

Mr. Chairman, members of the Board of the Supervisors, Auditor Carr,

My former colleagues, thank you for everything you've done, so far, to maintain a safe, COVID 19-free environment in the courthouse.

There is no place more 'public' than the Floyd County Courthouse. And as long as it remains open to the public, reducing the risk of community spread of the deadly virus must remain your highest priority.

And thank you very much for the opportunity to address the Board today about critical COVID-19 response issues in the Courthouse.

I read the Board minutes, the COVID-19 stories in the PRESS, and once in a while go online to watch your meetings. You are dealing with life and death issues I never faced as a county supervisor. I respect your efforts.

Soon after the story entitled '**Supervisors and treasurer clash over office access**' appeared in the Charles City Press, I contacted my friends Board Chair Roy Schwickerath and County Treasurer Frank Rottinghaus to talk about my concerns. That conversation with Chairman Schwickerath eventually led to signs being placed at the entrances to the Courthouse that clearly state that masks are required to be worn in the Treasurer's Office and the Clerk of Court's office and recommended elsewhere in the courthouse. I truly appreciate that response from Roy and action by the Board.

I also totally support Frank's decision to require masks and limit access to the Treasurer's office while still providing all services to the public either online or by appointment. I know many other county residents feel the same way I do, ... but that's not what I came to talk to you about today.

It's scary to think that Floyd County is in a far worse position now than we were just 6 months ago when **Floyd County recorded the first COVID-19 death on May 12, 2020** as reported in this Charles City Press story. But we are. If community spread of the virus isn't contained, Charles City schools will remain closed to in-person learning, local businesses will continue to suffer, and more people will die.

Two weeks ago I was in the Courthouse when the Assessor's Office sent this email to floydcousers@floydcoia.org stating that masks are required in the office due to a confirmed exposure to COVID-19 of a staff member. (I deleted the person's name to comply with HIPAA regulations.)

The Assessor's office safety protocol was noted in the Board minutes you just approved.

It should be known that the quarantined person tested negative, and there never was a threat of COVID-19 exposure in the Assessor's office.

I applaud the Assessor's office for taking action to protect the health of county Courthouse employees and the general public by requiring masks.

To the best of my knowledge, and that of Treasurer Rottinghaus, the Board of Supervisors hasn't taken any formal action to establish safety protocols in the courthouse when employees are either quarantined as a result of exposure, or when an employee tests positive for COVID-19.

Floyd County Treasurer Rottinghaus raised this critical issue more than four months ago when he asked Board Chairman Schwickerath for guidance on establishing COVID-19 safety protocols in the Treasurer's office **in this email dated July 7, 2020**. Rottinghaus attached the Positive Case Protocol used in Story County, Iowa as an example. Specifically, Rottinghaus asked Schwickerath if Floyd County had any safety protocol in place when a county courthouse employee tests positive for COVID-19.

Rottinghaus stated, "It would be helpful for me and others to know what is expected if one of my staff or I are infected. Are there plans for testing and facility cleaning in place that I'm unaware of? I continue to believe that we may not be recognizing how serious this pandemic is. Hope to hear from you on this."

Schwickerath promptly responded saying, "Some of this is covered in our COVID-19 policy we adopted. I will have a discussion with Gail Arjes about tracking information and what we can ask the employee without crossing HIPPA guidelines."

The Infectious Disease Action Plan cited by Chairman Schwickerath and approved by the Board of Supervisors on April 6, 2020 is an 8-page county human resource document that:

1. Designates four Priority service areas for county functions and services
2. Defines telecommuting for county employees and when that is allowed.
3. Details Floyd County's expanded paid sick leave policy pursuant to the federal legislation entitled the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.
4. Explains Floyd County's expanded county employee paid family leave (FMLA) requirements in the federal legislation.
5. Outlines non-essential and essential travel restrictions for county employees.
6. Prohibits group meetings of more than 10 people where 6 foot distancing cannot be adhered to.
7. Designates employees who are at higher risk from becoming ill from the virus pursuant to CDC guidance.
8. Directs department heads and elected officials that they **shall** update all staff on developments during the pandemic public health emergency. The Action Plan is unclear, however, if department heads and elected officials are required to update the Board of Supervisors or other elected officials and department heads on developments in their staff.

9. States the Board of Supervisors **may** order all county employees not to enter a Floyd County facility if they tested positive for COVID-19 or if the employee was around someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

Floyd County's Infectious Disease Action Plan clearly does **not** establish a county wide, employee safety protocol for elected officials and department heads in the courthouse when employees are either quarantined as a result of a confirmed exposure with another person who tests positive for COVID-19, or when an employee tests positive for COVID-19.

The Action Plan also does **not** require elected officials and department heads to develop their own employee safety COVID-19 protocols in those two specific instances until and unless the Board of Supervisors orders them to do so.

These gaps in Floyd County's response to the greatest public health emergency of our lifetimes is troubling for a couple of reasons:

1. Elected officials and department heads are apparently left to determine critical COVID-19 safety protocols on their own which could lead to a patchwork of safety protocols in the courthouse or perhaps none at all.

The voters of Floyd County put their trust in you, the Board of Supervisors, the executive branch of county government, to enact county policies that protect the health of county employees and the general public when visiting the courthouse. The Code of Iowa gives you that responsibility.

2. There appears to be little, if any, communication between the Board of Supervisors, other elected officials and department heads regarding the two specific COVID-19 testing safety protocols within the Courthouse that Treasurer Rottinghaus and I have brought to your attention. This poses a serious safety risk to county employees and members of the general public who may unknowingly enter an office in the courthouse where a staff member has recently tested positive for COVID-19.

This is a clear and present danger, that according to Treasurer Rottinghaus, has actually happened twice in the Courthouse since the pandemic began and resulted in three county employees being tested positive for COVID-19. One employee in an elected official's office and two employees in a department head's office.

The questions that beg to be asked are the following:

Did the Board of Supervisors ever order department heads and elected officials to establish and maintain safety checklists in their respective offices as stated in the Action Plan?

What, if any, safety protocols were put in place to ensure the safety of other county employees and the general public in the offices where the three positive COVID-19 tests occurred?

Were masks required in the offices following the positive test results?

Were the areas in the offices used by the employees who tested positive closed for cleaning and disinfecting in accordance with CDC guidelines?

Was any contact tracing performed by the County Public Health Director, as required in the Action Plan, to determine the extent of possible community spread of the virus to others who came in contact with the employees who tested positive.

As noted by Chairman Schwickerath in his email response to Treasurer Rottinghaus, Gail Arjes of Floyd County Public Health, is experienced in developing safety protocols for COVID-19. She has worked extensively with the Charles City Community School District to develop contact tracing initiatives. She works with local businesses and citizens in response to COVID-19 issues on a daily basis. She is at the Board's disposal. Arjes would bring to bear all the resources of the Floyd County Board of Health, the Iowa Department of Public Health, and the Center for Disease Control to help you create this essential county policy.

Time is of the essence. It really is a matter of life and death.

Please join with Floyd County Hospital officials, health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic, and Charles City school officials who are pleading with the public to help reduce the community spread of COVID-19, and do **your** part to ensure that doesn't happen at the Floyd County Courthouse.

Please respond to this request for action with the urgency that it requires. With all due respect for the office each of you holds, and the lives and livelihoods of the citizens of Floyd County who visit the courthouse, please review Floyd County's Infectious Disease Action Plan and amend or revise the policy as needed.

Thank you for listening to my concerns.