

County lifts building restrictions

Commissioners recognize vaccine providers

By **MELISSA KLARIC**
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MERCER – After more than a year, visitors to the Mercer County Courthouse will be free of most restrictions imposed during the

COVID-19 pandemic.

County commissioners repealed emergency resolutions that limited activity during the pandemic. They also issued proclamations honoring organizations that delivered COVID-19 vaccinations in the county.

The commissioners had issued the pandemic state of emergency issued March 19, 2020, three days be-

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Mercer County Commissioners awarded proclamations Thursday honoring organizations and health care providers who distributed COVID-19 vaccinations. Representatives of AHN Grove City hospital, Primary Health Network, Sharon Regional Medical Center, UPMC and Walberg Family Pharmacies were on hand to accept the proclamations.

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fore the county reported its first COVID 19 case. They also repealed a resolution adopted May 21 that amended the employment policy to require safeguards in the courthouse.

With the commissioners' actions Thursday, the only pandemic restriction that remains in place is that visitors who have not been fully vaccinated — a threshold reached two weeks after the second doses of either the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines or the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine — must still wear masks in the

courthouse.

In response to repealing the state of emergency, Commissioner Tim McGonigle said, "It just was time."

Since the first recorded case on March 22, 2020, Mercer County has had 7,379 confirmed COVID-19 cases, with 256 deaths, according to figures from the state Department of Health. The county reported 9 new cases on Tuesday and 15 on Wednesday, well below the December-January peaks of more than 100 cases most days. Mercer County has gone almost a month since its most recent fatality, on April 26.

Approximately 34% — 37,041 — of Mercer County residents are fully vaccinated. Another 6,104 residents have received one dose of either the

Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines.

"We're out of the emergency, but it's not over," McGonigle said.

Commissioner Matt McConnell said the county offices as openly as possible during the pandemic.

"It was one that we did for preparation in case we had to do things," McConnell said. "I appreciate the board and all the departments working in a way to make sure that we still stayed open and stayed open to the media as well so that we weren't doing anything that was not fully discussed and voted on in a meeting."

Crediting vaccine providers

Commissioners also made proclamations Walberg Family Pharmacies, Sharon Regional Medical Center, Primary Health Network, Allegheny

Health Network AHN Grove City hospital and UPMC for operating vaccine clinics throughout the county.

"And it was really a call to arms for the community, and that's one thing Mercer County does really well is pull together," McConnell said.

McConnell said the commissioners were "extremely happy" to give the proclamations.

"These hospitals are already charged with so many duties," McGonigle said. "Not only were they able to do their everyday work that they're accustomed to doing but in addition, delivering these vaccines is quite remarkable."

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