



Court Is Adjourned

Courtroom Ceiling Collapses

Plans to reopen the Jefferson County Courthouse to the public have been complicated by the collapse of a large portion of the ceiling in the courtroom. The courthouse has been closed for several weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The lone courtroom is on the top floor of the courthouse.

No one was in the courtroom and no one was injured when a large section of the ceiling caved in, scattering ceiling tiles, dust and debris across the courtroom floor and on furniture. Although no one saw it, at approximately 2:15 p.m. on Wednesday, May 27, occupants of the Courthouse heard the crash. Deputy John Davis was present and told **FJN**, "When I first heard it, I thought it sounded like thunder."

It is unknown what caused the collapse. County Commissioner Mark Schoenrock told **FJN**, "We are engaging our engineer to evaluate and then have a plan to repair."

During the closure, County and District Courts were still being held, though many cases were continued for longer than usual. District Court was held using videoconferencing and teleconferencing and written arraignments were encouraged. In County Court, only defendants and their attorneys were allowed in the courtroom, no family

members or friends except in the case of a minor.

In County Court, all cases scheduled for Monday, June 1, have been continued.

Until further notice, County and District Court will be held at the Jefferson County Law Enforcement Center, 606 3rd Street in Fairbury.

All individuals should enter the main entrance on the north side of the building and everyone will be screened by law enforcement and temperatures will be taken. People should wear a mask as the venue is a smaller area. If individuals do not have a mask, one can be provided.

Jefferson County Commissioners were planning on having their weekly meeting in the courtroom, as it is larger than the Commissioners' regular meeting room and allows

for greater social distancing. Commission Chairperson Gale Pohlmann said, "We decided this morning that we could make it work for the five of us in the room, and still maintain social distancing."

At the next meeting, Tuesday, June 2, the Veteran of the Month ceremony will be held outside the courthouse at the Veterans Memorial, weather permitting. The rest of the meeting will be held in the Commissioners' meeting room.

Reopening of the courthouse is still scheduled to occur Monday, June 8, with restrictions. Only the west entrance will open and anyone entering the courthouse will be subject to screening, including answering questions and having their temperature taken.





Photos by Gordon Hopkins/Fairbury Journal-News



A stack of ceiling tiles collected after the collapse.