

Council approves letter opposing vaccine mandates

October 12, 2021



The city council of Crescent City voted at its Oct. 4 meeting to send a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom, as well as two other state officials, to express opposition to vaccine mandates.

In a draft penned by Mayor Jason Greenough, the letter stated: “We are writing you because we are concerned about the recent push in the State of California to mandate the Novel Coronavirus vaccines for health care professionals, correctional staff, educators and children in schools.”

The merits of the draft, including whether it should be edited and sent were discussed by the council and members of the public for about two hours.

Public Health Director Dr. Aaron Stutz provided a quick vaccine update prior to the discussion, saying he was encouraged by another one-point increase in vaccination rates in Del Norte County to about 47%-48%, “but we would like to see that continue to go up,” Stutz said.

Members of the council seemed to support increased vaccination levels, but in a 4-1 vote stated mandates aren't the way to go about it. Councilman Ray Altman cast the lone no vote.

Specifically, the letter stated that "mandates will fuel a hesitancy to receive the vaccine because it creates a feeling that it is forced and, in turn, creating (stet) more resistance instead of encouraging people to do research and make that decision for themselves."

Several residents of Crescent City and Del Norte County also spoke - all of whom supported the council's action and some who challenged the efficacy of the vaccine.

"There are patients who have had COVID and now have antibodies," said Stacy Schnacker. "I don't know why we are being forced to have a vaccine when we have antibodies in our system."

Stutz confirmed that research suggests antibodies have a positive impact on a person's ability to fight COVID but added that "the only thing better is having had COVID and the vaccine," he said. "That is the strongest level of protection there is."

In a request for comment from The Triplicate, chair of the Humboldt-Del Norte PreMedical Education Task Force Dr. Caroline Connor took it a step further.

"This action is shortsighted," Connor said, referring to the assertion from Mayor Greenough that mandates will fuel a hesitancy to get the vaccine. "We have seen healthcare workers, United Airlines, the military, and other groups increase their vaccination rates because of mandates. The hope is we can get a significant portion vaccinated so we can enter herd immunity."

United Airlines recently touted its COVID-19 mandate, stating that more than 99% of its U.S.-based employees have received the shot or applied for an exemption.

A majority of the council, however, seemed to take no comfort with increasing vaccination rates in a similar manner.

"I'm just happy we are all on the same page," said Councilman Beau Smith. "We're the city of Crescent City, not the city of Gavin Newsom."

Councilman Blake Inscore initially expressed concerns about the tone of the letter, saying he doesn't know of anyone who has had to retire early because they won't agree to the vaccine (which was mentioned in the letter), and added that he would like to give some props to Governor Newsom for reversing his stance of mandatory vaccinations of correctional facility employees.

While it's true Newsom reversed his position of mandates for correctional officers and staff, critics have suggested the governor did so after caving to pressure from the prison guards union.

Also, On Sept. 27, U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar overrode Newsom's posture change, stating that the vaccine mandates will stand for all 34 of California's prisons, minus religious or medical exemptions.

Councilman Smith didn't oppose making edits to the letter but said: "I think we've been compliant long enough."

Smith made a motion for Greenough and Inscore to make edits that would include supporting Newsom for reversing his position on mandated vaccinations in correctional facilities but still proceed with sending the general message of the letter to Newsom, Assemblyman Jim Wood, and Senator Mike McGuire. Councilman Isaiah Wright seconded the motion.

After the vote, Stutz also informed the council that based on recent declining COVID numbers he will likely recommend that testing of city employees be suspended and that the city council should be able to meet in person at its next meeting on Monday, October 18.