

From the Mayor...

January 7, 2022

I'm very thankful that I have had the opportunity to share my thoughts each month in this column. This past year, among other things, I have written about housing, the 2020 Census, local public works projects, public private partnerships, and multiple columns on the future of US 30 in our community. On Wednesday, March 9, I will take a more comprehensive look back at these and other topics as I report on our progress during my annual State of the City address.

It's hard to believe we are heading into the third year of the pandemic. I wanted to use today's column to discuss the ongoing impact of COVID in our community. I think it is safe to say that the impact has been more than we bargained for and more persistent than we ever imagined, no matter who you listen to.

From the beginning, it has been abundantly clear that primary goal of public health measures was to contain the spread of the virus in the population and prevent the health care system from being overwhelmed with serious disease and significant mortality. With just under five and a half million deaths worldwide, with over eight hundred thousand in the United States, for now, the virus seems to be winning. The impact on our country was so profound that the average American life expectancy decreased by 1.8 years in 2020, the most since World War II.

We have seen significant surges of disease burden brought about by the waves of emerging variants of the virus. Our local health department gave us that warning very early in the pandemic. We were told that we could expect at least two if not three surges of cases. Public health data and the discipline of epidemiology can confidently explain that the spread of replicating virus in the population will produce mutations that result in new resistant strains of the virus. We have seen and will continue to see this play out with COVID 19.

It is clear that vaccinated individuals have statistically less probability of developing severe or fatal infections than unvaccinated. Reducing the severity of the disease reduces the burden on the health care system. This also improves access to health care for non-Covid patients and improves their outcomes as well.

I do not believe anyone should be mandated to be vaccinated. Consulting with your physician to rule out a legitimate medical reason for not taking the vaccine is very important if you have a concern. The decision should be base upon whats best for you and your family. In a public health emergency, there should also be some consideration for whats best for the community. Public health measures are implemented to protect the entire public when there is widespread disease.

I hope we can all turn the corner in 2022 and once and for all, extinguish the menace this virus has become. I know we are all more than ready for that.