

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Wednesday, May 19, 2021 | 8 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 102



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Board extends Slater's contract

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater was awarded a 3-year extension of her contract Monday night.

The board had extended the contract by only one year in 2020, through the 2021 school year after not voting on a contract extension in 2019.

The new contract will pay Slater, who will be starting her sixth year with the



SLATER

district with the new contract, \$187,709 per year for the next three years.

As has been done in past contracts with Slater, the district will also be buying seven of the superintendent's 25 days of paid vacation at \$2,000 per day. With the \$14,000 added on to the compensation package, Slater will make \$201,709.95 annually through the 2023-24 school year.

The new rate represents a pay increase of \$4,040 per year or 2.2%.

The district also pays full premiums on a family insurance plan with a \$1,000 deductible, all vision and dental insurance, and \$100,000 of life insurance.

The board conducted a closed session evaluation of Slater's performance earlier this month.

The motion to approve Slater's contract was passed unanimously without discussion.

HOLY TRINITY

HTC hires Bautista for elementary

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – It wasn't the new state-of-the-art building that drew her here. It was the sense of family and community in the Holy Trinity Catholic educational community.

But the new facility certainly didn't hurt.

"I'm used to working with whatever has been given to me, but it's nice. I'm not gonna complain," said Holy Trinity Catholic's newly hired Elementary Principal Amy Kies Bautista.

The Jessup, Iowa native comes to the Holy Trinity system with more than 12 years teaching and a stint in the corporate world having worked for Boeing in Seattle.

Her most recent post was Athletic Director and physical education instructor at Isaac Newton Christian Academy in Cedar Rapids. Prior to that she taught in Houston, Texas, and Seattle.

She and her husband, Jason, moved back to Iowa with their four sons, Zian, Zachary, Xavier, Zander to be closer to family. The couple also has a daughter who was born into heaven.

Bautista has practiced Catholicism her whole life and was looking for a position where she could go more in depth into her faith.

"I've always had a very sincere drawing and feeling that I should be within the Catholic education. And I've missed it, especially doing non-denominational teaching. We teach Biblical truth, but we don't get to get into the depth and the traditions of Catholicism and that's what I miss," Bautista said.

After earning her undergraduate degree at Iowa State University, Bautista went on to get a Master's of Science degree in Physical Education/Curriculum from Eastern Illinois University and now is



BAUTISTA



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

HTC senior Ali Robu signs her national letter of intent to play golf at Mt. Mercy University in Cedar Rapids Tuesday at Holy Trinity with her parents, right, and new coach on the left. See story in today's SPORTS.

STIMULUS MONEY

Fort Madison, Lee County await close to \$4M in funds

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Plans are being carefully considered for nearly \$4 million that will be coming into Fort Madison and Lee County next month.

Fort Madison is expected to get about half of a \$1.43 million federal stimulus allocation under the American Rescue Plan signed by President Joe Biden in March. Lee County supervisors are expecting half of \$6.54 million.

Fort Madison City Manager David

Varley said Fort Madison is categorized as a non-entitlement city and its funds, along with funds to other Lee County incorporated cities such as Keokuk, Donnellson and West Point, will come

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WEATHER

WED 19 May.....Light Rain, 71° F / 62° F
 THU 20 May.....Light Rain, 75° F / 60° F
 FRI 21 May.....Rain, 73° F / 65° F

OpenWeatherMap

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 05/17.....18 29 32 40 44, Lucky Ball: 16
 PICK 3 05/17 MIDDAY.....708
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Obituaries/Lee County News

OBITUARIES

DANIEL K. AYER

Daniel Keith Ayer, 56, of LaHarpe, Illinois, passed away Sunday, May 16, 2021 at the UnityPoint – Memorial Hospital in Carthage.

Dan was born on April 4, 1965 in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of Ronald and Janet (Morgan) Ayer. On December 28, 1985 he married Lisa Grider. They later divorced. On October 19, 2015 he married Shaila Oaks. She survives.



AYER

Dan was raised in Emden, Missouri and graduated from North Shelbyville High School. Following high school Dan attended Northeast Missouri University before transferring to Western Illinois University to complete his Bachelors Degree. He later returned to Western Illinois University to receive his Masters Degree.

