

Polk County

Board of Supervisors Office News



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Polk County Unable to Enact Local Measures to Control Spread of COVID-19, Despite Rapidly Rising Case Counts

Des Moines, IA- Polk County continues to experience record increases in COVID-19 cases. The White House Coronavirus Task Force identifies a community as a “hot spot” or “red zone” when two criteria are met – a seven day average positivity rate of over 10%, which Polk County reached this week; and a case rate of over 100 cases per 100,000 population, which Polk County has far exceeded for 57 consecutive days. Based on these metrics the Polk County Board of Health Advisory Committee recommended that the Board of Supervisors adopt a countywide mask mandate.

Polk County Supervisor Angela Connolly said “we have been collecting the data and have engaged our local jurisdictions in a dialogue about the urgency of this situation. The majority of our local leaders are in agreement that masks are an effective tool at preventing the spread of COVID-19 but due to concerns about the legality and enforceability of a mask mandate there is not support to implement a countywide mask mandate at this time.”

Local governments within Polk County and public health officials continue to strongly recommend the use of face coverings and applaud businesses that require face covering usage within their establishments. Additional effective measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 include staying home when sick, washing hands frequently, limiting large gatherings and social distancing.

In July the Polk County Board of Supervisors issued a letter to the Governor to encourage a statewide mask mandate and requested the ability to adopt measures that meet local needs and reflect local disease conditions. Polk County Supervisor Matt McCoy said “ultimately the Governor of Iowa has eliminated the ability of local governments to enact common sense practices that will protect our most vulnerable residents. Until a vaccine is approved and becomes widely available, masks are one of the only tools that we have to help contain local outbreaks and the uncontrolled community spread that we are experiencing right now. It is both unfortunate and discouraging that we are unable to adopt a mask mandate at this time.”

To learn more about steps that you and your business can take to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 please visit www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health.

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