

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Friday, January 8, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 14



www.pencitycurrent.com

OCT. 11, 2020: Area loses Zephan Abel after weeks-long cardiac battle

23,981- views, 5,299 engagements

LOOKING BACK ON 2020

City sees losses at many levels

Editor's Note:
See ya 2020.

There was little to smile about in 2020 and the loss of our beautiful Kelsey made this past year at times insurmountable, unbearable, and improbable - often all at the same time.

But pressing on we managed to continue to provide local coverage of the events that matter most to you.

From crime, politics and business, to sports, obituaries, and yes, health, we put together 224 E-editions, while maintaining 24/7 website traffic and social media channels.



VANDBERG

Each year as we start the new year we look back at the news and events that shaped the lives of those in north Lee County.

The coronavirus will carry a heavy presence editorially this year. With daily reports on 14-day positivity rates, and the actions taken at all levels of government to help the public stay clear of the virus that is being connected to almost 4,000 deaths in Iowa alone in 2020 took up a lot of column inches this year.

We've lost loved ones, watched others suffer from afar, and heard the heroic tales of the front line health care professionals.

We've written about schools scrambling to serve the interests of not just students and staff, but families across Lee County.

And we've seen the gaping holes the virus has uncovered in our ability to stay connected in and between our rural communities.

The criteria for selecting the stories is based on Google analytics and social media traction on a month-to-month basis. We will combine two months per issue for the next six issues.

Current news will continue to be posted on our website and social media channels.

We hope you enjoy looking back on the year with us as we usher in a new year with a glance to regressing coronavirus and the peace that should follow along.

We thank you for your patronage and wish you a wonderful new year.

Gone too soon

BY PCC STAFF



Zephan William Abel - Feb. 3, 2004 to Oct. 11, 2020

Zephan Abel, a 16-year-old from Fort Madison, died on Oct. 11 after complications from a pulmonary condition and procedure. Abel was an avid performer with an infectious smile and personality. He was a Central Lee student heavily involved with Old Fort Players, Elliott Test Kitchen, Illiniwek Archeology and Great River Players. He served on the Youth Advisory Council at U of I Stead Family Children's Hospital.

He made better the lives the thousands he touched.

TOP STORY - 31,783- views, 5,969 engagements

Siemens-Gamesa lays off 130 at FM facility

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Siemens-Gamesa officials confirmed Monday morning that approximately 130 employees have been laid off.

A spokesperson for the company confirmed the announcement and said the decision didn't come lightly.

"On September 14, Siemens Gamesa notified employees at its Iowa wind turbine blade manufacturing facility that we are reducing the workforce by approximately 130. We do not take this decision lightly, but we must adapt to the demands of the market and meet our customers' needs in an ever-changing environment," the spokesperson said in an email to the Pen City Current.

rent.

"We appreciate the professionalism and dedication of our valued employees, and we will assist them during this time of transition."

Lee County Economic Development President Dennis Fraise said, even the light of the announced closing of Bagcraft next month, there are still plenty of good paying jobs in Lee County.

SEPT. 3, 2020 - 19,444- views, 4,382 engagements

Lee County Board of Health gives nod to public mask mandate

PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – The Lee County Board of Health voted Thursday morning to create a regulation requiring masks be worn in public by all county residents.

The move was approved unanimously after a lengthy discussion among board members, and Lee County Attorney Ross Braden at the board's regular meeting.

Braden told he board he wasn't advocating for any position on the masks, but was there to help answer legal questions regarding

a mandate.

Lee County Health Department Administrator Michele Ross said she recommended issuing a position statement that all county residents be "requested" to wear masks while out in public. LCHD issued a similar position statement advising against any large scale events back in August.

"My opinion is that if we start with a position statement and release it from the Board of Health, then we don't have to do the (legal requirements)," Ross said.

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap

FRI 08 Jan Overcast, 30° F/ 24° F
SAT 09 Jan Overcast, 27° F/ 21° F
SUN 10 Jan Broken Clouds, 27° F/ 18° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 01/06.....4 8 17 25 44, Star Ball: 6, All Star Bonus: 2
PICK 3 01/06 MIDDAY.....4 3 9
PICK 3 01/06 EVENING.....7 4 6
PICK 4 01/06 MIDDAY.....9 3 3 2
PICK 4 01/06 EVENING.....8 2 8 2
POWERBALL 01/06.....1 20 22 60 66, Powerball: 3, Power Play: 3

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

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Tawnya K. Ammer
Reva Marlene Anderson
David A. Andrews
Ronald David "Dave"
Andrews, Jr.
Carmen Arnold
Opal Jean "Nick" Arnold
Delene Rae Atterberg
Danny C Bailey
Mary "Lucille" Bailey
Nancy Mae Baker
Verlin Morris Baker
Richard W. Baldwin
Wayne E. Ball
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Warren "Barney" Barnum
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It's Black & White and Read all over

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

SEPT. 30, 2020 - 8,705 views, 597 engagements

City loses Morawitz to cancer

FORT MADISON - Robert C. Morawitz, 64, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 8:23 a.m. on Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at the Great River Hospice House in West Burlington, IA.