Dan touched the lives of many children throughout his career in education. He worked as a Camp Counselor for disabled children, bus driver, custodian, 1:1 aide, Special Education Teacher and was currently serving as Principal for the Nauvoo-Colusa CSD 325.

Outside of school Dan was a man of many talents. He enjoyed playing the guitar, bass, banjo, ukulele and singing. He played in the bands Boulevard, Lemmings and Ayer & Oaks. He also installed, sanded and finished many hardwood floors and recently began creating stained glass.

Dan's hobbies included riding his motorcycle and boating.

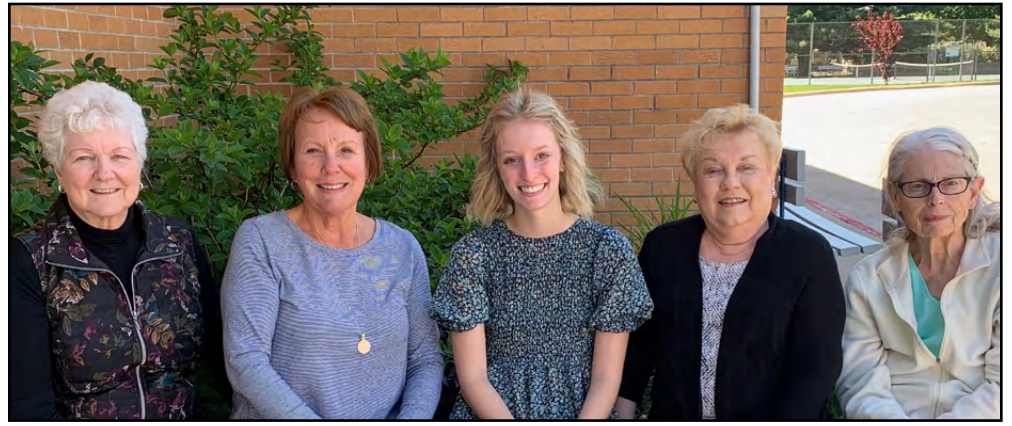
Survivors include his wife: Shaila; his father: Ron Ayer of Overland Park, Kansas; three sons: Tyler (Allison McKenzie) Ayer of Chico, California, Nate Ayer and Brandon Ayer both of LaHarpe; two step children: Hallie Draughan of LaHarpe and Brandon Wright of Morton, Illinois; one grandchild: Harlee and two step-grandchildren: Grace and Brendon. Also surviving is one sister: Deb (Craig) Antovoni of Stilwell, Kansas.

Dan was preceded in death by his mother: Janet.

A memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m. Saturday, May 22, 2021 at the Nauvoo-Colusa CSD 325 School Gymnasium with Pastor Maxinne Dennison officiating, followed by a visitation with the family until 5:00 p.m.

A memorial fund has been established for the Gift of Hope Organ & Tissue Donor Network. Banks & Beals Funeral Home is assisting the family.

To leave a condolence for the family, please visit Dan's obituary at banksand-beals.com.



Courtesy Photo

The Nancy Wagner Memorial Scholarship this year is awarded to Ava Peitz of Holy Trinity High School. This scholarship honors the memory of Nancy Wagner, a long time and beloved member of P.E.O., Chapter KV in Fort Madison. Nancy was vitally interested in the education of female students and funded this scholarship in order to help further the education of a Fort Madison female student. Ava will attend the University of Iowa to study nursing. Chapter KV is very proud to be able to award this scholarship.

WP Club to host summer farmers markets

WEST POINT - The West Point Community Club will be hosting a series of farmers markets this summer. They will be held once a month in the beautiful town square from 8am-12pm. The first market will be held June 12th. The markets will feature handmade goods, local produce, crafts and food vendors. Many businesses along the square will also have their doors open throughout the event.

Niki Fraise, WPCCC President, says "West Point is a bustling little town, we wanted to add another event as a way to bring the community out and together, and nothing beats a great market in the summertime!"

