

Atchison begins slow return to pre-pandemic normal

(KAIR)--The substantial decrease of hospitalizations nationwide due to COVID-19 means a slow return to some semblance of pre-pandemic living, and that includes local communities.

The Associated Press reports the number of hospital cases plummeted by 80,000 nationwide in six weeks, with nearly 20% of the nation's adult population now vaccinated.

Virus-influenced mandates, implemented by local governments in an attempt to prevent the virus spread, continue to adapt with the changing numbers. Some area counties, including Doniphan this week, and Brown and Jackson in late December, opting to end the mandatory wearing of face masks in public. The Atchison County Commission this week extended the mandate, while the Jefferson County Commission, with a mask mandate remaining in place, set to evaluate the need on Monday.

Local government buildings continue to slowly reopen to the public in phases, following full closures implemented at the height of the pandemic.

Steps toward a return to some sense of pre-pandemic normalcy is noted in a change made regarding public meetings of the Atchison City Commission, with that change to take effect Monday.

The Commission, like others in both local cities and counties, has utilized the online Zoom meeting platform to conduct open business as a method of practicing social distancing.

According to the agenda for Monday afternoon's meeting of the Atchison City Commission, while the session will be available for public viewing on the City of Atchison's Facebook page, as had been the procedure prior to the pandemic, Zoom will no longer be utilized, with the Commission returning to an in-person format.

However, in-person attendance by members of the public will remain limited, with any resident who wishes to attend required to RSVP to Atchison City Clerk Julie Behler no later than 12 noon on Monday.

Among matters of business for the meeting will be the consideration of the sale of Walt Wilburn Memorial Ball Park, currently placed in the City's Land Bank, to Franklin Family Enterprises, which has made a \$20,000 offer for purchase of the Branchton area property.

The proposed use of the property, should the City accept the offer, is an

entertainment venue for both indoor and outdoor events.

The ballpark has, since the 2010 opening of the Atchison County Sports Complex, been maintained by the City, with official league use of the location moved to the complex.

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