

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's **Black & White** and **Read** all over

Thursday, February 4, 2021 | 8 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 33



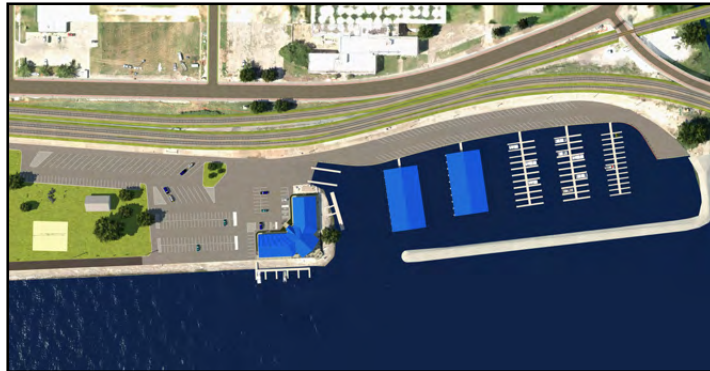
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COUNCIL SWEET ON NEW MARINA



Courtesy image

The Fort Madison City Council held a spirited discussion on a new Fort Madison Marina that will require a \$1.5 million investment from the city to trigger up to \$3 million in private investment. Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said the new marina could be operational in 14 months. Below are several concept images.



A BEER NEXT YEAR: Mayor says Marina could be up and running by spring 2022

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City Councilman Mark Lair hasn't decided if he's going to run for another term on the council next year.

But if he doesn't he wants to know if the city's new marina will be done before he goes. Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld answered succinctly.

"Yes," Mohrfeld said.

"How bout that for an answer. If you don't have target you'll never hit it. So we set a target and it's a good plan."

At Tuesday's Fort Madison City Council meeting, Connection Bank President Matt Morris and Lee County Economic Development Group President Dennis Fraise,

pitched the council on the idea of what many are calling a 5-star marina on the city's riverfront.

Mohrfeld and Fraise are part of a 16-member committee that has been preparing the proposal for the past nine months.

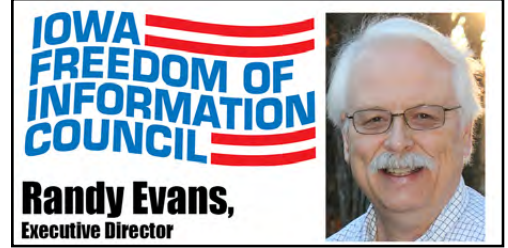
"I've said this before. We are not going to apologize for having a 5-star marina in Fort Madison," Mohrfeld said.

The project has been put together in just over a year and will require about \$6 million to get it done.

Mohrfeld said Tuesday that will involve a \$1.5 million ask from the city. If the city approves the spend, that will trigger private investments that could double and eventually triple the city's investment with the remainder poten-

See **MARINA**, page 8

FIRST AMENDMENT



Confusion on the First Amendment

Forty-five words that were first written with a quill pen 230 years ago form what may be the most consequential sentence in United States history.

But that sentence also is one of the most misunderstood — as recent comments from some of our leaders illustrate.

The sentence I refer to is the First Amendment. It is the Constitution's guarantee of fundamental rights of the American people to live their lives without government butting in.

For reference, here is what the amendment says in full: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Some graduates of top law schools must have been snoozing in class when constitutional law was being taught. Josh Hawley and Ted Cruz are a couple of examples.

Hawley is a Yale law school graduate. Cruz is a Harvard law school graduate. Before they were elected to the United States Senate, Hawley was Missouri attorney general and Cruz was Texas solicitor general.

It would not be surprising if someone without legal training did not fully grasp the nuances of those 45 words in the First Amendment. But it is troubling that Ivy League lawyers could be so wrong about such a fundamental part of life in America — or be so willing to deliberately mislead the public.

Conservatives have grouched that social

See **EVANS**, page 7

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap
THU 04 Feb.....Wintry Mix, 36° F/ 18° F
FRI 05 Feb.....Partly Cloudy, 20° F/ 14° F
SAT 06 Feb.....Cold with Light Snow, 14° F/ 0° F

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Local News/Lee County News

Cities' audits turn up few areas of concern in books

Fort Madison dinged for spending more than it took in, deficit fund balances

FORT MADISON - According to retained public accounts the cities of Fort Madison and West Point had a few check marks in recent audit findings.