Formed in 1957, the West Point Community Club Inc., was established to encourage the civic, commercial and industrial development of the City of West Point

Additional markets will be held in July and August (exact dates TBD). The June 12th market coincides with West Point City Yard Sales. If interested in becoming a vendor, contact Niki at nikifraise@gmail.com.

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W-2319024 11/18

Obituaries/Lee County News

OBITUARIES

LORENE M. WHEELER

Lorene M. Wheeler, 93, of West Point, Iowa, passed away at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, May 15, 2021, at the Kensington in Fort Madison, Iowa.

She was born on November 25, 1927, in rural West Point, Iowa, the daughter of Otto J. and Evelyn B. (Rauenbuehler) Moeller. On June 25, 1949, she married Gerald H. "Junior" Wheeler. He preceded her in death on June 28, 2010.



WHEELER

She is survived by five daughters: Linda (Ron) McGuire of Shueyville, Iowa, Jan (Jeff) Beard of Gainesville, Florida, Sandy (Gene) Mehmert of St. Paul, Iowa, Cindy (Dave) Hines of Mt. Prospect, Illinois and Angie (Leroy) Wagner of Waukee, Iowa; son-in-law: Brad Vandenberg of Donnellson, Iowa; twelve grandchildren; seven great grandchildren; one sister: Velda Vonderhaar of West Point, Iowa; three sisters-in-law: Helen Moeller of West Point, Iowa, Joan Menke of West Point, Iowa and Barbara Stanaway of West Des Moines, Iowa. Also surviving are several nieces, nephews, cousins and her Kensington family.

She was preceded in death by her husband: Gerald; daughter: Sue Vandenberg; one grandchild: Jack Beard; one brother: Clarence Moeller, one brother: Marvin in infancy and one brother-in-law: Gene Vonderhaar.

Lorene was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church, the Altar and Rosary Society of the church the Daughter's of Isabella and Boots & Umbrellas Card Club. She enjoyed bowling (was in the West Point Palm Bowl Hall of Fame), playing cards, flowers, gardening and most of all, her grandchildren and family. Friends may call after 1:00 p.m. Wednesday, May 19, 2021, at Schmitz Funeral Home in West Point where the family will receive friends from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. A parish rosary will be recited at 4:30 p.m. and a Christian wake service will be held at 6:30 p.m. at the funeral home.

A Mass of Christian burial will be held at 12:30 p.m. Thursday, May 20, 2021, at St. Mary's Catholic Church in West Point with Father Dennis Hoffman as celebrant. Mass will be live streamed on the church Facebook page and posted on her obituary "Tribute Wall" on our website following the service at: www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

Burial will be at Calvary Cemetery.

A memorial has been established in her memory for St. Mary's Catholic Church for building maintenance.

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

ISU Extension to host farm estate program

DONNELSON - ISU Extension and Outreach of Lee County is hosting a Farm Estate/Farm Succession Planning Meeting on Wednesday, June 16 starting at 5:30 pm at the Lee County Extension Office in Donnellson (414 North Main Street). A light meal will be provided at 5:00 pm. This meeting is an introduction to farm estate planning, an exercise to get things started.

Charles Brown, ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Specialist, will discuss the top estate planning mistakes and the information your attorney or team will need to start preparing your estate plan.

Charles states, "Too many people procrastinate, thinking there is always tomorrow. Sometimes tomorrow comes sooner than expected." We want everyone

to be informed and able to make educated decisions.

This class is free to Lee County residents; please contact the Lee County Extension Office at (319)835-5116 to register. The registration fee is \$20 for non-residents of Lee County. Registration will close on June 11 at noon.

ISU Extension and Outreach is part of an educational network supported by Iowa State University, local county governments, and the United States Department of Agriculture. ISU Extension and Outreach works to provide learning opportunities for citizens of Iowa by providing unbiased, research-based information that will improve quality of life.



OBITUARIES

BRUCE E. BROOKS

Bruce Edwin Brooks, 63 of Keokuk, IA died Sunday, May 16, 2021 at the Mississippi Valley Healthcare Center in Keokuk, IA.

He was born March 21, 1958 in Keokuk, IA the son of Edwin and Betty Elder Brooks.