He was born on May 2, 1956, in Burlington, IA, to Harold C. & Bettie Lowe Morawitz. On November 24, 1994, he married Beverly Owens Gobble in Fort Madison, IA. He had served in the US Navy for 6 years during the Vietnam era. He was an electrician with the IBEW Local #13.



MORAWITZ

He had many interests in his years, including National Insulator Association, City Preservation Commission, Old Settlers Association, North Lee County Historical Society, Second Ward Councilman for the City of Fort Madison and was heavily involved in the Lee County Democratic Party, receiving the Steve Ireland Award, the Eppers-O'Malley Award and the Democrat of Distinction Award from the Lee County Democrats. He was the Fort Madison 2019 Citizen of the Year and was a collector of everything.

Survivors include his wife, Bev Gobble of Fort Madison, IA; 5 stepsons: Gregory (Janice) Gobble of West Point, IA, Jeffery (Elizabeth) Gobble of Buena Vista, CO, Kevin (Jayne) Gobble of Wever, IA, Eric (Cheryl) Gobble of Lutz, FL & Timothy (Kriisti) Gobble of Fort Madison, IA; 13-grandchildren; 11-great grandchildren; 1-brother: Roy "Skip" (Elora) Morawitz of Plattsburgh, NE; 2 sisters: Joyce (Kenny) Johnson of Burlington, IA, & Beverly Heath of Web City, MO and several nieces & nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Bob's body has been donated to science at the University of Iowa Hospitals in Iowa City. No services are planned at this time. A memorial has been established for the North Lee County Historical Society-Old Fort Madison Battlefield Site and contributions may be mailed to: Tim Gobble, 1114 Avenue F, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Online condolences to Bob's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.king-lynk.com. King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory is assisting the family.

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SEP. 14, 2020 - 11,752 views, 2,761 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

President Donald Trump supporters took to the waters of the Mississippi River on Sept. 13, 2020 in Fort Madison. A boat rally made its way from Burlington down to the Fort Madison Marina in support of the president's re-election bid.

SEP. 14, 2020 - 11,752 views, 2,761 engagements

Thieves break into, damage PAW shelter

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – The Lee County Sheriff's department is investigating a break-in at PAW animal shelter in Fort Madison overnight.

According to PAW Director Sandy Brown, said security camera cables were cut and the entrance was broken into.

She said the suspect(s) broke into the facility after damaging the security system and stole the safe.

"Anyone who has written us a check in the last two weeks should contact their bank," Brown said in a message to Pen City Current Friday morning.

Brown said it doesn't appear any of the animals were hurt or taken during the break-in.

May the timeless message of Christmas fill your heart and home with joy now and throughout the coming year.

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAPPY NEW YEAR

From all of us at Holy Trinity Catholic Schools

HOLY TRINITY
H·T·C
CATHOLIC



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Parents and grandparents were on hand at Shug's Tiny Town & Educational Toys Sunday for a sneak peak at the new store's new play center.

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

OCT. 25, 2020 - 8,958 views, 3,099 engagements

One killed, 17 injured in Nauvoo hayrack accident

BY PCC STAFF

NAUVOO – A 32-year-old female from Hamilton was killed as a result of Saturday hayrack ride accident near Nauvoo.

According to an Illinois State Police preliminary investigation a 1994 green John Deere tractor/trailer combination was traveling northbound on 800 East towing a double-axle trailer with more than 20 people riding on square hay bales.

The vehicle, driven by Wayne York, 41, of Nauvoo, lost control and ran off the east side of 800 East near 2000 North and overturned and the driver was ejected. Multiple passengers were ejected from the trailer.

In addition the fatality, 17 other were taken to area hospitals with injuries including: Michael E. Davidson 43, Hamilton, Ill., Ashley Davidson 36-Hamilton, and Jessica N. Little 41 of Hamilton.

