

## How The Town Navigates the COVID Mandates

It's hard to believe we are now entering our second Holiday Season living with the perils brought on by the COVID Pandemic.

The Town of Clarence infection rate is one of the highest in Erie County. County Executive, Mark Poloncarz summarizes that Clarence Residents last year were the first to be vaccinated and depending on the vaccine, you might need a booster shot.

I have received numerous calls and emails at the Town Hall regarding Mark Poloncarz's reinstatement of the mask mandate, and it's important that I clarify the bigger picture in how I'm having to navigate this as your Town Supervisor.

The mask mandates/policies from Erie County are completely out of our control at Town Hall. The Town does not have our own Health Department. All health decisions are made by the State first and then the county – including these various mandates. Technically, law enforcement should not intervene when it comes to these mandates. Therefore, this will never come through our town courts, or have crossover with our town policies.

The Erie County Health Department is a different story. We have no authority over the Health Department. We can't overrule or change any of their policies or decisions. These mask mandates, and any repercussions fall solely between the county/state and the business owner.

I am never going to pretend to be an authority on health, immunology, viruses, etc. I am never going to pretend that I have the answer to how to get COVID behind us. I do know that the CDC has said that this is never going away. We must start figuring out how to live with this, just as we live with the flu.

I try to find a balance between maintaining a decent relationship with the county, as we rely on them for several services for our town, while also supporting the residents, business owners, and overall, the greater good of our town.

For those that really want to know...I'm personally vaccinated and "boosted." I also know several people that have passed away from COVID. I have a family friend that is hospitalized with COVID as I write this.

Certainly, the jury is out on whether masks are effective or not. The numbers are hard to deny when you look at many states that have little to no mandates and are flourishing in many ways. I'm hopeful that more and more people chose to get vaccinated. However, I am also strongly against government overreach. Wearing a mask and taking a vaccine should be a personal decision – not a government mandate. The "vaccine passports" are disturbing – yet if a privately owned business chooses to implement these policies, I also think it is respectful to honor their wishes (or choose not to patron their business).

Lastly, I'd like to take this opportunity to send a big thank you to Clarence Pharmacy (and all of our healthcare workers). Last year Clarence Pharmacy held many clinics at the Harris Hill Fire Hall vaccinating our residents. This year Clarence Pharmacy again has been leading the way helping our residents with both vaccines and boosters – which has been especially helpful with the struggles of the

other Pharmacies in the area. Pharmacists Kevin Clary, Jon Vorreuter and Steve Scalzo have been extremely helpful and supportive.

I hope everyone in town has a safe, happy and healthy holiday season!