

Clemson preparing to begin distribution

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Now that Clemson City Council has unanimously approved requiring the public to wear masks or face coverings in public places in order to reduce the risk of transmitting COVID-19, officials are now working to make them available.

The city announced Thursday afternoon that masks will be available for business owners or designated representatives to pick up starting Monday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Each business is allowed a maximum of 100 masks.

Interim city administrator Andy Blondeau said he has already placed an order for 50,000 surgical masks. He said the city found a vendor in Greenville that could get the masks to Clemson today.

The new ordinance requiring masks or face coverings, approved by city council during a special called meeting Wednesday, officially went into effect Thursday. While Blondeau said 50,000 masks, which will cost the city \$25,000, sounds like a lot, "it gets real little fast" once divvied up.

"We're going to start with that

SEE MASKS, PAGE A3

of masks

MASKS: 50,000 set to arrive in city today

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and see what we need from there," he said. "We want to make sure we can get them to as many people as possible without accidentally overdistributing someplace."

Blondeau plans to use the city's business license list to determine how many brick-and-mortar, in-town businesses are in the city and break it out into another category to determine which are storefront units and who would have customer service.

Blondeau said the 50 cents per mask cost "was the best price we could find and get them quickly."

"We found other places where it would take a week or so, but we don't have a week or so," Blondeau said.

A recent spike in COVID-19 cases in the city that has forced several local businesses to temporarily close, as well as concerns expressed by residents and a presentation by local Clemson physicians led to council's decision to

approve the emergency ordinance mandating masks or face coverings. Because it is an emergency ordinance, it will be in effect for 60 days unless council votes to extend it.

During Wednesday night's meeting, council also announced plans to work with the Clemson Police Department, Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce and Clemson Free Clinic among other agencies in distributing the masks.

"If there's others we need to bring in, we'll bring them in," Mayor J.C. Cook said. "If not, we'll do the best we can with this."

Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce president Susan Cohen said an initial number of 2,000 masks were ordered to help get businesses through until the masks ordered by the city arrive. Cohen said the initial order was made through a donation provided by the Community Foundation of Greater Clemson.

"This was very important to them as a service that would have an impact com-

munity-wide," Cohen said.

But now that the city's masks are scheduled to arrive today, Cohen said the city requested the additional 2,000 masks be provided to police for distribution to the general public. Cook said the goal is for police, rather than writing tickets as they are allowed to do under the ordinance (\$25 for individuals, \$100 for businesses), to hand out masks.

The mayor added that public support for the ordinance has been overwhelming. Of approximately 200 emails received, Cook said only two were in opposition to the ordinance. He said more positive emails came in Thursday "thanking us for what we did."

Clemson physician Dr. Ted Swann told city council during its special called meeting that the importance of wearing a mask to combat COVID-19 cannot be emphasized enough.

"If one person in a room is wearing a mask and the other person in a room isn't, that mask is marginally beneficial, but if both are wearing one, it goes from marginal to a terrific tool," Swann said. "If we, as a community, take this seriously and make a commitment to mask in public, we could shut this (COVID-19) off. I'm convinced this could work, but the challenge is getting enough people to do it."

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