

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Monday, March 22, 2021 | 9 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 65



www.pencitycurrent.com

Fight turns into shooting



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Lee County Sheriff's deputies and Fort Madison Police cordoned off the 2600 block of Avenue I after a shooting at noon on Saturday in Fort Madison.

AVENUE I: One hospitalized after front yard fist-fight turns into shooting

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Police are investigating a shooting that took place Saturday right at noon, that sent one Fort Madison man to the hospital.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff said police were called to the 2600 block of Avenue I at 12:01 p.m. after a man was shot as a result of an escalating fist fight.

Rohloff said the victim, Zachariah J. Raines, 19, was shot in the shoulder with a hand gun and was taken to Iowa City via helicopter. He was reported to be in good condition. Raines

was located after the shooting a short ways from the incident in the same block.

A 19-year-old Fort Madison man, Wade Lee Shaffer was arrested and is currently being held at the Lee County Jail as a result of the shooting. He has been charged with disorderly conduct and reckless use of a firearm causing injury.

“You can assume the charges will be elevated with the circumstances we have,” he said.

“We are currently working with the Lee County Attorney’s office and obtaining search warrants for two residences and

See POLICE, page 8



Economics and string theory

Sitting in the Fort Madison City Council meeting Tuesday night I heard something that made me laugh.

Fort Madison City Manager David Varley has a dry sense of humor. That’s like a good wine to me. It always takes a second to realize that maybe it’s a good wine. I’m a beer guy, so there aren’t very many.

Sometimes it takes me a second to absorb Varley’s humor, but I always appreciate it.

Varley was updating the council on money the city is likely to get in the next 75 days from the American Recovery Plan that was signed on March 11, by President Joe Biden.

Varley said there was some good news

See ECONOMICS, page 8

EDUCATION

CL unveils upgrade to elementary

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – The economic regression that’s followed the pandemic did not hinder progress of the \$13 million Central Lee school district’s facilities renovation.

School officials held a limited grand opening of the new Pre-K-8 grade building in front of stakeholders, community members and media Friday morning.

Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said the new building symbolized the district’s determination to continue serving the

See SCHOOL, page 7

THE MADISON

Assisted living center to double square footage

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A \$5.5 million expansion at The Madison is the latest in encouraging economic news in Fort Madison.

Former Fort Madison resident Mark Holtkamp, a 1994 graduate of Fort Madison Aquinas, purchased

The Madison about a year ago, and is now planning to almost double the size of the facility.

“We’re just kinda getting started when you look at where we’re at and where we can from,” Holtkamp said. “I don’t even know if it’s a one- or two-story addition yet.”

But Holtkamp said there will be about 12 full time equivalent

jobs in the new 34,000 square foot addition. The project will provide 24 new assisted living units and 12 Memory Care living units.

Holtkamp said city officials have made the decision to expand and easy one.

“The city has been really good as

See HOLTkamp, page 8

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WEATHER

MON 22 Mar.....Light Rain, 62° F/ 47° F
TUE 23 Mar.....Rain, 62° F/ 49° F
WED 24 Mar.....Light Rain, 64° F/ 46° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 03/20.....1218 3747, Star Ball: 2, All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 03/18.....2 5 21 28 45, Lucky Ball: 15
MEGA MILLIONS 03/19.....9 14 40 58 69, Mega Ball: 8 Megaplier: 3
PICK 3 03/18, 03/19, 03/20 MIDDAY.....418, 813, 952
PICK 3 03/18, 03/19, 03/20 EVENING.....344, 043, 684
PICK 4 03/18, 03/19, 03/20 MIDDAY.....5998, 4040, 0184
PICK 4 03/18, 03/19, 03/20 EVENING.....0439, 9890, 3241
POWERBALL 03/20.....16 22 42 61, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 3

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

CHANCE W. WILLDRICK

Chance W. Willdrick, 55, of Ft. Madison passed away at 10:53 AM on Friday, March 19, 2021 at the Fort Madison Community Hospital ER.

