as much as possible about the disease. When dealing with a respiratory virus, that means getting vaccinated, staying outdoors as much as possible, and wearing a mask indoors. One of the most disheartening things about this pandemic is seeing how people do not understand that everyone is connected to each other. The Governor's decision to leave it to towns to mandate masks is nonsense, as respiratory viruses can cross town lines. He strongly believes the Town Council should join neighboring towns of East Hartford, Manchester, and Rocky Hill in implementing a mask mandate.

**Denise Weeks of 334 Hollister Way**, urged the Council to implement a mask mandate. Science clearly points to the value of vaccines, masking, and social distancing. The huge surge in COVID-19 cases among people who are unvaccinated, and the higher mortality among them, speaks to the role that anti-mask and anti-vaxxers are playing in perpetuating the spread and increasing virulence of the disease. She called this a war against the disease, and to defeat the enemy, everyone needs to be willing to suffer the discomfort and inconvenience of wearing a mask.

**Jill Grieveson of 3 Tryon Farm Road**, is in favor of requiring the wearing of masks in public places. The argument against a mandate as being unconstitutional and infringing on civil rights is spurious and has been rebutted several times by the Supreme Court in upholding the "police powers" of government, overriding even the First Amendment, when it is for the public good.

**Councilman Osgood** wrote in to support the Town requirement for indoor masking.

Mr. Niland opened the floor for comments from attendees:

**Jenn Jennings of 34 Cranesbill Drive**, is not here to argue whether masking is right or wrong, but introducing a finance metric is government control and overreach. She is pro-freedom and against a \$100 penalty to those who are anti-mask. Glastonbury is not in a state of panic right now. She believes that this proposal will further divide the community and burden the police department. She asked for a science-based metric for transparency.

**Jill Durall of 73 Shagbark Rd**, is against the mask mandate. COVID-19 does not kill children, and case rate means little. Glastonbury's death rates have been static. Store-bought masks do not protect against viruses, and N95 masks do not fit on children or those with facial hair, so a general mask mandate is not rational. The best way to prevent respiratory infection spread is by maintaining hand hygiene. The Delta variant is less deadly. She concluded that this disease is going to become endemic, so we need to learn to live with it and stop the mask hysteria.

**Anne Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive**, supports the mask mandate. This is a simple effort to help prevent transmission of the Delta variant, especially for children and the immunocompromised.

**Bruce Bowman of 62 Morgan Drive**, is also in favor of masking. He has 42 years of experience in health care, as a nurse and as a physical assistant, and wearing masks is imperative to keeping the community safe. One would not ask a surgeon to discard a mask in the middle of a surgical procedure. We are in the middle of a war against COVID-19 and its mutations. Other waged wars have lasted longer. He asked for patience from the community.

**Nathan Fiala of 1505 Manchester Road**, supports a mask mandate. As an economics professor at UConn, his research concerns the intersection of COVID-19 deaths and employment status. It is not true that people under 60 are not affected by the disease. It is the frontline workers who are infected disproportionately. A minor inconvenience to protect them is necessary. Businesses are having a hard time finding employees because they do not feel safe to return to work, so it behooves all to keep them safe by wearing a mask.

**Laura Cahill of 17 Montauk Way**, supports the mask mandate but asked to reconsider the \$100 fine. She thanked the Council and welcomed their transparency in holding this meeting.

**John Langmaid of 2200 Main Street**, has no opinion on mask-wearing, just as he has no opinion on fluoride in water because matters of public health should be dictated by public health officials. He trusts that the Health Department has made a recommendation to the Council based on their expertise, which he relies on to make public health decisions for Glastonbury. Following public health rules should be no more controversial than following traffic safety rules. Thus, he supports the mask mandate.

**Chris Haaf of 29 Strickland Street**, is against the mask mandate. He asked everyone to read the box label for their masks, which state that they do not protect against viruses. He claimed that 80% of the country is pro-choice when it comes to masks, and two-thirds are pro-choice in Connecticut. He reiterated his statement from a previous meeting, where he took issue with the

language used by one of the council women at the BOE meeting. He asked to keep the negative rhetoric down to a minimum.

