



CITY OF HALLOWELL

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To: Hallowell City Council

RE: Review of Hallowell State of Emergency

Starting last month and as recently as last week I had been discussing the merits of maintaining the City State of Emergency, vs. reducing to a “State of Alert”, with City Council Committees, the Hallowell Board of Health, and at the Emergency Operations Center Staff meeting. The conversation evolved last week after an abrupt increase in COVID-19 cases nationwide, and Governor Janet Mills’ order that business owners in certain cities and towns along the coast and in major population areas will be required to enforce mask / face covering requirements set by the state. It reminded me that Hallowell may face unique, local needs in response to the recurring wave of COVID-19 that has struck the nation, especially during a summer tourism season where Hallowell is a very popular tourist destination for visitors from states with higher COVID-19 incidence.

Along with having the flexibility to issue orders to protect public health and safety, I am especially concerned with the health and safety of City staff, who are all essential workers—and many are first responders, the front line of the COVID-19 response. Realizing that diminishing the State of Emergency at this time may unintentionally send a message that the virus is not a serious threat, or that we don’t need to remain vigilant about staff safety and public health in City-owned buildings. To help clear this obstacle for later reducing to a State of Alert, at an appropriate time, we have proposed a change in the City Ordinance that would allow us more flexibility in setting City Hall office hours, which would not go into effect until after the final reading, with a reading schedule to be determined.

For these reasons, I do not recommend that Hallowell reduce the State of Emergency to a “State of Alert” at this time.