He was born on August 31, 1965 in LaHarpe, IL to LeRoy and Marilyn Guy Willdrick. On October 23, 1992 he married Jenifer Hayes in Ft. Madison. Chance and Jenifer attended Living Hope of the Nazarene Church. He served on the senior board of the Salvation Army. Chance enjoyed motorcycles, cars and loved John Wayne.



WILLDRICK

Survivors include his wife, Jenifer Willdrick of Ft. Madison; his mother, Marilyn Willdrick of Lomax, IL; one sister, Cheray (Dave Gasparich) LaRoue of Fremont, MI; mother-in-law, Dixie Hayes of Ft. Madison; sister-in-law, Dawn Hayes of Ft. Madison; nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his Father, LeRoy and his grandparents.

The funeral service will be held on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 11 AM at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory with Pastor Donna Palmeter officiating. The family will meet with friends from 10 AM until the time of the service at 11 AM. The family encourages those attending to wear a mask. Burial will follow in Oakland Cemetery.

A memorial has been established for the Nazarene Church or the Salvation Army and online condolences may be left at www.kinglynk.com.

Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.

OBITUARIES

PATSY A. MCMANIS

Patsy A. McManis, 90, of Louisville, Nebraska, passed away on March 5, 2021, while living at Hillcrest Health and Rehab in Bellevue, Nebraska.

She was born on April 30, 1930 in Farmington, Iowa, the daughter of Russell N. and LaVanchie M. (Bartholomew) Benedict. On December 1, 1951, she married Paul McManis in Fort Madison, Iowa. Together, they had two sons: Joseph and Michael.



MCMANIS

Patsy became a nurse and moved to Nebraska where she worked until her retirement.

Patsy is survived by one brother: Jimmy Benedict of Farmington, Iowa; two grandsons; two nieces; one nephew; several great and great-great nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents: Russell and LaVanchie; two sons: Joseph and Michael; one brother and two nieces.

A memorial service for Patsy was held at 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, March 16, 2021, at Fusselman-Allen-Harvey Funeral Home in Louisville, Nebraska.

A private family graveside service will be held at a later date at Greenglade Cemetery in Farmington, Iowa.

A memorial has been established in her memory for Homeschool Teen Serve. The mailing address is: P.O. Box 302, Springfield, Nebraska.

Pat looked forward each month to the young men and women from Homeschool Teen Serve to come help and visit her while she lived at her home in Louisville.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Farmington is assisting the family with local arrangements. Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

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KEEP DISTANCE

Great River Regional Waste Authority urges you to wear gloves when moving bins for residential trash pick-up. Workers can touch over 2000 bins a day before even touching yours. Don't forget to wash your hands after bringing in your bin!



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for your community

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PEN CITY CURRENT

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Pen City Current and www.pencitycurrent.com are products of Market Street Publishing, LLC. Pen City Current is published Sunday through Friday mornings by 6AM.

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Opinion

Curt's binge movie sessions turn to 4-star shows

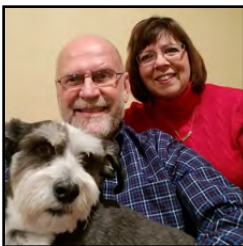
Ginnie and I have seen some great movies lately right in the comfort of our own home. Why risk catching or spreading something? I may never leave home again.

"News of the World" with Tom Hanks. I don't think I've ever seen a bad Hanks' movie. We watched "News of the World" On Demand twice and it was just as entertaining the second time. Neither Ginnie nor I realized that, following the Civil War, there were actually people who traveled from town-to-town, like minstrels, reading newspapers to the news-starved public, either because the general public was illiterate or didn't have access to newspapers. I give "News of the World" four stars.