**Laura Hancock of 255 Weir Street**, spoke on behalf of Safe Streets Connecticut, which is a non-partisan group. Should the Council decide to implement a mask mandate, they ask that the Glastonbury Police Department not be used as a resource for implementation. The GPD is best left to focus on juvenile crime and crimes that are far more dangerous and important for public safety.

**April LaVoie of 1341 Diamond Lake Road**, is against the mask mandate. She, too, stated that the mask boxes state that they do not protect against COVID-19. The disease has a 99.7% survival rate on average. Wearing a mask should be each individual's choice. The immunocompromised are already fully aware of the fact that they need to be careful when out among others. Citizens should have the right to make their own choices.

**Joseph Weiss of 25 Lazy Valley Road**, asked that, going forward, councilmembers stand for the pledge of allegiance. He cited Connecticut Department of Public Health statistics, which state that almost no deaths have occurred in the state because of COVID-19. Children's suicide rates are multiple-fold higher than deaths from COVID-19. He is against the mask mandate.

**Ketti Marks of 82 Hanover Fields Road**, stated that our freedoms are not absolute. If there were, there would be no road laws or requirements for students to even go to school. Liberty is being restricted for good reasons and not getting COVID-19 is a very good reason. She supports the mask mandate.

**Amy Bouchard of 1162 Neipsic Road**, has a background in medicine and has had COVID-19 twice. She has also been vaccinated. Masks will absolutely save lives if worn properly. The box warning is put there for legal reasons. She stated that those who voiced their disagreement with the mandate have not considered children. Regarding the comment about children's suicide rates, frontline worker suicides are astronomically out of control. She supports the mandate.

**Luther Weeks of 334 Hollister Way West**, is a scientist but not a medical scientist. He listens to the CDC, which advises wearing masks inside. He stated that they should worry about children and the elderly. A few weeks ago, fewer than 100 people tested positive. Yesterday, it was 1,000. It has been going up and up. 20% of people in the hospital have been vaccinated, which is still a lot. The least they can do is put on masks, so he supports the mandate.

**Bevan Moore of 65 Hurlburt Street**, supports the mask mandate as a father of three children under 12 and a teacher in a public school, where he has been wearing a mask for 8 hours a day for the past year. There needs to be a multi-layered approach to this pandemic because they cannot vaccinate their way out of it. As a social studies teacher, he took issue with the way many people tonight voiced the role of freedom. He listed the preamble, which is the mission statement of what the purpose of government is. The freedoms cited are about proactive government actions for the collective. This action is not an overreach by the government, nor does it curtail anyone's freedoms in any way.

**David O'Connor of 1140 Main Street**, supports the mask mandate because this is a science and public health issue, not about government control. They need to consider the wellbeing of the entire community. His grandchild has lived with him for the past 1.5 years, and Glastonbury is now in a high-transmission area. There is ample evidence that masks help reduce the spread of COVID-19. The fine is a good idea so that people take this issue seriously.

**Candice Maningas of 202 Indian Hill Trail**, supports the mask mandate. Experts say that vaccines and mask wearing will protect against COVID-19. She urged those quoting Johns Hopkins that they look at their website, which states that masks help prevent the spread of the disease. The idea that masks will make you sick is false. As a nurse in critical care, she shared that every young person whose hand she held when they died of COVID-19 wished that they had put on a mask.

**Audrey Dati of 139 Williams Street West**, favors a mask mandate. She appreciates transparency in holding public hearings. However, she does not support it in this case because this is an issue that should be left to public health experts. It is not a matter of opinion. There are many personal “liberties” which are no longer permitted out of public health concerns, such as banning smoking in public places and requiring wearing shoes in restaurants. Mask wearing is not a political issue but a public health one. The point of wearing a mask is to protect your neighbor, not you.

**Stephen Michaels of 225 Grandview Drive**, is against a blanket mandate. If there is to be a mandate, it should be tied to a metric which is measurable. He asked to leave the police out of it because this is not a criminal matter.