CPA Associates PC, Certified Public Accountants, released an audit report on the City of Fort Madison on Tuesday.

Financial Highlights:

The City's receipts totaled \$18,700,068 for the year ended June 30, 2020, a 6.96% decrease from the prior year. Disbursements for the year ended June 30, 2020 totaled \$19,707,572, a 15.36% decrease from the prior year. The significant decrease in the receipts and disbursements is due primarily to the receipt of bond proceeds in the prior year and decreased spending on sewer capital projects.

Audit Findings:

CPA Associates, P.C. reported seven findings related to the receipt and disbursement of taxpayer funds. The findings are found on pages 59 through 62 of this report. The findings addresses a lack of segregation of duties, disbursements in excess of the City's budget, deficit fund balances, City employees or Council members with delinquent utility account balances, excess tax increment financing funds, economic development grant overpayment and cemetery lots sold at rates that do not conform to those established by City Council resolution. CPA Associates, P.C. provided the City of Fort Madison with recommendations to address this finding.

Four of the findings discussed above are repeated from the prior year. The City Council has a fiduciary responsibility to provide oversight of the City's operations and financial transactions.

Oversight is typically defined as the "watchful and responsible care" a governing body exercises in its fiduciary capacity.

A copy of the audit report is available for review in the City Clerk's Office, in the Office of the Auditor of State and on the Auditor of State's web site at <https://auditor.iowa.gov/audit-reports..>

WEST POINT

Ted M. Wiegand, CPA released an agreed-upon procedures report on the City of West Point, Iowa, for the period July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 on Jan. 19, 2021.

The agreed-upon procedures engagement was performed pursuant to Chapter 11.6 of the Code of Iowa.

Wiegand reported one finding related to the receipt and disbursement of taxpayer funds. It is found on page 6 of his report. The finding addresses a lack of adequate segregation of duties in various accounting areas. Wiegand provided recommendations to address the finding.

The City Council has a fiduciary responsibility to provide oversight of the City's operations and financial transactions. Oversight is typically defined as the "watchful and responsible care" a governing body exercises in its fiduciary capacity.

Lee County GOP elects new chairman for 2021-23

LEE COUNTY - At its February meeting Monday, Lee County Republicans elected officers for 2021-2023.

The new officers are James Creen, Fort Madison, Chairman; Linda Wheeler, Fort Madison, Co-Chairman; Jill Cox, Keokuk, Secretary and Chris Riegel, Keokuk, Treasurer. Sandy Johnson, Keokuk, was appointed Finance Chairman. Creen also serves as the committee's



CREEN

webmaster.

The new leadership reflects the recent election of former Chairman, Martin Graber, to the Iowa House of Representatives and former Co-Chairman, Jeff Reichman, to the Iowa State Senate.

Joining the Zoom meeting was U.S. Representative Marianne Miller-Meeks who reported on her committee assignments and noted that sub-committees have not yet been assigned. She also

reported that she is looking forward to getting to know her fellow representatives when face-to-face proceedings resume.

Also joining the meeting was Supervisor, Garry Seyb, who highlighted the issues facing the Lee County Board of Supervisors.

Lee County Republicans meet the First Monday of each month except for national holidays. In-person locations are being investigated. You can contact the Committee by calling 319-526-1110, on Face Book, or by mail at PO Box 281, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Zoom meetings are available on the LCR Face-Book page.

While precinct representatives are elected at Caucus, open precinct seats can be filled at any regular meeting and interested registered Republicans are encouraged to reach out and contribute to the future of the Lee County Republican Party.

Winter storm could cause Thursday driving issues

QUAD CITIES - National Weather Service out of the Quad Cities is predicting a fast moving Arctic cold front will bring dangerous conditions to the area Thursday and Thursday night. Rain, possibly be mixed with freezing rain and sleet will move into Iowa early Thursday morning, then as the cold front moves into the area during the mid morning, rain will switch to snow. Winds will quickly increase behind the front to 20 to 30 MPH with gusts up to 45 MPH, and any wet roads will flash freeze. The front will reach the Mississippi River by early afternoon.

