January 3, 2022

Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
City of East Lansing

Dear Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission,

Thank you for your recent letter requesting the mandatory vaccination of City of East Lansing employees against COVID-19. Your concern for the continued successful provision of our services and safety of our employees is appreciated. Over the last 22 months of the global pandemic, the City of East Lansing, through the effort of our employees and strict adherence to safety procedures, has continued to provide essential services to the community with little interruption.

While we recognize that Michigan State University has implemented a COVID-19 vaccine mandate that has been largely successful, it’s important to note the difference between our operations. MSU, with its large proportion of students living in group housing, presents a significantly different environment as compared to our city government. Prior to implementing a vaccine mandate, MSU faced considerable challenges in managing its operation during the pandemic. As we know from experience, there was significant spread of COVID-19 in the fall of 2020, both within the University and community at-large. Based on that period, a vaccine mandate to allow for the safe, continued operation of the University appears to be a well-justified decision.

Over the last 22 months, the City of East Lansing has continued to provide services, primarily on an in-person basis. Over this period, our services have continued without any major interruptions, or any significant COVID-19 spread in the workplace. This period of in-person work included several months prior to and after the release of the vaccine. Based on that record, we believe it is advisable to move forward with a vaccine plan after it has been formally established by MIOSHA.

We will continue to adhere to strict safety procedures and closely monitor our operation. In the event that MIOSHA establishes a rule on vaccines in the workplace, we will directly follow their guidance. In regard to virtual meetings, as of January 1, 2022, such meetings are no longer permitted. If the State of Michigan provides that option, we will consider that approach based on the current circumstances and after consultation with the East Lansing City Council.

Thank you,

George Lahanas
City Manager