"Nomadland" is Frances McDormand in, if not her finest role, at least as good as the role she played in "Fargo" for which she received an Academy Award as Best Actress. We watched "Nomadland" on hulu. Watching it a second time, I must admit, in my opinion, it didn't hold up as well. Ginnie was still hooked. A friend of mine watched it six times in two days (COVID isolation) and still couldn't get enough. "Nomadland" received Golden Globe Awards

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



for Best Picture and Best Director. Its appeal, I think, comes from our own trapped feelings of isolation, independence, wanderlust, regret and loss. Packaged in superb acting, a great story line and mood-setting cinematography, "Nomadland" gets four stars.

"Queens Gambit" is a marvelously performed miniseries on Netflix that's quite entertaining, even if you don't know a thing about the game of chess, like Ginnie and me. Starring Ana Taylor-Joy (some critics say she's too pretty for the role of a chess nerd), the movie is about more than chess. It's about addiction, overcoming obstacles, finding true worth, and looking life in the eye. I haven't watched it a second time (but I want to), so I don't know how well it holds up on a second viewing. It's all subjective anyway. I understand "Queens Gambit" is a great book—I might read it. The miniseries is only

seven episodes long, so it's good for a straight day of binge watching if you have the time, or spread over a couple of evenings if you have a busy schedule. I give "Queens Gambit" four stars.

"Unorthodox" on Netflix is my favorite miniseries. I'm watching it a second time right now as I write this, and it's even better the second time through, because I'm understanding the Hasidic Jewish Yiddish a little better. I have my hearing aids turned up and the closed captioning helps. I'm absolutely captivated by starring actress, Shira Haas, who looks more like an undernourished, small boy. (Movie stars can look like normal people, you know, although it's an unusual Hollywood portrayal. McDormand in "Nomadland" does a good job of the normal-person look, too.) Four-stars-plus for "Unorthodox."

The best "sleeper" might be "Our Friend" with Casey Affleck (Ben Affleck's brother, and better actor). I've been hooked on Casey Affleck ever since "Manchester by the Sea," mainly because I identify with the underdog roles Casey Affleck plays. On Demand carries "Our Friend" and

I'd watch it a second time if Ginnie would let me. She likes more of the action roles, like brother Ben Affleck plays. Four Stars for "Our Friend."

Honorable Mentions (two stars) go to "The United States vs Billie Holiday" and "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." As far as Billie Holiday movies go, in my opinion, Diana Ross did a better job of portraying Billie Holiday in "Lady Sings the Blues" back in 1972. But that dates me. I didn't much care for Viola Davis in "Ma Rainey's Black Bottom." I thought Davis did a better job in movies like "The Help" and "Fences." Ginnie disagrees with me here on both movies, empathizing strongly with minority female singers. So be it. As long as Ginnie keeps cook'n, I'll keep look'n.

Movie theaters can shut down. With big screens, add-on speakers, and remotes with "pause" and "rewind," why roam when you can stream at home?

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com.

Do you have time - to help stop crime?

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE
Lee County Board of Supervisors Meeting
Mon, March 22, 2021
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (CST)
AGENDA

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.
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United States: +1 (224) 501-3412
Access Code: 190-085-789

If you would like to pose a question to the Board, please use the Chat feature and wait for the Chairman to address you. If you are participating by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking before addressing the Board. Please keep your microphone muted to cut down on background noise. If you are partic-

ipating by phone, press #6, this will mute your phone.
Pledge of Allegiance
Approve Agenda
Public Input
Consider Approval to Authorize Loan Agreement and Provide for Issuance of General Obligation Corporate Purpose and Refunding Bonds, Series 2021 and Provide for Levy of Taxes To Pay Same
Discuss and Consider Approval of Statement of Understanding for Region Designated Work of Lee County Employees
Consider and Approve FY2021 Lee County Budget Amendment and Set Public Hearing
Open Bids and Consider Awarding Contract for Electrical Work in Estes Park
Consider Approval of Resolution Making Changes to Personnel Policy