The other 14 injuries were to juveniles from Hamilton who are all transported with injuries, including a 1-year-old, a 3-year-old, two 4-year-olds, a 5-year-old, an 8-year-old, a 9-year-old, a 10-year-old and six 12-year-olds all from Hamilton.

Two other juveniles one from Warsaw and the other from Basco were not injured in the accident.

York was issued a citation for failure to reduce speed to avoid an accident.

SEPT. 10, 2020 - 5,048 views, 747 engagements

Suspect sought after stealing Hancock County cruiser

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – An 18-year old man is being sought by local law enforcement after crashing a Hancock County sheriff's cruise and fleeing on foot in Keokuk.

Hancock County Sheriff, Scott Bentzinger reported that on Wednesday at about 11 p.m. a deputy stopped a car driven by Ethan Walte, near Broadway and 8th Street in Hamilton,

Illinois.

Walte was arrested on a felony warrant from Iowa for Violation of Probation for Burglary.

SEP. 14, 2020 - 12,250 views, 1,648 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Gregory fire

FM firefighters responded to a fire in the ventilation systems at Gregory Manufacturing in September. Smoke was coming from the west side of the building when firefighters arrived and they had to extinguish the fire inside the ventilation.

SEP. 15, 2020 - 7,605 views, 1,376 engagements

Board of Health holds public hearing on mask mandate

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Residents will have a chance to voice concerns over a proposed Lee County Board of Health regulation that would mandate masks in certain public environments Wednesday morning.

The Lee County Board of Health approved moving forward with a facemask regulation at their last regular meeting. The move requires a public hearing and another vote of the board. That hearing will take place via teleconference at 7 a.m. Wednesday.

Lee County Health Department Administrator Michele Ross said the Board of Health agenda, following the public hearing, includes possible action regarding the regulation. If approved again by the Board of Health, a resolution would be sent to the Lee County Board of Supervisors for an up or down vote.

“There is an action item on the agenda to discuss, review, or revise to propose a regulation that’s been posted on our website and then they can take action to move to the Board of Supervisors or not,” Ross said.

“That will be done tomorrow.” Supervisor Rich Harlow said Iowa

Gov. Kim Reynolds has deemed facemask mandates unenforceable

“This mask mandate situation is a very emotional issue,” Harlow said.

“When you tell someone they have to do it, they really get their hackles up. I’m reading that Gov. Reynolds says it’s not enforceable. I’m also hearing that Sheriff Stacy Weber said it would be very difficult for him and his people to enforce.”

Supervisor Matt Pflug said it was important for people to fully understand what would be taking place. He said Johnson County has a similar Board of Health regulation in place and it’s working well.

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

SEPT. 29, 2020 - 8,809 views, 1,777 engagements

Donnellson vet returns home after six-month Covid battle

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – Jerry Krogmeier is a 71-year-old Marine who just fought the toughest battle of his life. Fortunately for him, he doesn't remember much about it. From April 10 through the beginning of June, Krogmeier was at the Veteran's Administration hospital with COVID-19. At one point he was given less than a 20% chance of survival.

Kim Krogmeier, Jerry's wife of the past 45 years, said that was a punch she wasn't ready for, and wanted to share Jerry's story with others so they didn't take the virus lightly.

Many who get infected from the novel coronavirus and develop COVID-19 experience what can safely be described as a very weak cold. Some only experience a loss of taste or smell and then go back to life after a few weeks. Some have no symptoms at all.

Jerry found the other side of that battle.

Jerry gets reacquainted with his cat upon his arrival home Friday after a nearly 160 days in hospitals and rehab centers following a battle with COVID-19. Courtesy photo.

"After two days I was told they had to put him on a ventilator and I should 'hope for the best,'" Kim said. "It was so fast... I wasn't ready for that."

She had taken Jerry to the VA Hospital toward the end of March when he wasn't feeling well. He was evaluated, and like so many others, was sent home because he wasn't sick enough to be admitted.

After several days when his symptoms worsened, Kim drove him back to the hospital where they admitted him on April 10 with COVID-19. Kim was sent home to self-quarantine for 14 days. She wasn't tested.

Two days later he was on a ventilator, in a coma, and was fighting for his life.

Jerry said he remembers nothing of the month and a half at the VA, but he recalls dreams of his wife.

Kim said the staff at the VA hospital were wonderful and called her every day, sometimes multiple times each day to keep her informed of the progress.