BROOKS

Bruce was a member of the Musicians Union in Nashville. He loved playing traditional country music and was an amazing self-taught steel guitarist. Bruce had played with numerous bands over the years most notably Ronnie Milsap and Johnny Paycheck. He performed throughout the country at well-known venues including the Grammys, the Kennedy Center and numerous times at the Grand Old Opry in Nashville, TN.

Bruce enjoyed drag racing, traditional country music and playing cards. Most of all he enjoyed spending time with his family.

He is survived by his parents, Edwin and Betty Brooks of Canton, Missouri, three daughters, Jenny Mueller (Tyler) of Farmington, Iowa, Sarah Cameron of Kahoka, Missouri and Gretchen Eaton of Keokuk, Iowa, four grandchildren, Ian Martin, Jera Wilson, Luke Wilson and Kinley Eaton, two sisters, Missy Brooks of Canton, Missouri and Suzi Brooks-White (JR) of Revere, Missouri, three brothers, Brian Brooks of Bedford, Indiana, Rob Brooks (Mary) of Alexandria, Missouri and Quentin Brooks (Darci) of California, along with many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Farold and Leta Brooks and Ben and Iva Elder.

Visitation will be held from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., Saturday, May 22 at the Vigen Memorial Home in Kahoka, Missouri with the family meeting with friends at that time.

A funeral service will be held at 1 p.m., Saturday, at the Vigen Memorial Home in Kahoka, Missouri. Burial will be in the Chambersburg Cemetery.

Memorials may be made to the family.

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



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Sports/Health News

Robu advances to Region 5 finals

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Holy Trinity Catholics Ali Robu is having a week.

Not only did the Crusader qualify for regionals after carding a 96 at Deerwood Golf Club in New London Monday, but she signed a national letter of intent to play the sport for Mt. Mercy University in Cedar Rapids on Tuesday.

Robu's 96 was fourth behind New London's Taylor Phillips and Sophie Mallott. Phillips shot a 90 on her home course for medalist honors, while Mallott was a stroke behind at 91.

Danville's Natalie Wilcox carded a 94 for third at the Region 5A competition at Deerwood.

Robu put up pars on Hole 7 on the front nine, and Hole 6 playing as the 15th hole on the 9-hole course.

She said the conditions weren't the greatest for scoring, but everyone was up against the same thing.

"First round of regionals was definitely pretty difficult conditions. Super rainy, super wet. I would say it rained or spit on us 14 of the 18 holes," Robu said.

"I ended up with a 96 which is alright – not the best I've had, but I'm satisfied with it. It got me in the top four and you had to be in the top six to advance."

The Region 5 finals will be played at New Sharon's Prairie Knolls Country Club, a course Robu is unfamiliar with but may play into her strength.

"I haven't been up there to play it yet, but I'm hoping to get up there before hand. Hopefully I'll have success and move on to state but I guess we'll find out Monday," she said.

The top six golfers will advance to the state meet at Ames Golf & Country Club.

"I've heard there are some blind t-shots where you don't have full knowledge of where you're hitting. I can hit longer drives so I want to use that to my advantage and be looking at a short second shot. It looks to be a pretty short course though," Robu said.

With the student body in attendance, Robu thanked them and the staff for the support.

"I've had a pretty good season and definitely felt love and support from the staff and the students. I'm excited to continue my athletic and academic career at Mt. Mercy it seems to be a great school."

Robu won the Southeast Iowa Superconference meet on May 10 with a 90 at Sheaffer Memorial Golf Course, the Crusaders home course, edging Phillips by one shot and Wilcox by six.

FM's Teague Smith moves on to USA freestyle 16U nationals

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison wrestler Teague Smith has qualified for the 16U USA Wrestling Freestyle National Tournament being held July 17-19 in Fargo, ND.

Competing for the Pickford Wrestling Club, Smith placed 3rd in the 170 lb. division at the Iowa State Freestyle Tournament held at Southeast Polk HS on Saturday to qualify. He went 3-1 on the day with his only loss coming to Theron Castle out of Moen Wrestling Academy on a tiebreaker.

Despite having the same points, Smith gave up a 4-point move in the match which was criteria used in determining the winner.