Consider Approval of Agricultural Lease with John DiSanto for Land Located Next to Jail
Consider Approval to Appoint Committee to Oversee American Rescue Plan Funds
Consider Approval of Resolution Amending Pioneer Cemetery Members
Consider Approval of Monday, March 15 and Thursday, March 18, 2021 Board Minutes Consider Approval of Claims Personnel Actions:
A. New Hire- EMS
B. Part-time to Full-time- EMS
Reports:
A. Manure Management Annual Update for C & M Hogs LLC in Charleston Township
Commission or Committee Reports
Adjourn

Workshop to Follow

PUBLIC MEETING
CITIZENS WELCOME

Vision and hearing assistance available upon request

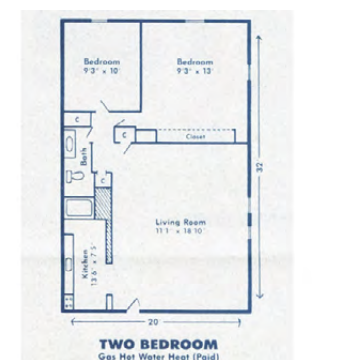
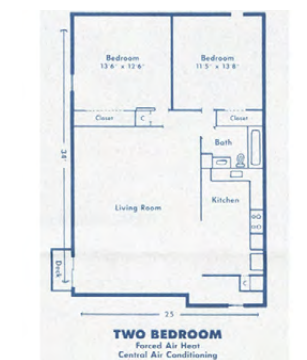
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HELP WANTED

ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY

JOB DESCRIPTION:

The Lee County Attorney is accepting applications for a full-time Assistant County Attorney. Primary duties involve all aspects of trial work including daily court appearances, assistance with investigations; charging of criminal cases; interaction and training with law enforcement, victim and witness contact, representing the State at hearings, trials, and in other legal proceedings; and other duties as assigned. The duties of this position may change as determined by the County Attorney.

REQUIREMENTS:

Graduation from an accredited law school and admission to practice law in the State of Iowa with a law license in good standing and no history of discipline.

Must be able to simultaneously handle multiple areas of responsibility with minimal supervision, properly prioritizing tasks and duties as dictated by changing demands. Must be able to simultaneously advance all assigned cases in a large trial caseload.

Prior trial experience and prosecution experience is preferred but not required.

SALARY:

Salary range to start at \$71,300.00 per year commensurate with experience, as well as a competitive benefits package.

Applicants should submit, by email or mail, a cover letter, resume, writing sample, and three references to:

Ross J. Braden
Lee County Attorney
710 Avenue F
Fort Madison, Iowa 52627
rbraden@leecounty.org

Applications must be received by March 19, 2021 at 4:30 PM.

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LEE COUNTY SECONDARY ROADS

ASSISTANT TO ENGINEER

Lee County is taking applications for an Assistant to Engineer to work out of our Fort Madison, Iowa office. Duties will include conducting National Bridge Inspection Standards inspections of in-service bridges, preparing engineering plans and specifications for road-related construction or maintenance projects and serving as project lead inspector on construction projects, including directing and supervising contractors and County employees. Wage based on experience and qualifications.

Lee County provides equal opportunity in employment to all persons regardless of age, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion or disability.

To apply, download an application from our county website, www.leecounty.org or request one from the Engineer office, and return your completed application, along with a resume to: Lee County Engineer, P.O. Box 158, Fort Madison, IA 52627, or email it to engineer@leecounty.org Applications will be accepted until 4:30 p.m., Monday, March 22, 2021.

If you have any questions please contact Lee County Engineer, Ben Hull, at (319) 372-2541 or email him at engineer@leecounty.org.



LEE COUNTY SECONDARY ROADS

ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN SUPERVISOR

Lee County is taking applications for an Engineering Technician Supervisor to work out of our Fort Madison, Iowa office. Duties will include: to direct and oversee the work of a small crew of engineering technicians, perform research and fieldwork for land surveys, engineering surveys, and construction surveys; drawing plans and preparing specifications, conduct inspections of work performed by contractors, and preparing right-of-way descriptions and drawings for the purchase of land to improve and construct roadways and operate survey equipment.