Courtesy photo

Jerry Krogmeier, 71, of Donnellson, gives a thumbs up for a photo at the one visit his wife Kim had during his five month battle with COVID-19. Krogmeier returned home on Friday.

OCT. 28, 2020 - 6,958 views, 914 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The No Tricks Just Treats event saw more than 1,000 vehicles come through the new location and was supposed to run from 5 to 8 p.m. but volunteers stayed until almost 10 p.m. handing out treats.

SEPT. 4, 2020 - 5,955 views, 1,562 engagements

County shuts Admin building due to COVID

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Due to a positive known COVID case at the Lee County Treasurer's office in the Fort Madison Administration Building, the office has been closed. The office was deep-cleaned

and will reopen pursuant at a time determined by public health and CDC guidance. Anyone who visited that office between the dates of August 24 and August 31, 2020 should contact their health care provider or go to www.testiowa.com to determine need for COVID testing.

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

SEPT. 21, 2020 - 7,156 views, 749 engagements

Folluo, Seyb Jr., faced off for Supervisor seat

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – There won't be a lack of passion on the supervisor's District 4 seat come November.

Incumbent Gary Folluo and Garry Seyb, Jr., are facing off Nov. 3 for the seat, and both candidates have had a loud voice for the people of the district and the county.

Seyb is looking for his first public election win, while Folluo is the incumbent and has been a part of Lee County's political scene for close to 12 years.

Seyb has been vocal and a regular call-in for the supervisor's regular board meeting and many special meetings since announcing his candidacy in March.

The retired National Guardsman and supervisor at the Mt. Pleasant Correctional Facility, has lent his voice to many issues including recent discussions around a potential county mask regulation, and the county's hearings on the ambulance service.

Folluo is looking for his fourth term as a Supervisor and was integral in putting together options for the county, when Lee County EMS hit financial struggles toward the end of 2019. Folluo has also been deeply involved in the county's economic development efforts as a liaison to the Lee County Economic Development Board and Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission.

He also served several terms as Keokuk's mayor and was the general manager at Keokuk's radio stations KOKX, KRNQ, KOOL oldies, and WCEZ.

Folluo said the impacts of the COVID virus and the county's move toward ownership of county ambulance services are two bigger issues facing supervisors.



SEYB, JR.



FOLLUO

SEPT. 12, 2020 - 8,115 views, 1,231 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Lines forming for Lynnwood BBQ on Fort Madison's west end. All the smells....! The new BBQ location opened with limited hours in September on the S Curve.

OCT. 20, 2020 - 5,974 views, 734 engagements

County approves shooting range north of FM

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – County officials gave a nod of support Tuesday morning to plan to open a shooting range north of Fort Madison.

The shooting range is planned to be located at 2958 County Road 103 about five minutes north of the city west of the airport.

Supervisors said they all received emails in support of the proposal submitted by Jim Seitz, of Seitz Firearms LLC.

The facility will be built on Seitz' property, according to a letter to Lee County Attorney Ross Braden in September.

Seitz is looking to sell firearms from his residence and construct a 140-yard range from shooting

positions to a 12-foot tall earthen berm south down range that is 12 feet wide at its base. A 12-foot by 24-foot wooden structure with a tin roof is also planned at the shooting position.

Seitz indicated there is an additional 40 to 50 acres of timber behind the berm, all within his property boundaries.

Seitz said he anticipates the range being open from 5 p.m. to dusk Monday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to dusk on the weekends.

Board Chairman Ron Fedler said the county received a stack of emails in support of the shooting range, and he had one phone call opposing it.

The measure passed unanimously.

In other action, the board passed

a resolution, 5-0, to authorize the county to enter into a loan agreement with Zion Bank Corp. of Salt Lake City for \$1.075 million on bonds for installation of a new digital camera system for Lee County Jail and repairs needed at other county facilities.

Supervisor Gary Folluo also reminded citizens that coronavirus case counts in Lee County are on the rise again and people need to be vigilant about wearing masks and taking recommended precautions such as frequent hand washing, sanitizing and social distancing.

"Nobody wants government intervention, but nobody wasn't people sick and dying either. Pay attention to what your doing and let's get through this as best we can," Folluo said.

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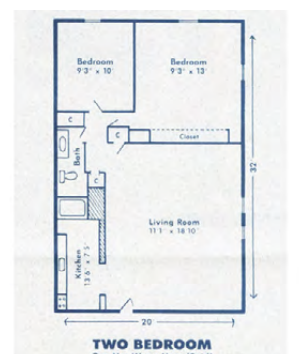
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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

SEPT. 25, 2020 - 6,807 views, 457 engagements

Bloodhounds get one of best starts in team's history

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

BURLINGTON – Its been many, many years since the Bloodhounds started the year 4-1.

