



County Administrator

Robert W. Wilson
701-241-5770
wilsonro@casscountynd.gov

PO Box 2806
211 Ninth Street South
Fargo, North Dakota 58108

www.casscountynd.gov

MEMO

TO: Commissioners
FROM: Robert W. Wilson
DATE: June 1, 2020
SUBJECT: COVID-19 Update

The response to COVID-19 continues on a federal, state, and local level. The effort is changing. Last week Governor Burgum announced that North Dakota Smart Restart has transitioned to the Green, 'low risk' category. Cass County is not directly tied to 'Smart Restart', but we continue to work closely with our state partners.

The most notable change County employees and visitors may soon see is more court activity. Beginning this week several non-custody hearings will take place. The Court plans to transition back to near normal activity over the next several weeks. I've worked closely with Court Administrator Rod Olson and Presiding Judge Frank Racek on details for this reopen.

This Wednesday, June 3rd, County applications are due for CARES funds – federal funds authorized to help offset costs local governments incur in responding to COVID-19. Request must be submitted to FEMA and the ND Office of Management and Budget by the 3rd and will be considered by the State Emergency Commission on June 18th. I have worked with Commission Chair Peterson and others on the following potential requests:

- \$25,000 for Social Distancing Accommodations for Courtrooms. This includes slight modifications to the layout of Courtroom 302, potential purchase of additional chairs, microphones and hand sanitizer stands. Foss Architecture and Fargo/Cass Public Health have reviewed courtroom layouts.
- \$6,225,000 to remodel the Jail Intake Area. The county included the development of construction plans for this project in 2020. With COVID-19, completing the project is an imminent need. Members of all local law enforcement agencies pass through the intake area daily and the current configuration does not provide enough space to appropriately socially distance and prevent virus spread.
- \$60,000 to add negative airflow capabilities to 12 jail cells. The facility currently has 4 negative airflow cells and the lack of additional capacity has challenged jail staff's ability to separate COVID positive or suspected COVID positive inmates from other inmates.

- ITV equipment in Courtroom 201. Estimated cost is \$52,940.61. This is the Courthouse component of the closed-circuit audio & video link between the courtroom and jail that allow first court appearances to occur without transporting inmates. The system is near end of life and must be replaced. Maintaining this capability is critical for managing the safe and secure movement of COVID positive or suspected positive inmates.
- Additionally, two other courtroom modifications have recently been suggested. One is to combine Courtrooms 303 & 304 into a single larger courtroom. The second is to combine the current Jury Assembly Room and Courtroom 202 into a larger courtroom/jury assembly room. Foss Architecture has reviewed the space and will prepare a cost estimates on these projects. I expect to receive those estimates by the submission deadline of 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, June 3rd.

I will look for Commission direction as to which proposals the Board elects to pursue.