

From: Jay Johnson <jaysjohnson43@gmail.com>

Sent: Monday, April 19, 2021 6:41 PM

To: Michelle Crocker; Rick Robbins; Debra Rushton; Ty Wessell; Patricia Soutas-Little; Gwenne Allgaier; Melinda Lautner

Subject: Public comment to be delivered Tuesday, April 20

My name is Jay Johnson and I live In Empire Township.

I remain appalled that Commissioners Bunek, Lautner and Rushton, stubbornly and selfishly, refuse to wear masks at County Commission meetings. I gave you ample reasons before, but you have no legal right to ignore health department guidance just because you hold an elective office. I am not at all sorry that Commissioner Rushton was offended by my remarks last Tuesday, because the right to speak truth to power is the essence of my Constitutional right under the First Amendment to petition my government, at any level, for redress of grievances.

Moving on to another subject, also protected by the First Amendment, I am opposed to offering any public prayer before each meeting of the Board of Commissioners because it would be inherently divisive. By way of example, I believe the prayer recited by Mr. Zemaitis during the public comment period on April 13 was the Roman Catholic version of the Lord's Prayer. I doubt that Mr. Zemaitis even knew that the Lord's Prayer has a different wording in other Christian denominations and in the other two great Abrahamic religions, Judaism, where the prayer originated, and Islam. If you choose to have the opening prayer delivered by a Catholic priest one month and a Protestant pastor the next month, the least you could do is have succeeding Commission meetings open with a prayer given by a Rabbi or an Imam of those faiths. Moreover, are you prepared to welcome opening prayers from other great religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Confucianism or Rastafarianism as well as hear the Anishinaabe prayers of those whose traditional lands comprise Leelanau County? And what will you say to our neighbors who are Atheists, Agnostics, or Pagans? Your hyper-religiosity offends them all as well as others.

Speaking as a Christian myself, your public prayer offends me. My father and at least eight generations of Johnsons before him were members of the Society of Friends, otherwise known as Quakers. Friends believe that God speaks to them in private. If you have ever attended a Friends meeting, you would know the value they place on silent prayer.

For all these reasons, I would support the proposal made by Commissioner Allgaier to lengthen your current moment of silence to a full minute; that is more than enough time for you to seek guidance from your own religion without offending anyone else in the process.

Thank you for the privilege of your time.