Smith won by tech falls over Justin Wirtz, 10-0 in the consolation bracket; Isaiah Kellow 11-1 in the consolation semis and Nicklas Martin 12-2 in the 3rd-place match.

FMHS Hall of Honor inducts three alumni

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison High School Alumni Hall of Honor was established to recognize alumni who have distinguished themselves based upon elements of academic excellence and achievement, career accomplishments, community service, personal excellence, and a dedication to lifelong learning.

The Hall of Honor Committee selected three Distinguished Alumnus that they feel have contributed over and above expectations.

This year's inductees are Paul Schulte class of 1994, Bobbie Moline-Kramer class of 1964 and Christopher Smith class of 1997.

Alumni Hall of Honor Award recipients will be honored at a reception and award presentation on Wednesday, May 19th at the high school at 5 p.m. in the High School Media Center.

If you know of someone who fits the criteria for the Hall, please ask the high school office for a nomination form, visit the website at www.fmcsd.org to access one, or send us an email at HallofHonor@fmcsd.org.

FMCH to hold Medicare seminar on May 25

FORT MADISON - Are you going to be eligible for Medicare in the near future? Have you been on Medicare for awhile and want to better understand what it offers? Do you have a family member you help with Medicare issues?

"Welcome to Medicare" is for you! This two hour seminar will be held Tuesday, May 25, 2021 starting at 5:30 p.m. It will be presented by Great River Health SHIIP counselor with support from the FMCH SHIIP counselors. The seminar will be held in the FMCH Business Center Conference Rooms. Participants can enter through the Business Center doors and be screened for COVID-19. Masks will be required.

"Welcome to Medicare" will cover Medicare Part A and Part B benefits, the prescription drug benefit (Part D), Medicare Advantage plans and Medicare supplement insurance. For more information or questions call 319-768-3342.

SHIIP, the Senior Health Insurance Information Program, is a service of the State of Iowa. SHIIP counselors are trained by the state and do not sell or promote any insurance companies, policies or agents. Fort Madison Community Hospital is a local sponsor for SHIIP in Lee County.

Lee County Health Department Drive-thru COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

Tuesday, May 18
4:00pm-7:00pm

First Christian Church
3476 Main Street, Keokuk

Saturday, May 22
8:00am-Noon

Lee County Health Department
#3, John Bennett Drive, Fort Madison

No appointment necessary

Moderna & Johnson and Johnson vaccine will be available

The vaccine is **FREE** to anyone 18 years and older.

Paperwork is located on LCHD website (www.leecountyhd.org). Everyone is encouraged to have paperwork filled out prior to arriving at the clinic.

For more information visit www.leecountyhd.org or the LCHD Facebook page.

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Sports/From the Front

State unions remove all restrictions for weekend track championships

DES MOINES – Attendance limitations have been removed for this week's Iowa High School State Track & Field Championships following updated public health guidance and coordination with Drake University and Polk County Health Department.

The three-day IHSAA and IGHSAA meet at Drake Stadium will be open to all interested spectators, cancelling capacity and seating restrictions announced May 4.

"Throughout the pandemic, our number one priority for hosting athletic events has been the safety of our athletes, staff, spectators, and our community. In doing so, we have followed guidance from the CDC, the Iowa Department of Public Health, the Polk County Health Department, the NCAA, and our own administration," Drake University athletic director Brian Hardin said. "Recently released CDC guidelines encouraged us to consult with these partners and revisit stadium capacity. We look forward to once again welcoming the best high school athletes our state has to offer to compete on the world-famous Blue Oval in front of all their family and friends who wish to attend."

Masks are strongly encouraged of all spectators

at this event, especially in common areas such as concourses, concession stand lines, and restrooms. Per CDC guidance, unvaccinated people should continue taking safety precautions before and while attending gatherings, such as wearing masks.

Polk County Health Department reminds spectators the safest way to attend any event is to be vaccinated. A mobile vaccination clinic will be located in the Drake Stadium concourse all three days of the meet. The Pfizer vaccine will be administered by members of Drake University's College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, and Polk County Health Department. Anyone age 12 or older wishing to receive a vaccination will be able to do so.

The meet schedule will remain as previously planned, with six sessions taking place over three days, May 20-22. Drake Stadium will not be cleared between sessions.