Some coaches suggested 1869, but that may be a bit of an exaggeration. However, the Hounds 55-7 win over Burlington on Friday is no exaggeration.

The win sets up a potential clash with Mt. Pleasant at Richmond Stadium in Fort Madison next week. But the Panthers canceled their game with Keokuk this week, and have two losses on the year to Washington and Tipton.

Fort Madison was firing on pretty much all cylinders all night with the exception of a hiccup in the first series, when Greyhound quarterback Nolan Simpson appeared to be stuck for a short gain, but somehow emerged from a pile of Bloodhounds and raced 33 yards for a touchdown.

After that, it was a very buttoned-down Bloodhounds team in all aspects of the game.

“We got away from who we are and what we do,” said Head Coach Derek Doherty.

“On the second series Coach (Jason) Crooks did a phenomenal job and said, “You know what? We’re gonna abandon ship – we’re gonna go be us.”

And who they are is quickly becoming a team that capitalizes on small opportunities in big ways.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison senior Brock Califf (5) outraces everyone to the endzone in Friday's 55-7 win over Burlington. It was Califf's second kick-off return for a touchdown in two weeks.

After the Grayhound touchdown, senior Brock Califf, for the second time in two weeks, picked up a kick-off off the ground, and then busted a couple tackles and split the BHS kick off team to the left for an 88-yard touchdown run. He had a 76-yard return last week for a score.

“When it’s muffed they really don’t know what you’re going to do so you have the advantage. I saw an opening to the left and just took off and my team decided to block really well and it ended up being wide open,” Califf said.

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

OCT. 28, 2020 - 4,922 views, 1,273 engagements

Sheerin offers abrupt resignation from HTC system

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Holy Trinity Catholic Elementary Principal and Chief Academic Officer Michael Sheerin announced his retirement today effective Friday.

Sheerin wrote in a text to Pen City Current that this is a perfect ending to 35 years teaching students in southeast Iowa.

“My time spent with the students, staff, and teachers are some of the most rewarding times of my life,” Sheerin wrote.

A release from Holy Trinity Catholic system indicated Sheerin informed the board Wednesday that his last day will be this Friday.

“HTC is extremely grateful for Mr. Sheerin’s many years of service and dedication to Holy Trinity. He

was a tremendous part of HTC’s new state of the art elementary school, the creation of a 21st century classroom, and major upgrades in technology for our entire school system,” according to a release from Holy Trinity Wednesday afternoon.

The Holy Trinity school board will being an immediate search to fill the role of the Elementary Principal at the system’s brand new elementary school in West Point.

In the interim, Craig Huebner, will serve as the principal for kindergarten – 12th grades.

“HTC has a tremendous staff who will work with Mr. Huebner to ensure a smooth transition through this process,” the release indicated.

“HTC is confident that we will provide our students, teachers, and staff with a principal who will continue our tradition of excellence in education and a commitment to our Catholic Christian environment.”

Sheerin began his teaching career at Fort Madison Aquinas in 1985 and had teaching stints at Iowa Wesleyan College, Central Lee and Harmony school districts.

Sheerin was also the girls head varsity soccer coach and said he is stepping away from that as well, but said he will take those memories with him into retirement.

“A simple smile, gentle hug, consoling a worried or hurt child, talking a parent off of the cliff, losing a sprint to the girls soccer team, being humbled by a child’s words, witnessing the unsolicited generosity of parents and community for our small school system, all wrapped up with love make it a fitting journey’s end,” Sheerin wrote.

He moved to the United States in 1981 from Ireland, met his wife Shelley and the two have raised three daughters here.

OCT. 10, 2020 - 4,661 views, 1,330 engagements

Judge fines Humphrey on downtown building

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A southeast Iowa district judge has fined Bryan Humphrey \$150,000 and ordered him to get plans in order to either demolish his downtown Fort Madison building or make city-mandated repairs within six months.

The order was handed down on Sept. 25 after a 90-minute hearing on Sept. 22 in North Lee County Court.

Judge Michael Schilling suspended \$120,000 of the fine in lieu of Humphrey either demolishing the

building at 732 Avenue G in Fort Madison, or making repairs to the satisfaction of an engineer retained by the city.

The city has retained Michael Purol, a structural engineer with Poepping, Stone & Bach Associates out of Keokuk.

