

**BOARD OF MADISON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**  
**April 1, 2021, Special Meeting Minutes**

On Thursday, April 1, 2021, a special meeting of the Board of Madison County Commissioners came to order at 10:05 a.m. in the Courtroom of the Madison County Courthouse in Virginia City, Montana, with Commissioners Dan Allhands, Jim Hart, and Ron Nye present. Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk, was present to take minutes. Tommy Luksha, GIS Coordinator, was present to administer the public connection to the meeting via GoToMeeting.

Those people in attendance at the meeting were Jean Foster, and those on the attached list.

**Presentation of Mold Situation and Air Sampling Conducted by Buffalo Restoration:** Jean Foster, Estimator and Indoor Air Quality Professional with Buffalo Restoration Inc., reviewed and briefly discussed bioaerosol sample results from four sampling dates over the last two years in the Madison County Courthouse. She acknowledged the known dampness in the basement as well as the second-floor vault that has been affected by a roof leak, and said because the Courthouse is an old building it has had years of accumulated dust, pollen, skin cells, dead bugs and everything else that comes with an old building, and although it is "not terrifying," it is a concern for many people. In general, mold is everywhere and necessary in our environment to break down debris, and she noted its positive role in items such as penicillin and cheeses. She explained what happens in the lifespan of a water damaged building: when organic material gets wet, bacteria starts to grow and mold can result from consistent wetness in a conducive environment, depending on how long the water damage remains. At three weeks or more of consistent wetness, any of five of the most well-studied species of mold start to take over, and those types of mold are known to cause potentially significant health effects to mold-sensitized individuals. Everybody's systems are different, mold growth is not irritating to all people, but those who are sensitized (about 25% of the population) react with symptoms associated with allergies and hay fever including itchy eyes, scratchy throat, and cough. Irritation in sensitized individuals happens while mold is actively growing from the gasses emitted in the process, or once it dries out from aerosolized mold spores, and in these people the sensitivity remains and can build over their lifetime. If growth conditions are removed, mold goes dormant but doesn't completely go away. N95 masks will stop most of the mold particulates and HEPA filters will trap mold spores, but the most important thing is to fix the problem by stopping the moisture from intruding and removing conditions where mold can grow or come out of dormancy.

A question-and-answer discussion ensued. Jean explained that mold spores settle on paper and boxes stored in damp areas and spread elsewhere when moved, and to stop the spread every affected page needs to be cleaned, but if there is too much damage papers should be reproduced and destroyed. She noted the obvious mold growth in the GIS vault, evidenced by the white crusty material called efflorescence, and recalled seeing mold in the basement. HVAC systems, which can also contribute to spread, are not in use at the Courthouse since it has old-style radiators for heat. She confirmed that vacuuming without using HEPA filters spreads mold spores, discussed carpets where dust and mold spores settle and are spread by walking, other surfaces that collect dust and mold spores, including walls, and the significance of proper cleaning. The differences between samples collected between 2019 and this year were discussed along with the varied circumstances of each, such as weather conditions, open windows versus a closed building, snow that covers outdoor mold spores on the ground and minimizes spread, etc., but Jean said conditions in the Courthouse have been holding steady over the last couple of years especially with the use of air filters and other mitigation efforts. Whether the building presents an imminent health hazard depends entirely on each individual's level of sensitization, people who have mold allergies or sensitivities usually notice their symptoms when they feel better or worse spending time in the building or away, and there are blood tests that can show mold toxicity in one's system. There are essentially no regulations in place regarding mold levels since every building, every circumstance, every location, is different and there is no way to set limits or standards. Asked about the Department of Labor and Industry's recommendation for mold mitigation, Jean said it is to remove visible mold from porous building material and clean non-porous building material, getting rid of the mold itself. She discussed effective methods of cleaning such as using HEPA filters to clean the air and microfiber dusting on horizontal surfaces, but noted these efforts

only help until you open the window or do something to stir things up. Forced air circulation shares the mold but also dries the building. She reviewed 2019 recommendations to first correct outdoor drainage, so water flows away from the building and moisture intrusion is stopped, and then to address interior repairs. She also recalled her recommendation to post signs in the Courthouse warning mold-sensitized people that the building has been water-damaged. Options for stopping the flow of moisture included fixing negative drainage toward the building, installing rain gutters, and even resealing the foundation. Dan discussed consultations with engineers and contractors, reviewed plans in place to address the moisture intrusion into the building when the weather gets warmer, and it was noted that rain gutters will be installed soon. Tony reviewed the work and cleanup done in the basement since the Sheriff's Department moved out, including removal of carpet and sheetrock, and said dehumidifiers have not collected any moisture for several months. Jean said basements will always feel humid and damp, noting that concrete continues to wick throughout its life, but allowing these areas to dry out will help to stop mold growth. When pressed, Jean could not state whether the building is deemed safe or not, since mold is everywhere, everybody's reaction level is different, so the risk level depends on each individual's system. She ended by saying the Courthouse is a lovely building, she thinks the County is on the right track, and encouraged anyone with additional questions to contact her.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

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Dan W. Allhands, Chairman  
Board of Madison County Commissioners

Date Approved: April 13, 2021

Minutes prepared by:

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Jane Bacon, Commissioners' Clerk

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Paula McKenzie, Clerk and Recorder, Madison County