

## Chris Taggart

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**From:** Randy Lint <randy.lint@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 22, 2020 2:17 PM  
**To:** Ravalli County Commissioners Office  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Public Comment for 3:00 PM October 22 Commissioner's Meeting

Dear Ravalli County Commissioners,

I own Big Creek Coffee Roasters. I don't like wearing a mask. Neither does my staff of 7. We do it, though. We are one of the few businesses in the county to require a mask to enter our store. We require masks, not to make a political point, but largely so we can stay open.

And it's a pain. My staff has to endure daily confrontations with walk-ins who don't have a mask. We have lost longtime regular customers over it. Our door gets slammed every day. Foot traffic and sales are down for the first time in our 8 years of existence.

But guess what? We're still open. Nobody has missed a paycheck yet. This will pass eventually and we trust that we will be able to limp along until it's over.

Freedom takes on many forms. For me, personally, freedom means the opportunity to pursue my chosen occupation, in this case running a retail coffee shop. I am living my American Dream, right here in Hamilton.

With my freedom to pursue my chosen occupation comes a huge responsibility. I am proud to have built a business that has created seven new jobs in our county. But I am also humbled to realize that I am responsible for the health and *livelihood* of the seven people who work for me.

If I, or any one of our seven employees, tests positive, we will all have to quarantine. By definition, that means we will have to close our business. The natural consequence of a closure is all 8 of us don't get paid.

So we wear--and require--masks; so that we may stay open for business.

My savings were used up in round one of the pandemic when I personally paid all our staff two weeks wages during the initial closure. I was fortunate to have cash on hand to do that, but that money has long since gone. The PPP money was spent months ago. The well has run dry. I can't afford another closure.

By not vocally supporting the governor's mask mandate countywide, you make it more likely that *my* business will have to close. Your inaction has hurt my business, diminished my earnings, and by extension my ability to be a generous corporate neighbor to my community. Doesn't my freedom to engage in business fit somewhere in this equation?

This is a tough issue, and I understand you may feel caught between a rock and hard place. I get it. But I believe you are indirectly undercutting the very values that the Republican Party professes to stand for: pro small business, free enterprise, and the choice to pursue one's chosen occupation.

I urge you to do the difficult, courageous, and right thing here. Don't worry about political blowback. Just think deeply, consider the ripple effects of your action/inaction, and do what is right for our community. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Randy Lint, Owner  
Big Creek Coffee Roasters

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