**Open Letter to the Billings Community**

Dear Fellow Citizens:

The agenda of the last Board of Aldermen meeting included a discussion regarding measures that could and should be taken within our community to help curb the further spread of the covid-19 virus locally.

We are urging everyone to voluntarily take the recommended steps of social distancing and wearing face coverings/masks when engaging with others outside our immediate families. Almost all healthcare professionals advise that these are the most effective measures in curbing the spread of the virus until vaccines are widely available. These measures will help contain the rapidly escalating infection rate we are experiencing, help avoid the uncertain results of being infected by this virus, and yes, save lives.

Social distancing and wearing facial coverings will not be a “new normal” long term. However, in the short term, these are the most prudent things we can do.

We all are suffering from “Covid Fatigue.” These last months have taken a toll on all of us in many ways. However, it is especially important now that we take this crisis very seriously for our own protection as well as for others. Let us keep in mind our fellow citizens on the front lines responding to this pandemic who are being pushed to their limits. We need to respond both out of respect and care for these devoted heroes who are so essential. Daily they are exposed to this virus and their numbers are not unlimited.

The escalating infection rate is not caused by more people being tested. If that were the case, our hospitals and healthcare facilities would not be faced with impending capacity challenges. This is real and we need to take the measures necessary to protect ourselves, our families, and others.

We want all to know that if the federal government, the State of Missouri, and/or Christian County officials issue mandatory preventative measures, the City of Billings will abide by all legal mandates. Again, we are strongly urging voluntary participation, in part to make sure that mandatory measures are not necessary.

This is a community that always steps up to whatever the challenges and needs that stand before us. Let us continue that tradition and protect each other.

Thank you for your understanding and assistance in this difficult time.

Sincerely,

David Rauch, Mayor, and the members of the Billings Board of Aldermen: Mickey Brown, Ken Cloud, Holly Fender, Scott Gold, Tricia Huffman-Bailey and David Kucera