



April 15, 2020

Letter from Council President Richard Emery

First, I want to express my gratitude, respect, and admiration for all of the people, businesses, medical workers, and first responders for the work they are doing in response to the Covid 19 epidemic. Mukilteans have come forward to donate food, money, cloth, masks and more to help us all cope with the challenges of staying home and social distancing. I am especially impressed with the local businesses that have re-purposed or re-imagined their production, to provide PPE in part or full, and provide other safety equipment that protects everyone.

Some of these businesses are Kaas Tailored, Electro-Impact, University Mechanical and Omnitech design. Please forgive me if I missed anyone. Let me, or Mayor Gregerson, know what you doing and we will share your story with our community.

And thanks to the Snohomish County Health District and their thoughtful and effective leadership, in spite of limited resources.

There is another group that deserves mention as well. These are the people who manage and staff our grocery stores and other essential businesses; those who deliver the products, food and supplies to our homes; and all those who keep the supply chains working. They have continued to work in spite of an increased risk of infection and without them, staying home and social distancing would be much more difficult.

The good news is, social distancing, self isolation, and staying home appears to be having the desired effect. The number of new cases is falling, as are deaths; there are fewer people in hospitals and more available hospital beds, and this seems true for both Snohomish County and the State. The data for Mukilteo indicates our residents have been effective at social distancing with 48 confirmed cases in Mukilteo, and no deaths, as of April 12.

This is good news for us all, and we can all be proud of how disciplined we have been and how successful we have been in containing this disease.

Unfortunately, frustratingly, this is not over yet.

A University of Washington projection indicated the peak of infections, hospitalization, and deaths may have already passed. But, it is essential to realize the projection expects new infections and deaths continuing for months, even with 80-90% effective social distancing. (Sunday, April 12, Seattle Times) And that is the best case scenario, based on maintaining social distancing as effectively as we have been doing. Since I am not medically or epidemiologically trained, I have been learning from those that are. Here are some quotes: "It's good to have models, but I prefer to be more of a pessimist when you don't know what's going on." Dr. Georges Benjamin, Exec Dir of the American Public Health Assoc; "People really do need to understand the sad truth here...people will continue to get sick, critically ill, and die." "...social distancing will greatly reduce the death toll by spreading the cases out over a longer period of time and preserving hospital capacity." Dr. Jeff Duchin, health officer for Public Health, Seattle&King County. Dr. Duchin also said, "We want to get back to our normal lives as quickly as possible, but we have to do this in a very measured way, without overwhelming our health care system."

This information is likely disturbing -- it certainly is for me. Like many, being at home full time has become less of an adventure and more challenging as days pass.



But my challenges are not important.

What is important is understanding that relaxing our social distancing too soon will reverse all the gains and successes we have achieved, and stretch out the length of this pandemic for many more weeks, even months, with more illness and deaths.

I believe many people are looking at May 4 as the date life may begin to return to normal. This may be unrealistic.

Drs. Benjamin, Duchin, Dr. Robert Redfield (director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) and Dr. Elizabeth Halloran (an infectious disease specialist and modeler at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center), among others, are clear there are three essential components to successfully limiting the spread of Covid 19. The only one that is currently active and effective is social distancing. The other two are the ability to perform massive testing to identify those who are ill (as well as those who have antibodies). The other is contact tracing of everyone who encountered those who test positive, and sequestering them for 14 days.

Neither of these currently has the resources necessary to be effective.

There are major efforts to develop and produce effective, FDA approved, testing kits (there are fake kits, and others not yet reviewed by the FDA). There is discussion on how to trace contacts using cell phone and/or social media data (there are privacy issues). This would greatly reduce the number of people needed to trace contacts, though.

In addition, there are many efforts around the world to identify and verify effective drug treatments and create vaccines.

All of these will take time and money to develop and implement. A vaccine may not be available for a year, or more, for example. The consensus from around the world is this virus will not be tamed until there is an effective treatment and/or a vaccine.

What does this all mean, and what can we do? And what does it mean in relation to the need to reopen businesses?

There should be at least a 14 day period between the last new infection and lifting of social distancing. That's due to the long incubation period of this virus, and the fact that the virus can be spread even by those with no symptoms. Different models from around the world have concluded that there will be another spike in infections and deaths a month or two after relaxing social distancing, putting us back where we just were.

We have to be patient. And have the stamina and will power to continue social distancing. We have to understand that any motion towards a return to normal will be gradual. We want economic recovery to be successful, allowing everyone to return to work and have the ability to support themselves and their families, without creating another round of infections and deaths. We can contact Senators Murray and Cantwell, and Representatives to continue to seek funding for testing and contact tracing. We can contact our State elected officials for the same.

It is encouraging that Gov. Inslee is working with the governors of Oregon and California to develop metrics and timelines for easing restrictions and getting us back to work.

It will not be easy or smooth or quick.

But we can do this.