Snow will be heavy at times during the late morning and afternoon and become lighter into the evening hours before coming to an end from west by 10 PM. Snow-fall amounts of 2 to 4 inches are possible north of Interstate 80 in Iowa with 3 to 5 inches possible north of Interstate 80 in Illinois. 1 to 2 inches of snow is possible between a Fairfield to Galesburg line and Interstate 80. Less than an inch of snow is expected south of a Galesburg to Fairfield line. Winds behind the front will increase to 25 to 35 MPH with gusts up to 45 MPH, with blowing snow becoming dangerous in open areas. White out conditions are possible.

Winter Storm Warning and advisories are in effect for Thursday and Thursday night for much of the area. Please keep up to date on this complicated and potentially dangerous storm.

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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.

Founded in 2016
P.O. Box 366 | Fort Madison, IA

Obituaries/Iowa News

OBITUARIES

HARRIETT E. WITTICH

Harriett Elizabeth Wittich, 87 of Keokuk, IA died Monday, February 1, 2021 at River Hills Village in Keokuk.

She was born November 2, 1933 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of John and Hazel Dodge Wittich. Harriett graduated from Keokuk High School.



WITTICH

She had been employed for the Keokuk Community School District at Lincoln School until her retirement in 1995.

Harriett was a member of St. Paul United Church of Christ in Keokuk.

Harriett enjoyed quilting and loved her cat, Snowball.

She is survived by her son, Daniel L. (Brenda) Wittich of Keokuk, two granddaughters, Katrina Cole (Robert) of Carthage, IL and Amanda Gould (Kevin) of Winterset, IA, great-grandchildren, Sarah, Jacob, Keira and Tara Gould, Terasa Cole and Bobby Cole, step-grandchildren, William, Laurence and Elizabeth Goehl and two great-great-grandchildren, Luke Gould and Grayson Fisher and several nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents and two brothers, William Phillip Wittich and Arthur Wittich.

A funeral service will be held at 10:30 a.m., Friday, at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with Reverend Milo VanVeldhuizen officiating. Burial will be in the Oakwood Cemetery in Hamilton, IL.

Visitation will be held an hour prior to the service, from 9:30 -10:30 a.m., Friday, at the funeral home with family meeting with friends at that time. Social distancing measures will be in effect and masks are required at both the funeral home and graveside.

Memorials may be made to St. Paul United Church of Christ.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.

A.B.A.T.E. Freedom rally set for July 1-3 in Algona

ALGONA – A.B.A.T.E. of Iowa is pleased to present the lineup for the 37th Annual Freedom Rally – to be held in Algona, Iowa July 1-3, 2021. Tickets are on sale now at www.abateiowafreedomrally.com. ALL are welcome to the Freedom Rally - You do not need to be a member or a biker to attend. Though by becoming a member you SAVE on this year's tickets (even after purchasing your membership). "Member" includes membership in any state-supported motorcycle rights organization (any state). Non-Member Rally tickets are \$100 and include access to the festival (July 1-3), camping, all the concerts, and many other activities. Member tickets are \$40 through June 20. Become a member for only \$25 at www.abateiowa.org. All attendees must be 18 years of age or older.

The Freedom Rally will be headlined Grammy Award-nominated, gold-certified hard rock group Sevendust, country superstar Eddie Montgomery of Montgomery Gentry, and the country hick-hop duo the Moonshine Bandits! With one additional headliner to be announced! The rally kicks off on Thursday, July 1 and the 3-day festival includes a multitude of activities including over 14 bands, a tattoo contest, bike show & rodeo, burnout pit, DYNO, fireworks, sled pull, duck race, vendors, and more! Tent camping is included in all tickets and the rally is open to the public. Car and Bike parking is available on-site. RV Camping is available for an additional fee. Get more information and tickets at www.abateiowafreedomrally.com.