Lee County provides equal opportunity in employment to all persons regardless of age, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion or disability.

To apply, download an application from our county website, www.leecounty.org or request one from the Engineer office, and return your completed application, along with a resume to: Lee County Engineer, P.O. Box 158, Fort Madison, IA 52627, or email it to engineer@leecounty.org Applications will be accepted until 4:30 p.m., Monday, March 22, 2021.

If you have any questions please contact Lee County Engineer, Ben Hull, at (319) 372-2541 or email him at engineer@leecounty.org.



Human Service Position Opportunities Available

Optimae LifeServices, a progressive mental health provider in Iowa, is seeking qualified individuals to fill a variety of roles working with individuals to achieve life goals in their daily living.

Opportunities include Service Coordinator out of our Burlington office, Site Team Leader out of our Keokuk office, and Direct Support Professionals out of our Keokuk, Fort Madison, and Burlington office.

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For questions, please reach out to HR at 319-237-1730 (Burlington) or 319-372-3566 (Lee Co.)

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NOW HIRING

Lee County Commission on Veteran Affairs Director/Administrator

The Lee County Commission on Veteran Affairs is looking to hire a replacement for our current Director/Administrator. Position includes providing assistance on obtaining benefits and services available to local veterans and their families.

High school diploma or equivalent required. Must be certified or able to obtain certification from Federal and State of Iowa Veteran Affairs. Must have excellent computer skills, valid driver's license, be eligible to work in the United States, reside in or be willing to relocate to Lee County. Must be willing to work flexible hours. Government budget experience is a plus.

Position will start July 6, 2021. Position will be part-time (20 hours per week) until January 1, 2022 then will be a full time position (30 hours per week, per Iowa Code). Certification must be reached by January 1, 2022. Starting wage will be \$14.00/hour and will increase to \$18.00/hour at full time status. Lee County benefits will be available. Veterans will be given preference but all candidates will be considered.

Application and job description may be found online at www.leecounty.org and may also be obtained at the Lee County Auditor's Office, 933 Avenue H Fort Madison Iowa or by calling the Auditor's Office at 319-372-3705 or the Lee County Commission on Veteran Affairs Chairperson at 319-470-9434. Please submit cover letter, resume, and completed County application to:

Lee County Auditor
933 Avenue H, PO Box 190
Fort Madison IA 52627
Or email to dfraise@leecounty.org

Applications accepted through May 1, 2021 at 4:30 p.m.
Complete background check and post-offer physical required.
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NOW HIRING LEE COUNTY CERTIFIED EMS PROVIDERS

Lee County is now accepting applications for full and part-time Iowa certified EMS providers. We are a county owned and operated ambulance service providing emergency services to Lee County, Iowa as well as critical care transport services. Our primary full-time schedule is based on a 24-48 rotation with a Kelly Day, flexible scheduling for part-time employment. Strong progressive protocols, new fleet power load equipped. Starting wage EMT \$15.82 per hour, \$42,777.28 per year. Starting wage paramedic \$20.16 per hour, \$54,512.64 per year, based on a 48-hour full-time work week. 2% wage increases annually for three years. 10 cents per hour increase for every year of EMS experience after your first year. Benefit package includes health insurance through Blue Cross Blue Shield (80/20 plan), chiropractic, prescription plan, annual wellness, vision, dental, life, protection class IPERS, optional 401K, Aflac, Lee County Credit Union. Annual uniform allowance provided. In house continuing education provided. Positions will start July 1, 2021.

