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Office of the Mayor  
City of Leavenworth

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Members of the Community,

I want to wish you all a very happy New Year as we begin 2021! It can be, and it will be, a happy one, if we choose to make it one! However, in some ways 2021 might be harder and more challenging to our happiness than 2020 was. Because we are SO ready to move on, and that means we are ready for 2021 to be back to normal, and we want it to change immediately as we turn the calendar to a new month in a new year. Yet we know and hear all the time that it is simply not going to happen that quickly. The good news is, the vaccine is being given locally to medical personnel, first responders, and those in congregate care facilities. The beginning of the end of this scourge is in process. However, we also know that it is going to take much longer to vaccinate enough of the population to bring this under control to the point that we can get close to living normally once again. So, it was one thing to wait and deal with the virus when we had no choice and saw no option. It will be tougher for many of us to wait, to keep practicing safety with masks and social distancing and hand washing, now that we can see the end potentially coming. But now, more than ever, we need to draw on our patience and keep our safety precautions fully in place!

The other factor that will determine how quickly we can get back to normal is, quite frankly, how many of us are willing to risk getting the vaccine. If there are a large enough number of us that are not willing to get the vaccine because it has not been around long enough and we question its safety, then we may continue to fight this virus longer than would otherwise be necessary. I am willing to get the vaccine, not because it is risk free, (not much in life is), but because the risk associated with the vaccine is less than the risk faced by the virus. We have two facts to weigh. Fact one: To date over 375,000 people have died in the US from COVID-19, and our health care system is stretched to its limit and beyond in many places. This virus has caused untold economic and personal damage to many millions more, including many of us here in our community, and it will take a long time to fully recover from those impacts. Fact two: While there have been a few cases of rather extreme allergic reactions to the vaccines that are in use, there have been no deaths to date linked definitively to the vaccines. So, when I weigh those risks, it's what I call a "no-brainer". Not only is the vaccine going to protect me if I get it, it is also going to help us reach that level of "herd immunity" that will help our community and nation defeat the virus and get back to being able to be social beings once again! (An aside: When some people hear the term "herd immunity", from what they have told me, they assume that it refers to the process of letting the virus spread on its own until enough people contract it and develop immunity. That might only be achieved after millions have died. That is, potentially, one way, the most deadly way, to get to herd immunity. But, actually, herd immunity just refers to the fact that we have enough people with resistance to the virus that there are simply not enough people susceptible to infection to keep the virus going. This can be done by letting it spread naturally, or by getting

everyone vaccinated, or by a combination of both. We have to get to that point of herd immunity, and the vaccine will help get us there sooner than later, and with far fewer deaths. Hope that clarification is helpful.)

We do not have a lot of information about when and where the vaccine will be offered more broadly here locally. We know that eventually the Cascade Medical Center, who has been vaccinating Phase 1A people currently, will expand their offerings to others. And we know that the local Safeway pharmacy also expects to be able to offer the vaccine at some point. But, as we have seen, the roll out has not gone as smoothly as we might have hoped. We simply do not have a lot of answers yet. The Governor's Office has released information on the various phases. But those are broad categories and estimated dates, and I expect that they will be modified further as we move forward. As soon as we get any updated information specific to our area, we will be sure to get it on our website and out to all of you! Stay tuned!

So, HOW TO MAKE 2021 a happy new year? It depends. It depends on our patience and how we keep being safe for ourselves and each other. And it depends upon what attitude we choose to have towards one another. We have seen how fractured and broken our society has become. How our differences have been elevated to a level of absolute division. We have seen it at the national level, but we have also seen it rear its head at the local level. It is, sadly, predicated on a false sense of absolute rightness. This means that those who differ from us do not just have a different perspective, or even different values, but are an evil threat to all that we hold good. Such attitudes drove the desecration of our nation's Capitol building last week, and it was probably something similar that led someone to call in a bomb threat in Leavenworth the week before. Such attitudes only add to the pain, only deepen the anger, only entrench our self-righteousness, only drive the divisions deeper. I plan to have a happy new year, because I refuse to live seeing my fellow residents as enemies. I will have a happy new year, because I will continue to seek the best for our entire community to the best of my ability, but without the arrogance that all my decisions or actions are the "only" ones, or even the best ones. Real community is only possible if we acknowledge that we truly are all in this together, whether we are of like mind or not. And that recognition should lead us to a place of humility. I will have a happy new year, because I will work to help you have a happy new year as well! Stay safe!



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