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OBITUARIES

WILLIAM T. CLENDENEN

William T. Clendenen, 84, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 8:47 a.m. on Tuesday, February 2, 2021 at the Keosauqua Health Care Center in Keosauqua, IA. He was born on February 20, 1936 in Fort Madison, IA to Thomas & Garnet McCann Clendenen. He married Toni L.



CLENDENEN

Kottenstette on November 21, 1957 in San Diego, CA. He was a chef for many years and served in the U.S. Navy on the USS Orleck and also bases in San Diego, CA and Las Vegas, NV. He enjoyed watching the Iowa Hawkeyes and the St. Louis Cardinals and spending time with his dog, Molly.



Bill is survived by: his wife: Toni Clendenen of Fort Madison, IA; 1-daughter: Paula (Brian) Mix of Fort Madison, IA; 1-grandson: Zachary Boilesen of Albion, NE and 1-son in law: Kevin Boilesen of Albion, NE. He was preceded in death by his parents & 1-daughter: Pamela Boilesen.

A visitation will be held from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. on Friday, February 5, 2021 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. The funeral service will immediately follow at 1:30 p.m. with Rev. John Simpson officiating. Burial will be held at Oakland Cemetery. A memorial has been established for St. Joseph's Indian School or the American Cancer Society. Online condolences to Bill's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

Pen City Current obituary policy

The 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.



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Sports/Opinion

Signing day shines light on tough recruiting year

The bulk of Iowa's 2021 recruiting class had committed before, or during the early stages of, the COVID-19 pandemic.

The restrictions placed by the NCAA — no official visits to homes, coaches couldn't visit recruits or watch them play in person — didn't really impact the class.

"In some strange way, I feel like I know these prospects better than a normal year because we had so much time to dedicate to it back when we should have been having spring practice, should have been in a summer program, those kinds of things," Iowa coach Kirk Ferentz said on Wednesday, the second signing day for this recruiting class.

Iowa signed 19 players, 17 on the first signing day back in December.

It's a high number considering what went on in the recruiting footprint for the Hawkeyes.

Iowa high schools played an 8-game schedule. Minnesota schools played a shorter schedule after the state association reversed course, going from fall to spring and then back to fall. Illinois schools will play a shortened spring schedule, but it may be too late for seniors trying to find a spot.



"In some strange way, I think it was almost a benefit — not that we want to go through that again," Ferentz said. "But where we are missing out right now is we didn't have a chance to evaluate last spring. We couldn't go out on the road and our coaches couldn't be out in schools. We couldn't have camps on campus where we are not only identifying prospects for this current year but years in advance. You learn things about people then. Couldn't go out during the fall, needless to say, and the last couple weeks, normally we'd be on the road in January and we're sitting here."

It's been a painful year for high school athletes during the pandemic. The spring season was completely shut down. Iowa played a summer base-

ball and softball season, got through a somewhat normal fall season, and is closing in on wrapping up a winter season.

But if coaches aren't able to get out and scout, it's hard to identify players.

It was a problem for Western Illinois, especially with Illinois high schools shut down. The Leathernecks signed 18 players, with only one from in the state, and a vast majority of the class were transfers from other NCAA Division I schools or junior colleges.

"It was definitely unique, in terms of recruiting," coach Jared Elliott said Wednesday. "I think recruiting is all about relationships. It's hard to kind of form and develop those kind of relationships with potential student-athletes and their families over Zooms or FaceTimes. You still can — thank God for the technology we have today, because it was obviously helpful. But you've got to rely on people you know, coaches you know across the country, to not only identify off of videotape the guys who can fit your program, not only with their skill set but also with the character component. Are they the right fit for what you believe in your locker room and all that?"

"Yeah, you have to do your homework."

That homework is going to continue with the 2022 class. The NCAA is expected to ease into a quiet period this spring, with athletes and their families being allowed on-campus visits, but coaches won't be able to go out and scout yet.

"I do think we're going to get back to normal in terms of high school recruiting and all of those things," Elliott said.

"It's going to be a challenge for us," Ferentz said. "You have to try to go on film. There are a lot of people that didn't play high school football this year. So you can imagine the challenges there, right."