Paramedic Qualifications:

- High School Diploma (GED or High School Equivalence Certificate)
- Current IDPH-BETS EMS Certification at the Paramedic level
- Valid Driver's License/insurable
- Current BLS
- Current ACLS
- Current PALS

EMT Qualifications:

- High School Diploma (GED or High School Equivalence Certificate)
- Current IDPH-BETS EMS Certification at the EMT level
- Valid Driver's License/insurable
- Current BLS

Applicants must be eligible to work in the U.S. Veterans will be given preference but all candidates will be considered. Applications and job descriptions may be found online at www.leecounty.org and may be also obtained at the Lee County Auditor's Office, 933 Avenue H, Fort Madison Iowa. Applications accepted through April 5, 2021 at 4:00 p.m. Complete background check, drug screening and post-offer physical required. Lee County is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Please mail or email applications to or for more information:



Lee County EMS
Attn: Dennis Cosby, EMS Director
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From the Front

Project symbolizes progress in the face of COVID-19 pandemic

SCHOOL - Continued from Page 1

students of the district despite the hurdles of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“COVID-19 has brought all kinds of challenges for everyone. While a bit behind on our target date on this project, COVID was not able to derail the project, Crozier said.

“When we speak about symbolism for this project, this symbolizes how we were able to keep moving forward on all tasks even in the middle of the pandemic.”

Many of the Central Lee elementary students, in lieu of the district going to online learning, went to POD learning throughout the Montrose and Donnellson area to keep classroom work in effect.

Elementary Principal Heather Fuget said with the completion of the majority of construction including new secure entrances, office spaces, and common space learning area, students are also returning from the PODs

“It’s been exciting in general, but were bringing all our PODs back to the building and the students haven’t been seen here for a while because of all the things happening and the construction. So they’re coming back to a WOW,” Fuget said.

“Having these extra spaces for small groups to get out of the classrooms to have conversations and learn in a new and exciting environment is a great addition.”

The project began with the formation of a facility planning committee in 2017 to take a look at the 34-year-old campus. A VOTE YES committee was created to move forward with bond work, once the plans were formed.

The 2018 bond effort failed, but voters approved a second facilities upgrade referendum in 2019.

Bidding went out in March for the work which included rehabbing the elementary school and high school. The high school work is scheduled to be complete by the fall and will provide a new gymnasium, locker rooms, coaches offices, fine arts auditorium, and upgrades to the office areas, cafeteria, and common areas.

The projects broke ground in May.

Sara Newton, who spearheaded the VOTE YES committee said she’s happy the district put a priority on security.

“It’s so exiting. It’s a bigger space than I imagined and it looks so comfortable for the kids,” Newton said.

“When we were working on VOTE YES, this was the main selling point of the bond. People really wanted it to be a secure location. That was the first step the school prioritized and it’s just exciting to see this become a reality.”

Newton said her heart was broken with the first bond failure, but said the district did a good job putting together the second plan and being able to promote it without raising the tax rate of district voters.

District residents will still pay for the \$13 million renovation, but overall tax rates didn’t increase because of increased district valuations, which helped push the district’s property tax rate down.

Brock Westfall, a member of the district’s school board, said the financial outlook enabled the district to borrow the money and not see an increase in what district residents paid last year.

“An important thing is we are able to give back to the community and the kids without raising the tax rate,” Westfall said. “These new security measures we’re



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Central Lee schools Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier welcomes guests to the ribbon cutting of the school’s renovated PreK-8th grade elementary Friday morning.

real priority, though.”

Crozier thanked the committees, the community, Pilot Grove Savings Bank and Connection Bank for financing, and the construction crews for their support in making the renovations a reality.

“I want to say Thank You not only as the superintendent of Central Lee, but as a parent of Central Lee students, and an alumni. I could not be more proud of the work we’ve accomplished in the last four years.”

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From the Front

City seeing jump in economic activity to start 2021

HOLTKAMP - Continued from Page 1

far as coming up with different ways to incentivize the project,” Holtkamp said.

Fort Madison Mayor dangled a 10-year tax abatement in front of the Fort Madison City Council informally at Tuesday night’s meeting. Mohrfeld said the typical 20-year TIF structure is too long.