"We appreciate Drake University and Polk County Health considering the latest CDC guidance in working to provide an opportunity for all fans to attend the IHSAA and IGHSAA State Track & Field Meet," IHSAA executive director Tom Keating said. "Competing at the Blue Oval is a dream of every high school track and

field athlete. Now our student-athletes will compete in front of family, friends, classmates and other fans from across the state."

Tickets for all six sessions will go on sale at 12 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18. Tickets already purchased through qualifying participants are still good for their assigned sessions.

A free video livestream is available through the Iowa High School Sports Network for those who are unable to attend.

The attendance adjustments will allow for participating teams to view the meet from seating areas inside Drake Stadium. Coaches and student-athletes will be permitted in the stadium during all events of their assigned sessions.

Class 2A and Class 3A boys and girls will compete in early sessions each day. Class 1A, Class 4A, and Wheelchair boys and girls competitors will be in the later session each day.

Teams are encouraged to set up camps in the previously mapped area east of the tennis center, however the video board will no longer be utilized. Lot 17, outside Drake Fieldhouse, will be reserved as a warm-up space.

Iowa native takes HTC post

BAUTISTA - Continued from Page 1

close to obtaining a Master's of Arts in Educational Leadership from the University of Northern Iowa.

Bautista will officially begin her new role as principal on July 1, 2021. Craig Huebner will continue to serve as the Chief Administrative Officer of Holy Trinity Catholic Schools as well as the Principal of Holy Trinity Catholic Junior High/Senior High School.

Huebner said he's looking forward to working with Bautista and having her positive energy, her commitment to our students, and her dedication to God add to the strong tradition of excellence at Holy Trinity Catholic Schools.

Bautista said the sense of community she gleaned from the interview process is what sold her on moving her family to this area.

"What played into the decision the most was the community, and the people that interviewed me, and getting the sense that this was a very hometown feeling where everybody comes together," she said.

One of her first priorities will be helping all the teachers at the elementary come back together after

COVID and losing former principal Michael Sheerin.

Sheerin resigned from his position abruptly in October after 35 years in the Fort Madison Aquinas and Holy Trinity Catholic systems.

"We have a lot of new teachers at Holy Trinity Elementary and I want to make it a very solid transition," Bautista said.

"Especially for the teachers still there that lost their principal from last year. That was very hard emotionally and then on top of that with COVID. Really just taking the time to mend and get that feeling together, building that family and that trust with each other."

She said a large meeting was held Tuesday to look at summer plans and roles everyone will be playing going forward.

"I am excited to be the new Elementary Principal at Holy Trinity Catholic Schools and look forward

to weaving our Catholic identity into our academic curriculum. My vision is to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to strengthen our Catholic faith and the rigorous academics Holy Trinity already possesses as well as developing new opportunities to enrich our school, parishes, and students."

In a related hiring, Savannah Strunk was hired as director of the Early Childhood Centers effective July 1. Current director Stefanie Drollinger has accepted a position as a kindergarten teacher beginning in August.

Strunk has been a former Child Care supervisor at the center since 2016 and has a degree in Elementary Education.

Holy Trinity operates two Early Childhood Centers, one in Fort Madison for children ages 2 to 10 and the other in West Point offering programs for children ages 3 to 5.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE OPEN HOUSE

The City of West Point, Iowa will hold an open house for the Iowa Economic Development Authority to present to the public their finding from a "Downtown Walk Around" studying the commercial businesses surrounding

the City Square. Presentation will be at Sonny's Supermarket Other Side at 327 5th Street, Thursday, May 20th @ 2:30 pm. The presentation is expected to last less than an hour.

telephone, dial (312) 626 6799 and enter the meeting ID (870 1856 1063) when prompted. If you have trouble connecting to the meeting, please call (319) 372-5721.