**Jennifer Siskind of 101 Fairview Terrace**, supports a mandate. While she is immunocompromised, the pandemic affects all those associated with her, not just those who are also immunocompromised. She is concerned about people not following the CDC recommendations of masking up in high prevalence areas, which Hartford County has been at for over a month. There are people putting their own personal liberties above the rest of the community. People are not wearing masks in businesses anymore, which is a big difference from before. She asked for leadership from the Town Council. She hopes that their leadership, along with the penalty for not adhering to the mandate, would help spur people to wear masks.

**Tom Bailey of 115 Paxton Way**, re-emphasized the importance of the role of leadership. Masks are not intended to protect the wearer, but to protect others. In an operating room, surgeons all wear masks to protect the patient. This is no different. He supports a mandate.

**Jennifer Wang of 84 April Drive**, stated that public health decision making and leadership are two different things. She is a candidate for the Town Council with a background in public health. A metric is not enough. Leadership is required. Nearby towns have implemented mask mandates, and none of them had public hearings. The mayor of Rocky Hill was authoritative and compassionate and brought the community along. They did it one week after they entered the high transmission zone. Glastonbury is almost two weeks out, and this meeting was only announced yesterday. They need to move forward with the mask mandate.

**Stephanie Johnson of 50 Smithbrook Terrace**, is against the mask mandate as it is just going to further divide the community. People have already taken stances on the sides they choose to be on. They are not going to change anybody's mind with a mandate.

**Gina Larosa of 127 Cedar Ridge Drive**, supports the mask mandate. She believes that everyone should be empathetic towards one another.

**Beth Hillson of 262 Cedar Ridge Drive**, supports the mask mandate. Given the Town's high positivity rate of over 4%, it is essential that they have this mandate in public places. She has changed her lifestyle considerably because of this virus, but she cannot do it alone. The only choice they have is to enact a community-wide effort to help control the numbers.

**Virginia Aleksunes of 72 Barry Lane**, is tired of being called anti-mask and selfish and not empathetic. They cannot vaccinate their way out of this. Early treatment is paramount. Early in the pandemic, the government was censoring health information. She does not agree with a mask mandate because it should not be left to the government. If they had health information available and doctors could advise them on it, then this pandemic would not be here now. This is all about fear, control, and misinformation. She would like the mandates to stop.

**Doug Foyle of 534 Addison Hill Road**, is the BOE Chairman, and he is speaking as a board member and a policy maker. The BOE found that their school policies and procedures helped control transmission in schools. Community spread is what affects their ability to keep children in school. Community transmission leads to quarantines, which are affected by community spread. Whatever they can facilitate as a community to keep children in school is something they should be doing. He supports a mask mandate.

**Mark Branse of 48 Birch Trail**, supports a mask mandate. If masks do not do anything, he asked why medical procedures all require them. He also thinks of this like smoking in public. There are people who want their freedom to smoke in public, which involves subjecting him to their ignorance and jeopardizing his own health. The responsible thing is to maintain the conduct that has always been around to protect us.

**Paul Wechsler of 286 Buttonball Lane**, thanked the Council for holding this meeting. He asked them to keep looking at science and the facts.

**Jacqueline Weiss of 25 Lazy Valley Road**, asked if everyone is so comfortable with vaccines, why are they looking backwards. Medical science is improving treatments for COVID-19. She asked why they are not widely known. Why are masks the end all be all to preventing illness? Bullying in this town is the opposite of the kind of example they should set for children.

**Alison Couture of 37 Shipman Drive**, echoed those who desire a metric. Everyone is exhausted, but this is a virus we still do not understand, so setting an arbitrary end date is nonsense. They need to turn to town leadership because reducing community spread is paramount to continuing the success of schools and the community at large. She supports the mask mandate.

**Mark Pappa of 41 Uplands Way**, is new to town. He claimed that this is a coordinated effort by the Democratic Party during their campaign season. He had COVID-19 twice, even though he quarantined, got vaccinated, and wore masks. He does not shame somebody because they have their individual right to protect themselves. He is against the mask mandate.

**Robert Marn of 1137 Main Street**, echoed the need for a metric, if a mask mandate is implemented. However, it is an inevitable truth that this virus will run its course through the population and become a part of our daily lives. He does not know what metric can be placed on long-term safety. Good self-preservation should prevail, and people should be able to make the right choice without being made to make the right choice. He is not in favor of a mandate.