“If you’re gonna invest \$6 million and throw jobs at the town, that’s worth a little abatement. Twenty’s too much. Somebody’s gotta pay for police and fire, but this would allow them to get into profit mode and do some payback and then get on the tax roles.” Mohrfeld said.

“It’s good thing.”

But it’s just part of what Mohrfeld describes as book-end economics – the presence of small and large expansion simultaneously.

“When you see the quaint stores downtown, and I can point to six of them right now, and then you look at Mark, and ConAgra, you tend to get the middle. But I think if you don’t have both of those ends, I’m not sure you have the healthy growth you want.”

Holtkamp said he had a vision for the expansion when he purchased the facility in 2020. However he said he didn’t have a market study in hand to gauge the demand for more assisted living beds in the area.

“I kinda thought about it, but didn’t have that market study. But in my mind I thought it would be there,” he said.

Holtkamp said he’s happy to be part of the growth spurt taking place in the city.

“Every time I come home for anything, it’s so good to see all the new businesses popping up everywhere. And I’m really excited to be a part of that.”

Mohrfeld also pointed to the ease of the discussions with Holtkamp as a blueprint for future developments.

“The first thing I’ll say is Mark was a delight for myself and (City Finance Director Peggy Steffensmeier) and the city to work with. He’s a smart, good businessman who’s family is from here. We met early on in the project and he laid it out on the table.”

Mohrfeld said he’s not a big fan of the “forever abatement”, but said 10 years seemed reasonable. He said Fort Madison is starting to find formulas like that that work.

“It’s interesting when we talk economic development. If there was a formula for it, everyone would do it right. But when you see development of little things and big things – the book ends – everything in the middle seems to take care of itself,” Mohrfeld said.

The city has seen a recent uptick in store front occupancy downtown with Swed & Co. Coffee, Treasure Troves, Brickhouse Salon, Jus’ Try It and today Odd Marvels. The city has also seen openings of Scooters Coffee, and the progression of Farm & Home in the former Shopko building. Several other small businesses are planned for downtown this year.

Mohrfeld also expanded the footprint of his commercial greenhouse business Matt’s Greenhouse across from Rodeo Park in Fort Madison

The mayor said more brings more, and Fort Madison is just starting to get a renewed sense of a lifestyle that people want. He also got in a plug for the marina project he’s been championing for more than a year.

“And this can’t go without saying – ya know we need a really good place on the river,” he chuckled.

That project carries an initial estimated cost of about \$6 million, with possible as much as \$1.5 million coming from city funds to trigger the remaining investment. Mohrfeld said to get everything done to make the marina a 50-year sustainable 5-star marina, will eventually carry a \$10 million price tag.

Stimulus money giving local governments options

ECONOMICS - Continued from Page 1

– that the “Saddle America’s Kids with Insurmountable Debt... I mean the last stimulus bill, sorry.”

I belly laughed behind my double mask.

I let the comment steep a little as Varley went on to say that thanks to the U.S. Senate, Fort Madison would be getting about \$1.43 million, \$200,000 more than Keokuk and about \$1.3 million more than West Point.

The \$1.9 trillion in stimulus money approved in March is a tremendous amount of money and it will saddle Americans with debt for decades – if not generations.

I’m not convinced that we need to spend that much money. But it’s law. So now, what’s the best way to move forward?

Let’s just say here loud and clear, the money being given to local governments, (Lee County got \$6.5 million) cannot be spent on any tax relief, including debt relief. Initial interpretations say the money can be used for water, sewer, and broadband, but also for revenues lost due to the pandemic.

Well, that’s a little obtuse in my mind. Creative governments will find a way to show a loss of revenue attributable to COVID.

Supervisor Garry Seyb, Jr, asked the county to form a committee to digest all the incoming proposals for using the money, and then suggested possibly hiring a grant writer. Grant writers wouldn’t technically be a viable use of funds, but the county could spend the money regardless in hopes the position pays for itself.