"All that being said, everybody is facing the same challenge. So you've just got to try to figure out a way to do it as best you can and go from there. We don't have a particularly large class to recruit next year. I guess maybe that's a lucky break for us."

For high school athletes looking to catch a coach's eye, any break is needed.

John Bohnenkamp is an award-winning sports reporter and is a contributor to Pen City Current.

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Sports

Merschman drops 39 on New London

Lady Hawks drop Wapello in SEISC Shoot-out Friday

BY PCC STAFF

NEW LONDON – Senior Mya Merschman scored 39 in the Lady Hawks 67-34 win over New London Tuesday night.

Merschman was the only girl in double figures for Central Lee. Macy Watkins had nine points, Ella Sanders scored eight, Alivia Myhre had six and Makayla Morrison scored five in the win.



MERSCHMAN

New London kept things close in the early going tying things up at 5 with three minutes gone, but Central Lee would pull away quickly building leads as much as 19 in the second quarter.

An 18-4 run through the second quarter was enough to put the game out of reach. Merschman had 20 before the

break.

The Lady Hawks would get the running clock going just a few minutes in the final quarter holding a 61-29 lead with six minutes left in the game.

The Hawks are in the middle of the pack in the Southeast Iowa Superconference South division at 7-6 in loop play and are 10-8 overall.

They take on WACO (6-7, 7-11) on Thursday at home and then host Wapello (5-6 SEISC North, 8-10) Friday night in the SEISC Shoot-Out at 7:30 p.m.

Merschman is still second in the state in scoring with 516 points, just 15 behind Van Buren's Isabel Manning. Merschman is the top scorer in Class 3A, 116 points ahead of Osage's Dani Johnson.

Porter lights up Hawks as Tigers roll



BY PCC STAFF

NEW LONDON – Central Lee dropped its fifth game in the last six with a 78-61 loss to New London on the road Tuesday night.

Central Lee started strong out of the gate hitting three straight 3-pointers for a 9-6 lead just two minutes into the contest, but then went ice cold from the floor and didn't score again until a minute was left in the period.

New London would go on an 18-3 run during that stretch to open up a 24-12 first-quarter lead.

The Hawks would reset and cut the lead to just nine at 42-33 at the break with Jaxon Betker leading the way with 16 first half points.

But Central wouldn't have an answer for New London sophomore Blaise Porter who hit just about everything in the first half going for 22 of his game-high 36 on the night.

The Hawks held Porter to just four points in the third period as they slowly cut into the Tigers lead and trailed by just eight points going into the fourth. But Porter would heat up again for 10 points in the final period as Central Lee was held to just 12 points.

The Hawks got 26 on the night from Betker. Bronson Sargent added 11, while Jaedon Betker and Kaleb Sanders each chipped in with nine. Derrick Denning added six and Dylan Stuecker was held to just a third quarter bucket in the loss.

Central Lee falls to 6-8 in Southeast Iowa Superconference play and 6-12 overall. New London sits atop the South Division with an 11-2 mark. The Tigers are 13-4 overall.

The Hawks host WACO (2-15) on Thursday night.

Notre Dame downs Holy Trinity 70-28 Tuesday

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – The Holy Trinity Catholic girls basketball team got down 10-2 just two minutes into Friday's game and that set the tone for the night.

Notre Dame rolled to an easy 70-28 win over the Crusaders in a game that featured a running

clock most of the second half with the Nikes coming out of the locker room up by 32 at 43-11.

Holy Trinity had cut the lead to five at 12-7 midway through the first period, but Notre Dame would run away with the contest from that point on, holding HTC scoreless for the next nine minutes building a 37-9

lead.

Maria Rauenbuehler led Holy Trinity with nine points. Brooke Mueller had eight and Mary Hellige scored six. The Crusaders got two points from Kassi Randolph and Reagan Holvoet and a free throw from Natalie Randolph.

Reagan Engberg had 14 for Notre Dame.

Megan Harrell scored a dozen and Katy Stephens and Karli Artman each put in 10 for the Nikes.

Holy Trinity falls to 4-12 in Southeast Iowa Superconference South action and 5-16 overall. Notre Dame still has just one loss on the year and stands at 11-1 in loop play and 15-1 overall.