**Mark Branse** rejected Mr. Pappa's comment about this being a Democratic Party conspiracy. There is nothing partisan about this discussion. He has served on many Republican campaign committees. This is simply a matter of the government protecting the public, which means mandating behavior in preventing the spread of this disease.

**Raymond Johnson of 50 Smithbrook Terrace**, encouraged all to check out the 2017 Johns Hopkins futuristic scenario document which discusses a theoretical pandemic scenario. At the end, it discusses how communities around the country confronted the fact that the medicine which was supposed to help them likely hurt them. Neither public health officials nor regular citizens know what the future holds. He urged all to look at the document.

**Noraleen Leclaire of 77 Partridge Landing**, is against police resources being used to enforce a mask mandate. She has daily stress over the juvenile car thefts. She asked to come up with creative ways to not take away resources from the police department.

**April LaVoie** spoke again to state that people are sharing what they have read and thought based on their experiences. Those who support the mask mandate should either wear them or stay home. The rest of the people in town should have the choice of whether to wear masks or not.

**Mark Pappa** stated that if this is not political, then that must be proven. He appreciates the meeting and the spirited debate tonight. He thanked the Council for their fairness in letting him speak a second time.

**3. Special Business as contained in the Call.**  
**a. Discussion and action concerning mask requirements per Executive Order 13A.**

Chairman Gullotta explained that several days ago, he and a few other council members (the Agenda Setting Committee) were contacted by the Town Manager and informed that Glastonbury continues to have a high rate of infections. After consultation with the Health Director, Mr. Johnson prepared a notice to reinstate mask wearing in indoor public spaces. Leadership voiced no objection and shared this information with their colleagues. It has been alleged that politics was involved with this. He asked Mr. Johnson if anyone on the Council spoke with him about COVID-19 or tried to influence him in any way. Mr. Johnson replied, no. He spoke with Health Director, Wendy Mis, who explained that other communities in Hartford

used the Red Zone as a threshold for reimplementing mask mandates. Following that discussion, he initiated the phone call to Town leadership with his recommendation. He felt it was best not to act in a vacuum on such an important matter.

Mr. Johnson explained that the \$100 fine for failing to comply with the mandate is established by the Governor's Executive Order through use of the words "shall be subject to a fine," so it is not discretionary. However, they have been working with potential fines in town for months. It has not been an issue to date, nor has it been a resource drain from the police department. In terms of a metric, they have used the grey, yellow, orange, and red zones. They want to see new cases moved down for a sustained period, perhaps two reporting periods for the state, which is a total of three weeks. If the Council agrees, that could be rescinded after a certain period, if cases move down.

Mr. Niland explained that they gave this power to the Town Manager back in the beginning of the pandemic. The insinuation that the mask issue came about as a political ploy from members of the leadership is patently false. He found it offensive and completely out of line. This came from the Town Manager following his discussions with Ms. Mis. Glastonbury is in the Red Zone. They need to protect residents, and he does not want to delay things further. This requirement could have been done four days ago.

Ms. Tanski asked why this mandate was not brought up earlier when they had a public council meeting. She stressed the importance of this meeting and the process for maintaining an open dialogue with the public. She asked how many fines the Town has assessed. Ms. Mis stated that none have been enacted thus far. They have worked with multiple businesses cooperatively and developed different protocols for ensuring that their staff would be masked, and the public would be protected. Ms. Tanski asked about hospitalization rates in Town. Ms. Mis explained that hospitalization rates are provided statewide and by county. In the last 10 days, Hartford County comprises about one-third of the state's hospitalizations. However, the data is not broken down by town, so she cannot say what Glastonbury's specific numbers are.

Ms. Tanski then asked about the language of the upcoming declaration. Mr. Johnson explained that they can look at two reporting periods (a total of three weeks) when the reported cases have moved below the red level. If the Council would like to integrate that into the motion, he can come up with that language. Mr. Cavanaugh stated that any discussion on a motion is skeptical because the chief executive officer here is the Town Manager. Mr. Gullotta remarked that this is not a political issue, and the intention is to clear up that misconception, which Mr. Branse did a great job of clarifying. They are trying to deal with a public health problem.