I spoke with a banker over the weekend who told me the \$1.9 trillion spend is law. The taxpayers are going to have pay for it now. So the second round of Pay-check Protection Program loans, extended unemployment, school funding, etc are in play and people should use them as intended.

But is it too much? Yeah.

And I’m not conservative, although I see the points of conservative people more and more as I get older. My liberal wife and daughter keep me rooted a little.

But this is too much. I remember hearing economics teachers talk about the dangers of devaluing the dollar. It just means you need more to buy less. I liken this to the same thing.

I saw a cartoon the other day where the Unemployment window had a line backed up, but the window next to it said Now Hiring and no one was in line. That’s real. People are making more staying at home and many choose not to go back to work. That will last right until the benefits run out. We have jobs. We have people. We have unemployment?

But I also get the value of using the stimulus money to purchase things you need – maybe things you want. That’s what’s happening with local governments. You have to spend it in the economy. I would assume, and I know as much about economics as I do about string theory, that those spends will act like solid rocket fuel for America’s economy. But we also know the dangers of solid rocket fuel.

I don’t know – but I agree with the banker. It’s a law now, so let’s use it the best we can for our families, schools, customers, and constituents.

The best formula is for all the unemployed to realize this is a chance to REALLY get back on their feet. Get out there and get back to work. There are companies in this county that need your help. They are good jobs with good benefits. You just have to get past sitting at home and seeing money drop into your account. It won’t be there forever, but here’s a chance to use it as a spring board to even better things.

Speaking of spring boards, what a start to the year economically for the city. I think I have taken pictures at about six ribbon cuttings this year already. Mark Holtkamp is going to double the size of The Madison and Glen Meller is cleaning up some property on the west end. Throw in activity at Farm & Home, there’s some rumor that Matt Mohrfeld might have an idea about a marina...or something, and you got some real good energy happening.

If we can get this coronavirus off our backs, it could be a very interesting couple of years in Fort Madison. But that’s Beside the Point.

Chuck Vandenberg is editor and co-owner of Pen City Current and can be reached at editor@pencitycurrent.com.

Investigation still underway in Saturday shooting

POLICE - Continued from Page 1

two vehicles in the area,” Rohloff said.

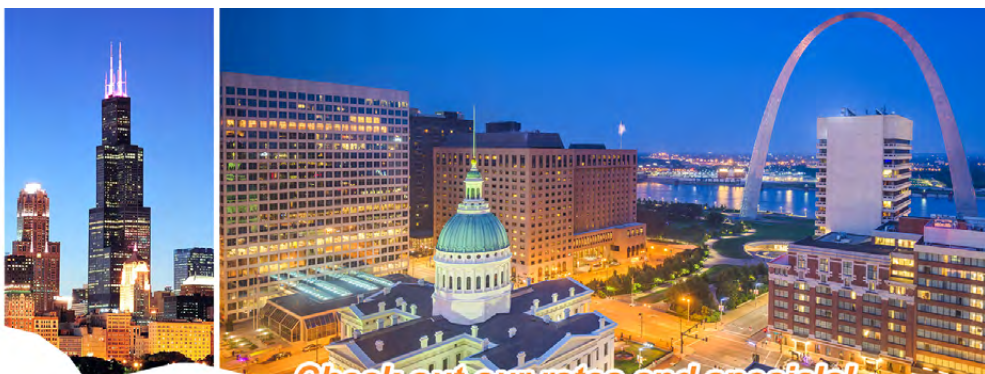
The city street was barricaded for more than five hours as the search warrants were executed.

Rohloff said police don’t feel there is any danger to the public as the incident was isolated between the two men. Lee County Sheriff’s deputies and Lee County EMS assisted at the scene.

Police were also looking for another

subject in the area who was reported to have brandished a weapon to five juveniles in the area, but Rohloff said he couldn’t connect that incident to the shooting.

Rohloff said the investigation is ongoing and additional witnesses are still being sought. Shaffer is presumed innocent of the charges until proven guilty in a court of law.



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