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From the Front/Classifieds

Private outlets under no mandate to publish

EVANS - Continued from Page 1

media companies like Facebook and Twitter favor content with a clearly liberal bent. Cruz recently tore into corporate executives during a Senate hearing and demanded to know, "Who the hell made Facebook the arbiter of political speech?"

Hang on, the answer to Cruz's question is coming shortly.

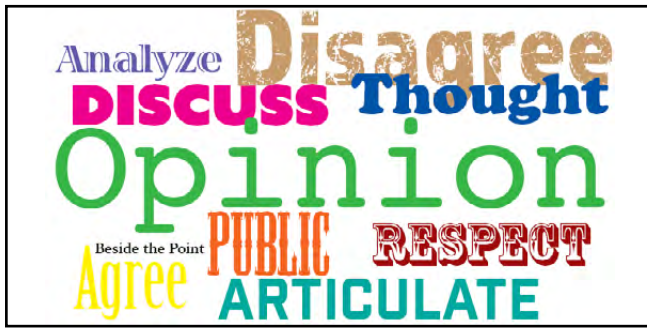
Hawley was the first senator to rise in support of President Donald Trump's push to get Congress to reject the electoral votes from a handful of swing states that Joe Biden carried. After the violence at the Capitol on the day of the electoral vote certification, one of the nation's big book publishers decided it no longer wanted to publish a new book Hawley has written.

The senator responded by accusing the publisher Simon & Schuster of "a direct assault on the First Amendment" by backing out of their deal.

Both Cruz and Hawley displayed a flawed understanding of the relationship of the First Amendment to companies like Simon & Schuster, Twitter or Facebook.

Any shade-tree lawyer should know the First Amendment prevents the government from stopping you from expressing your opinions or from demonstrating peacefully. It does not stop businesses from acting, or reacting, on free speech matters.

Hawley is free to take his manuscript to another publisher. He can decide to publish the book himself. But absent a contract clause prohibiting Simon &



Schuster from cancelling the deal, the company cannot be compelled to publish Hawley's book — or anyone else's book.

People who are kicked off Twitter or Facebook have other options for disseminating their views, ideas and commentary — especially when they live in the White House, with a press briefing room down the hall and a flock of journalists waiting there every day.

Just as Hawley cannot force Simon & Schuster to publish his book, I cannot compel the New York Times to publish these columns. Nor can I force the Trump family to put a stack of my political commentaries at the registration desk in each of their hotels.

Likewise, just as National Football League team owners have the legal right to punish players who kneel during the national anthem, Facebook or Twitter have the legal right to suspend or drop a user who violates the companies' terms of service.

The First Amendment does not require Twitter and

Facebook to give accounts to anyone any more than the Second Amendment requires gun manufacturers to sell you a gun.

The essayist A.J. Liebling put this First Amendment concept succinctly years ago when he wrote, "Freedom of the press is limited to those who own one."

One of my friends who is not an essayist offered this not-so-succinct explanation of the intricacies of the First Amendment last week:

"The government cannot punish you for waving a Confederate flag or wearing a 6MWE shirt or saluting rioters or yelling, 'You will not replace us.' That would be censorship.

"But your employer can fire you, your social media can suspend you, your publisher can drop you, and your neighbors can shun you. That is not censorship. That is your employer, your social media, your publisher, and your neighbors exercising their own rights.

"Your right to free speech does not take away others' right to react."

A footnote: If you are not familiar with the 6MWE acronym, organizations that study white supremacists say it is used as shorthand to claim that the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust "weren't enough."

That is a despicable position to take. The government cannot punish you for thinking or spreading a despicable message. But your boss can.

Randy Evans is the director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council and his weekly column appears courtesy of the IFOIC. Pen City Current is a member of the IFOIC.