Mr. Cavanaugh asked who could enact penalties and enforcement. Mr. Johnson read a list of people who could enforce the mask mandate. For Glastonbury, it would mainly be the Director of Health designee and police officers. Mr. Cavanaugh asked if this is classified as an infraction or a summons. Police Chief Marshall Porter explained that it is an infraction from the Governor's Executive Order. Mr. McChesney feels comfortable taking action that is suggested by the Town Manager and the Public Health Director. He is also in favor of a publicly recognized metric because shifting goal posts make it difficult for businesses to deal with this issue. He asked the Chief to address the concern that this action would not divert resources from the juvenile crime

issue. Chief Porter explained that there has not been a strain on resources, and no infractions have been issued in the past year. He does not anticipate that their resources would be strained either way.

Ms. LaChance was offended by the comment which insinuated that this came about from a political angle. Her brother and sister-in-law both work in hospitals. She asked why the people making these false claims are not doing the bare minimum of putting on a mask to help protect them. After all of that, they still have to treat anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers when they come into the hospital with COVID-19. Dr. Beckett stated that the escalation of cases is even faster now than it was this time last year when Glastonbury hit their maximum. He is not happy about the mandate, but he must support it.

Ms. Tanski asked if there is a way to sever the \$100 fine for failing to comply with the indoor mask mandate. Mr. Johnson explained that the Executive Order and any local declaration comes with a \$100 fine, but they work very well with businesses to seek compliance on a voluntary basis. No fines have been issued in the past almost 10 months. Ms. Tanski asked what the enforcement mechanisms are. Mr. Johnson stated that it is largely complaint or concern driven. It is not something that the police or health staff are actively patrolling for. Chief Porter concurred, adding that when the statutory language uses the term “shall,” Connecticut courts have interpreted that to mean “may.” The GPD has endeavored to gain voluntary compliance versus ticketing, and it has worked thus far.

Ms. Tanski asked if they have identified a specific type of business or public space as a driver of community transmission. Are there areas of concern that this mandate is tailored to address? Ms. Mis explained that, in addition to the complaint-driven responses that they receive, the Health Department has regulatory responsibility to do certain business inspections. That includes mask inspections. As for potential hotspots, there is no specific data for the town, but statewide and nationally, it is when people are gathered in larger numbers indoors. Ms. Tanski asked what the vaccination rates are in town. Ms. Mis noted that Glastonbury has reached 100% vaccination for people aged 75 and over. However, she noted that while the town has a high vaccination rate, many residents go outside of town for various reasons. The Delta variant has overtaken vaccination, so there is a risk.

Ms. Tanski stressed the importance of tonight’s process. Transparency is why she asked for this meeting and had a long list of questions. While it is not their decision to make as council members, it is their job to oversee the work of the executive in town and to provide feedback and ask questions. She does not believe that they should invoke Town Council or Town Manager powers without listening to the community. Dismissing this process as an inconvenience is failing in their responsibility to residents. She is proud that the town has committed to a metric that businesses will be able to plan. Knowing the logic behind this mandate is a step forward in building trust from the community. She appreciates that the Town Manager has set aside a plan, a goal, and a metric. The community decides that some risks are appropriate, and some are not. She advised every person to think about how their actions and choices affect others. Police powers should be used in the least restrictive ways possible, so she is not comfortable with this mandate.

Ms. Carroll stated that this is not a debate. The Connecticut Department of Public Health tested the thresholds, which Glastonbury is over, and that is why they are here tonight. The idea of politicizing public health is unacceptable and inappropriate. This is not about fear trumping freedom, but about facts trumping choice for a set period in the interest of public health. She clarified that her comments at the BOE meeting were simply that relying on public opinion over scientific data on matters regarding public health is absurd. She did not say that “people” were absurd, and she stands behind her comments because decisions about public health need to be based on scientific fact. She supports this mandate, and she hopes that it does not last long.

Mr. Gullotta encouraged all to get vaccinated if they have not yet done so.

**4. Adjournment.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Lilly Torosyan**

**Lilly Torosyan**

**Recording Clerk**

**Thomas Gullotta**

**Chairman**