

Flathead County Commissioners
Flathead City County Board of Health

November 27, 2020

To Commissioners and Board Members,

This letter is to inform you that I will no longer continue to serve as Flathead County's Interim Public Health Official upon expiration of my contract December 31, 2020. This will also serve as my permanent resignation from the Flathead City County Board of Health, effective on the same date.

It has become clearly evident to me during the past several months that the actions of both the Flathead County Commissioners and the Flathead County Board of Health have been at cross purposes with the goal of maintaining our county's public health. Spiking Covid-19 case numbers, along with an increasing number of deaths, have been met with nearly complete inaction by your groups, versus any type of reasonable mitigating response. The Commissioner's and Board's failure to enact or publically support even the most basic recommendations regarding mask usage, along with any type of recommended group meeting restrictions, has not only increased public health risk, it has demonstrated a clear lack of support for the county health department. This lack of support has undermined morale within health office personnel, leading to numerous resignations. As a result, my department has been continuously understaffed in key positions which makes it difficult to respond in a timely manner and mitigate the rapidly rising numbers of COVID 19 in our community.

The Board of Health have recently failed for the second time in their attempt to obtain the services of a qualified permanent Public Health Officer. While other factors may contribute to the problem, the toxic environment being fostered between the Commissioners, the Board of Health, and the Health Department is exacerbating an issue making it difficult to recruiting an incoming health officer.

Finally, it's clear that the underlying motivation by several members of your groups is more closely aligned with ideological biases than the simple desire to do what's best for the health of the community. It was always my goal that any of my requests or restrictions would have as limited an impact on the individual rights of our county citizens and on our local economy as possible, while at the same time minimizing overall health risks. My primary focus was to enable our schools to remain open, lessen the burden on medical resources, and help keep businesses open. I encourage you to work towards that goal, and I wish you the best in that endeavor.

Sincerely,
Tamalee St James Robinson
Interim Flathead City County Public Health Officer