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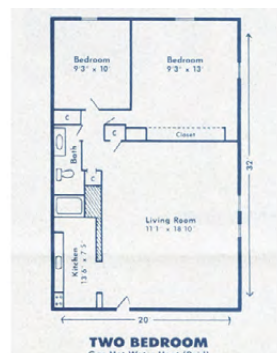
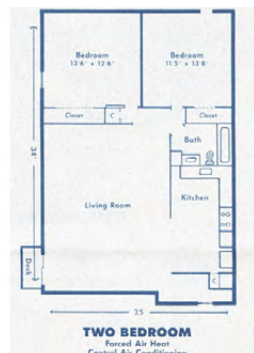
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PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

From the Front

Dock, slip rental would pay for maintenance

MARINA - Continued from Page 1

tially coming from other funding sources including profits, as well as potential state and federal grants.

The project initially involves dredging the marina, which is already being planned for this fall, repairing and raising the jetty wall approximately five feet to take it out of the 500-year flood plain, brand new docks and boat slips to accommodate additional boaters. Two of the docks would be covered docks.

Future plans include raising the north road out of the 500-year-flood plain.

Plans also include a new hospitality center with new amenities, fuel and convenience items, food and beverage services, additional repairs to the marina wall, and upgraded parking services.

The project is being planned as a public-private partnership with both for-profit and non-profit entities involved with several lease relationships.

Proceeds from the new dock and slip rental, with a goal of 110 new docks, would be used to maintain the new docks and dredging as needed. The higher jetty wall would reduce the silt that currently settles in the marina causing boater issues.

The plan would include for about half of the docks to be covered.

Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker was also part of the committee and encouraged the council to support the project.

"I'm really excited about the project and I think we have enough manpower and brainpower on this committee to make this happen. And I believe the council will support the forward movement," Bowker said.

"To vote against it would be a negative, negative thing."



CANGAS

Bowker said it was imperative that the public has access to the docks and the marina, and it not become a yacht club type of venture.

Lair said he was hesitant – but supports the project.

"I want to move cautiously, real cautiously," he said.

He said the city is already bonded \$19 million on the sewer treatment plant and \$6 million in sewer separation costs.

Mohrfeld said he sees the city coming up with the \$1.5 million by either bonding for the money or borrowing from the Highway 61 fund and then bonding to finish the highway renovation. The city would also be eligible for FEMA reimbursements for some of the project upgrades around flooding mitigation and repairs.

He said he didn't want to get too deep into the financing but said the bond wouldn't have to go in front of voters. The city can bond up to \$700,000 on a project like this, and he could see the whole project having three different individual projects.

"There are other avenues, we could link it to other community improvement projects. We could use Avenue H funds for right now, fully fund it and kick the can down the road. We have to bond to finish that project, so tack it on to there. That would be real simple," the mayor said.

Councilman Chad Cangas said the city has a tight budget and people will growl. He cited the success of Riverfest and then the blighted area on the east side as a reason to keep moving.

"The whole end of that parking lot people can be using. Right now we got 25% of the riverfront that's basically a slum. There's nothing there, it's falling apart and it looks like crap," Cangas said.

Councilman Tom Schulz quipped, "And we own

it."

Schulz said the city would be "absolutely insane" not to promote doing something if it was even close to being revenue neutral.

Cangas said he didn't like the idea of spending the money, but with American Cruise Lines coming in when things open up again, and the success of Riverfest, the city needs to finish the appeal of the riverfront.

Councilman Rusty Andrews gave the most pointed reaction to the project. "As the City of Fort Madison we suck at running a marina. And this is our chance not to suck at running a marina," he said.

Mohrfeld said the discussion was a vision discussion and then went around the room for an informal thumbs up or down. He got thumbs up from all seven councilmembers.

He said the \$6 million has to happen to make the project go.

"There's seven phases and this is four of them. There are three more down the road they want to do out of profits and grants," he said.

"But it has to have water, it has to have the jetty wall, it has to have docks and it has to have the hospitality center. That's the house of cards. You pull out one card and it falls."

He said the city needs to be looking at a sustainable 5-star marina for the next 50 years.

Fraise and Morris outlined how the marina would increase local sales tax revenue, while providing a quality of life improvement, increase tourism, help retain residents, and continue to showcase the forward movement of the community.

No formal action was taken on the project, but the council will have to take formal action at one point to direct the funding.



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