

AIRPORT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL
RESOLUTION 2020-6

A RESOLUTION OF THE AIRPORT HEIGHTS COMMUNITY COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF
THE CONTINUATION OF SCHOOL CLOSURES AND THE MUNICIPALITY OF
ANCHORAGE PROVIDING AN INDEPENDENT TRANSPARENT PUBLIC HEALTH
REVIEW OF SCHOOL DISTRICT PLANS TO RECONVENE STUDENTS, TEACHERS
AND STAFF IN CLOSE CONTACT WITHIN ANCHORAGE SCHOOLS WHILE
ANCHORAGE IS EXPERIENCING A PANDEMIC

WHEREAS, the general membership of the Airport Heights Community Council (AHCC), is not scheduled to meet until November 19, 2020 and there is urgency to have the subject of this resolution acted upon before the next general membership meeting;

WHEREAS, according to the AHCC bylaws, the executive board is authorized to make decisions and speak on behalf of the council when the general membership is unable to do so;

WHEREAS, the executive board met on November 7, 2020 to discuss the subject matter of this resolution and approved the following;

WHEREAS, the State of Alaska Constitution, drafted, passed and ratified with historic knowledge of pandemics, provides that one of the responsibilities of State Government is to provide for the public health;

WHEREAS, State Statutes provide that home rule municipalities have the authority to regulate matters of public health;

WHEREAS, the Municipality of Anchorage, under its home rule authority, has the authority and responsibility to act on behalf of the people in its community to provide regulation and advice to protect the public health, a profound and solemn responsibility during a pandemic;

WHEREAS, current conditions reported by the State of Alaska indicate COVID-19 incidence is on the order of 5 times the “red zone” high public health risk threshold that remains a feature on the Municipality dashboard for the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 1) MOA RED HIGH PUBLIC HEALTH RISK THRESHOLD
 - a) 7-day moving average, new cases, 10 per 100,000 (MOA COVID Tracking Web Site)
- 2) Current Conditions
 - a) 7-day moving average, new cases, ~50 per 100,000 (November 2, update as data becomes available)
 - b) 7-day moving average, new cases, ~72 per 100,000 (November 7, update as data becomes available)

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 test positivity rate for Anchorage reported by the State of Alaska is roughly 9% (November 2, update as data becomes available), on the order of two times the public health threshold of 5% that has been cited by the WHO as a baseline indicator of adequate testing;

WHEREAS, communities with public education and public health challenges similar to Anchorage, who were facing high and rising incidence as well as positivity rates that were lower than those currently being experienced in Anchorage, have retreated from reconvening students, teachers and staff in close contact within their schools, e.g.;

- 1) Boston Mayor announces delays in Boston School District reopening plans as testing positivity rate (diverse student body with roughly 54,000 students) goes above 5% to 5.7%¹
- 2) Google search of covid-19 related school closures reveals a large and growing number both in Alaska (Y-K Delta, Mat-Su, Kenai Peninsula) and across the U.S. as community spread surges;

WHEREAS, in states that have reopened schools, e.g. Arkansas, recent data indicates that over 2,000 public school teachers have tested positive for COVID and at least six have died [New York Times School Briefing, Monday, November 2, 2020];

WHEREAS, recent independent professional public health advice, (see The Lancet COVID-19 Commission Statement, Volume 396, Number 10257, pages 1045-1128, October 10-16, 2020), has concluded:

Opening schools when the epidemic in an area is not under control is inadvisable; as it is likely to be a short-lived policy, followed by rapid closure of facilities if many children and teachers are quickly infected. Teachers might also refuse to work unless assured of workplace safety. [paragraph 40]

WHEREAS, independent professional public health risk assessment thresholds that include consideration of when it is prudent to reconvene students, teachers and staff in close contact within local schools are well below current conditions faced by Anchorage

	New Cases Per Million per day	Tests per positive test / test positivity rate
Harvard Global Health Institute Risk Thresholds for Schools	200	20 / 5%
Prior Anchorage School District Threshold (August)	100	
Current Anchorage Conditions (2 Nov 2020)	557.5	11 / 9%

¹ <https://nypost.com/2020/10/22/boston-public-schools-go-fully-remote-amid-covid-19-uptick/>

Sources: Harvard Global Health Institute Path to Zero & Schools: Achieving Pandemic Resilient Teaching and Learning Spaces, State of Alaska Daily COVID-19 Updates (November 2, 2020), State of Alaska COVID-19 Dashboard Data (November 2, 2020), <https://www.wbtw.com/news/national/boston-delays-school-reopening-plan-after-virus-cases-surge/> [Announcement by the Boston Mayor]

WHEREAS, in summary it appears that the school district proposal to reconvene its staff (ASD typically issues on the order of 9,000 W-2s a year not including contractors) back inside of Municipal buildings in order to serve an initial population of SPED and pre K – 2nd grade followed by all elementary grades in January will substantially raise the number of close contacts in our community by thousands while the community spread is substantially above independent professional public health risk thresholds;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, THAT the Airport Heights Community Council through its executive board supports the continuation of school closures until such time that community transmission rate and the test positivity rate have dropped down to at least Harvard Global Health Institute Risk Thresholds for Schools; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, THAT the Airport Heights Community Council through its executive board supports the Municipality of Anchorage exercising its authority to regulate *and advise* on public health matters to ensure that all employers, including one of the largest employers in the State of Alaska, the Anchorage School District, are strongly encouraged to meet or exceed all prudent public health guidance while under the daunting emergency circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Airport Heights Community Council through its executive board strongly encourages the Municipality to disclose its independent, professional public health assessment and advice regarding ASD's plans to help illuminate the public health risks and mitigation strategies and provide the community with confidence that public health risk thresholds and associated public health guidance provided by the Municipal Health Department are prudent, professional, science-based, and reflect the current outlook for the COVID-19 pandemic in Anchorage.

THIS RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED by the Airport Heights Community Council executive board on November 7, 2020 and will be presented to the full council membership at the next regularly scheduled on meeting on November 19, 2020.



Carolyn Ramsey
President