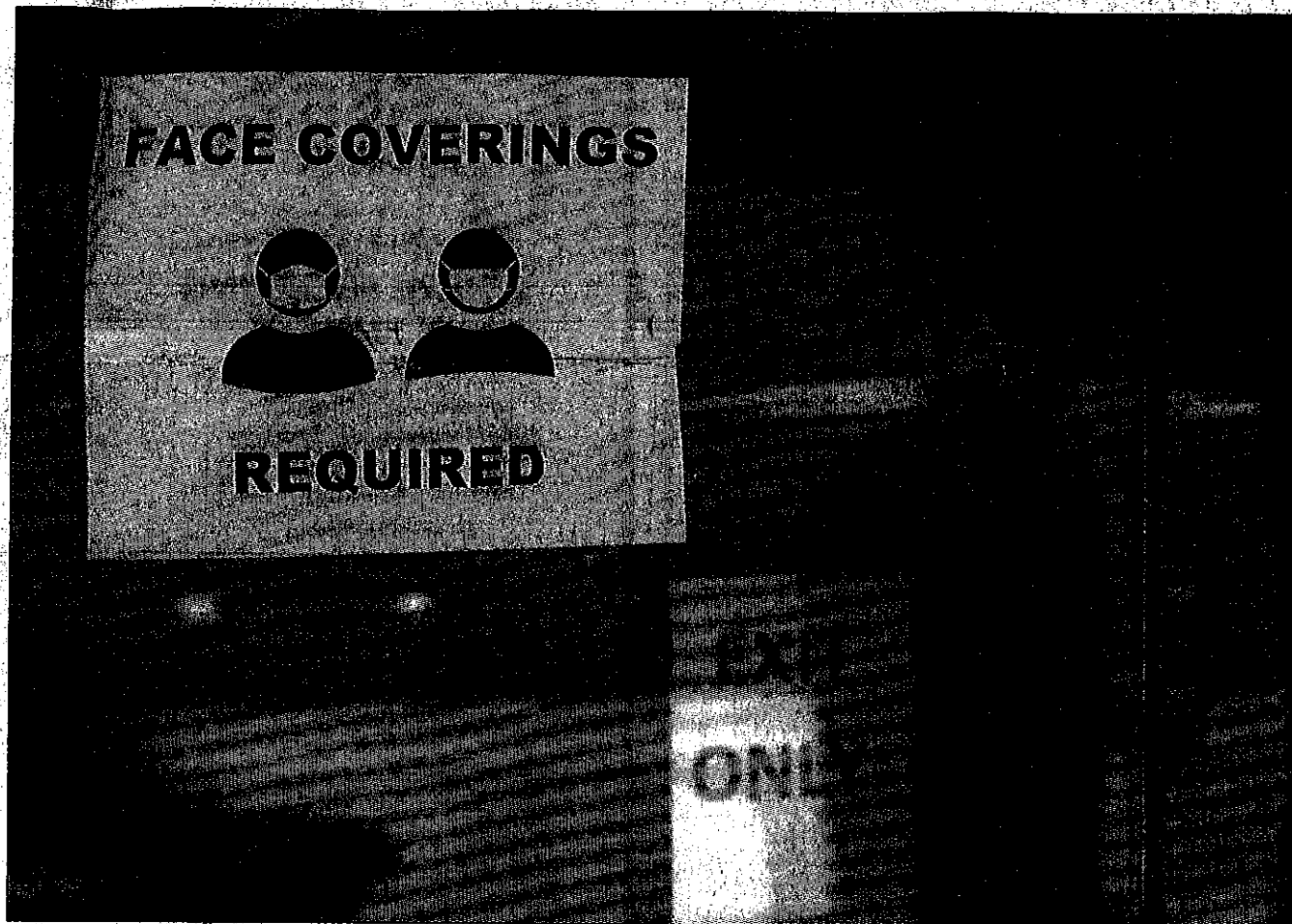


'Protect ourselves'



ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man wearing a mask to protect against the spread of COVID-19 is reflected next to a sign requiring face coverings at a business in San Antonio on Wednesday. Clemson City Council unanimously passed an ordinance requiring masks to be worn in public places at a meeting Wednesday evening.

Clemson City Council requires masks in public places

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Effective today, people will be required to wear a mask in public places in the city of Clemson to reduce the city's recent spike in COVID-19 cases that led to some businesses closing temporarily.

During a special called meeting Wednesday afternoon, city council unanimously approved the ordinance. The ordinance includes any building open to the public, including grocery stores, pharmacies, business locations, home improvement stores, retail stores, service establishments and medical and dental treatment facilities. It also covers people inside all city of Clemson buildings, and on all transport and transit vehicles, including CAT-bus, Senior Solutions, rideshares

WHO IS EXCLUDED?

The ordinance states that some people are not required to wear a face covering, including those with a medical condition, mental health condition or disability that prevents wearing a face covering; people whose religious beliefs prevent them from wearing a face covering; people who are hearing impaired or communicate with a hearing impaired person where the mouth is essential for communication; people for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines; and people who are obtaining a service or treatment involving the nose or face or a medical procedure for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service.

like Uber or Lyft, taxis and shuttle vehicles.

Also included in the ordinance are all jobs that entail coming into contact with any member of the public, including, but not limited to, preparation or packaging of food or beverages, unless separated by a physical barrier between the employee and the public.

"This (ordinance) received a lot of public input," interim city administrator Andy Blondeau said.

Some changes were made from the ordinance originally proposed. Revisions include no longer requiring people to wear masks outdoors, in their homes or private property, and allowing parents to determine if children need to wear masks.

Another change involved busi-

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nesses being held responsible only for their employees wearing masks. Businesses found in violation would be fined \$100, and individuals can be fined \$25.

"Any business that is open to the public, you're required to wear a mask and your employees are required to wear a mask," Clemson Mayor J.C. Cook said. "The exceptions include if you're in your private office and no one is with you or is sitting across from you in your office adhering to social distancing. But if you're in a public building, you're required to wear a mask."

City attorney Mary McCormac told council during its special called meeting that an opinion she received from the South Carolina Attorney General's Office allows cities to pass such an ordinance as "state constitution and the law have given cities this ability under home rule."

Councilman Fran McGuire, a leading proponent for the wearing of masks or face coverings in public, praised the input given to city council on the issue.

"Thank you, citizens of Clemson," McGuire said.

"You were great on doing this."

"I think it's obvious (that masks be required) if anyone goes to the grocery store and other places that voluntary measures don't work, and we have a significant number of at-risk people, especially retirees, in our community," Clemson resident David Allison said, adding that businesses could also feel a further economic impact if more COVID-19 cases force them to close because customers aren't wearing masks.

Clemson resident Rosemary McDonald said 66 more COVID-19 cases were reported in Pickens County on Wednesday, the highest number the county has seen so far.

"I think that adds to the credence to protect ourselves here," she said.

While citations and the amounts for businesses and individuals are included in the ordinance, McCormac said they won't be issued right away.

"Our first and foremost goal from our police department and council is education and behavior modification," McCormac said. "But the ordinance allows us to do something with respect to repeat offenders."