- I. Excused absences
- II. Approval of Agenda
- III. Public Comments IV. Approval of minutes
 - a. Regular Meeting April 18
 - V. Approval of the Bills

f. Facilities - landscaping

g. Professional Aarin Guzman Request Update

VIII. Unfinished Business

- a. Time Clock Policy
- IX. New Business
 - a. Bridges Renewal
 - b. Review Laptop Policy
 - c. Review Mask Requirement in the Library
 - d. Election of Officers
 - e. American Rescue Plan Act Library Grants
 - f. Sandrock donation
 - X. Trustee Education
 - a. Trustee Handbook
 - b. Annual Calendar of Events
 - c. Board By-Laws
 - XI. Upcoming Events
 - a. Summer Reading

begins June 1

Next Meeting, Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 5:30.

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Date: Thursday, May 20, 2021
Time: 5:30 P.M.
Place: Sheaffer Meeting Room and Online

5:30pm, Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees, in-person or electronic

Electronic Meeting (Pursuant to Iowa Code Section 21.8)

An electronic meeting is being held because a meeting in person is impossible or impractical for the health and safety of Library Board members, library employees and the public presented by COVID-19. You can participate in the meeting via telephone and can comment on an agenda item by joining the Zoom meeting. Using your

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To apply, download an application from our county website, www.leecounty.org or request one from the Conservation Office, and return your completed application, along with a resume and cover letter to: Lee County Conservation Attn: Nathan Unsworth, 2652 Hwy 61, Montrose, IA 52639, or email to nunsworth@leecounty.org. All applications are due by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, June 4, 2021.

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From the Front

County may sit on federal stimulus funds for now

PLAN - Continued from Page 1

out of a \$1.4 billion allocation to the state.

The state has 30 days after receiving the funds to pass it along to local governments, but Varley said they could ask for an additional 30-day extension. He said Fort Madison probably won't see the first payment until the middle of June. The second payment is expected in 12 months.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds and the Republican-controlled legislature have indicated they are going to carefully weigh the allocations and uses of the funds. At one point Reynolds was considering returning the funds.

Twelve of Iowa's largest cities including Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Ames, Iowa City and others will receive money directly from the federal government as 'essential cities'. Des Moines is getting the largest allocation at just under \$95 million. Polk County also received \$95 million.

But Varley said aside from a hit to the Hotel/Motel tax fund, the city really didn't lose revenue during the pandemic because Internet sales seems to have made up the difference, road use taxes were better than the state had projected, and people were able to pay their property taxes.

"I can't sit here today and tell you we've lost money due to the pandemic," Varley said Tuesday.

"What seemed to happen was enough people did online shopping that sales tax came in higher than we thought. That's people continuing to buy through Wal-Mart or other places online. They were staying inside but still buying and that's kicked in.

"Because of that, revenue is up and property taxes have been stable because people, generally, make good on their property taxes."

The city budgeted \$208,000 in hotel/motel tax revenue for the entire year in the current budget. Even if the city lost half that revenue it would be about \$100,000. The first payment expected from the state will total about \$715,000.

Language in the ARP package outlines what the money can be used for which includes COVID mitigation efforts, public health initiatives, and some infrastructure improvements around roads, bridges and broadband infrastructure.

Varley has indicated the city will probably use the money on infrastructure improvements.

On Monday, Lee County officials discussed the incoming payment that they will get directly from the federal government.

Budget Director Cindy Renstrom said the program requires the money be allocated by the end of 2024 and spent by Dec. 31, 2026.

Auditor Denise Fraise said the money can be put in an interest-bearing account while the county determines the best way to spend it.

"We can put it in an interest-bearing account. We found that out last week, so we might as well sit on it for a bit," Fraise said.

Lee County Supervisors have set up a committee to consider how to best utilize the stimulus money.

"We still have the board formed that Gary (Seyb) and I are on for how we're going to disperse it. We've said all along we're waiting to see guidelines for what we can spend it on," Supervisor Ron Fedler said Monday.

"Also, we don't want to get spend crazy early. We've got til 2024. We need to make sure we do it right, because if we violate one of the rules, the federal government will want it back."

The committee will look at what expenditures would qualify and filter out what won't, and then report back to the full board of supervisors.

Each state got a \$500 million even distribution and then additional funding based on the state's unemployment rate. Iowa's supplemental unemployment distribution totaled \$981 million, the 16th lowest in the nation. California received the largest unemployment distribution at \$26.5 billion.

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