



Carl J. Florea
Office of the Mayor
City of Leavenworth

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Community Members,

As we enter the Thanksgiving week, I believe that it is important to focus on all the blessings we enjoy as members of this community, even amid a pandemic. Not only do we live in one of the absolutely best, most beautiful places on earth, but we share this place with one of the most creative and resilient collections of people you could ask for! We continue to do our very best to manage the impacts of the pandemic while creatively trying to support our local workforce. However, with the Governor's newly released restrictions, we are definitely facing yet more challenges. Stepping backwards is never a welcome step to take. However, it is, unfortunately, a necessary one. We simply cannot continue as a state and region to move forward along our current path. It is not sustainable. The City and the business community continue to work closely on innovative ways for addressing the challenges the COVID virus has presented us. Last week, the City unveiled its Winter Special Use Permit, which seeks to expand business activities in the winter months while allowing snow clearing to also occur. This effort is inspired by the success of the Summer Special Use Permits that allowed over thirty businesses to expand their opportunities to make a living this past summer, as well as to give our guests a safe place to gather.

I understand that some people believe that this whole pandemic is not that bad and that our responses may be overreactions. They point out that the vast majority simply do not get sick enough to even need hospitalization. That is true. But it is also true that even the small percentage that do require hospitalization, and some for extended periods of time, will totally overwhelm our healthcare system if we continue down the path we are on. Just this past week we learned that 17% of all our cases in Chelan County have occurred in the last two weeks! And last Thursday alone we had 6 more deaths in Chelan County. And so, to those who think we are overreacting, I would simply ask you, "So who would you deny care to when we run out of space in our hospitals, or no longer have enough medical staff to care for everyone?" I wouldn't want to be the one who had to make that determination. And a similar question should also be asked. "Why is it OK for us to continue to ask our frontline healthcare workers to be put at risk because we don't want to wear masks, keep social distance, and avoid gathering indoors with people outside our households?" We owe it to health workers to minimize their load and the risk they assume for all of us. **We must take a step back so we can move forward.** And the good news is, it is within our power to make this work. We can take a break. We can double down on our efforts. We can put restrictions upon ourselves because of our care for one another.

As we have said throughout this very long pandemic, we are all in this together. Like it or not, we are. We have done so well in Leavenworth overall. We have worked hard to do things right. Many cities in the State recognize Leavenworth as a model for surviving while recognizing the seriousness of the pandemic. We have made the sacrifices, some of them far greater than can be reasonably expected. But we have done it. And now we must give an extra amount of responsible effort to get us over this hump. And such effort is not without hope. We have had tremendous news recently that very effective vaccines seem to be on their way. That, too, is a great reason for thanksgiving. We can see the light at the end of the tunnel. But we are not out of that tunnel yet. We need, with the promise of a brighter future, to commit to hanging in there, doing all we can to reign in this virus. We can do this! Keep your physical celebrations during the holidays small this year, in order to ensure that much bigger ones will follow in the years to come. Stay safe! And a blessed day of Thanksgiving to each of us!



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