The order requires Humphrey to keep the westernmost parcel of the building vacant.

It also requires Humphrey to obtain permits to demolish the building by Oct. 31 or make all necessary repairs to bring the property into compliance with all applicable Fort Madison building codes within 180 days, which would be March 25, 2021.

SEPT. 1, 2020 - 5,656 views, 1,837 engagements

City to spend \$85K on FM marina, jetty wall

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials took steps Tuesday night to improve portions of the city’s marina at cost of about \$85,000.

After discussion on long-term visions for the marina, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld asked for a motion to approve repairs to the jetty wall, dredge the marina, and pay \$15,000 for a hydraulic study looking at water flows in and out of the marina.

Mohrfeld got pushback from Councilman Mark Lair on the price. Lair initially balked at the idea of including the study, but voted in favor of the combined motion for all three expenditures.

The city still has access to some FEMA 2019 flood restoration money that can be used to help offset 80% to 85% of the costs of the dredging and wall repair with the city paying about \$70,000 of the cost. The \$15,000 feasibility study fee will be at city expense.

“That’s a lot of money, man. Where’s the money coming from,” Lair said. “You haven’t shown me the money. (City Manager David) Varley’s been telling me since I got on the council again a few years back, that we’re gonna be broke in a couple years if we don’t do something.”

Mohrfeld said the funds could be found a variety of different ways including borrowing from the Highway 61 rehabilitation funds or other enterprise funds that could be paid back with interest.

He told Lair the marina project could hold a \$6 million price tag that would have to be a combination of private and public investment, but none of that starts without the study.

“If you have a magic wand, that would be a \$6 million project,” Mohrfeld said. “You can’t move forward without knowing the cause and effect of that water. If we can’t do that, let’s make it a volleyball pit.”

Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker, who met, along with Mohrfeld and Public Works Director Mark Bousset, with representatives of Klingner & Associates out of Burlington, said leaving the FEMA money on the table is out of the question.

OCT. 26, 2020 - 3,665 views, 373 engagements

Burlington Notre Dame ends Crusaders’ 10-year run to state

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – The end could have come quickly, quietly.

Instead, it was a noisy, frantic comeback that fell short.

Holy Trinity’s 10-year streak of making it to the

state volleyball tournament ended on Monday night on the swings and blocks from an SEI Super-conference South Division rival that has known all too well of what the Crusaders have done in the past.

Notre Dame’s 25-16, 25-14, 22-25, 23-25, 15-12 win in the Class 1A regional semifinal at Shottenkirk Gymnasium ended what Mike Davis called “the Holy Trinity curse,” that feeling teams got in the postseason when they ran into the Crusaders somewhere along the bracket.

Not that Davis, who shares head-coaching duties with Susan Reid, has had much experience with it.

“I tell you what — me and Susan, and there’s a couple of players who haven’t been here, we don’t know about this Holy Trinity curse,” Davis said. “I guess it’s out there. You could see in some of the returning players from last year, it started to creep in (during the third and fourth games).

“We told them, ‘We’re a good team. They’re a good team. Let’s just prove on the floor that we’re the better team.’ And I believe we did.”

2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

OCT. 28, 2020 - 5,963 views, 873 engagements

Schools debate using virtual learning for snow days

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – For several years now a small group of school districts in Iowa have been tinkering with holding virtual classes on snow days.

That idea is gathering steam around the country and with county school officials.

Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater said that district is looking at using virtual learning for snow days this year. But Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said that district will not, unless snow days,... pile up.

Crozier said the state mandates that the virtual learning be a K-12 program and he said that can prove difficult for elementary parents who are at that point in the morning "scrambling".

"It's really challenging when elementary parents are scrambling for daycare coverage, and now they have to have kids ready to sit for a zoom class or other medium," Crozier said.

But he said the board is considering the option if snow days surpass four this year.

"We just kind of said this year, a snow day is a snow day. We're not going to strip those away from the kids. We want to make sure it's time for a mental break. But if looks like we're headed into June, then we'll consider going to virtual instruction," he said.

OCT. 28, 2020 - 5,963 views, 873 engagements

Wever man injured in head-on collision

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – A Wever man was injured this morning as a result of a head-on collision on 330th Avenue.

Michael Joseph Koch, 39, was airlifted after being trapped in his overturned vehicle in the 1600 block of 330th Avenue in northern Lee County.

Koch was taken by medical helicopter to Iowa City with injuries.

His Toyota Yaris was struck on the front drivers side by a Chevrolet Cobalt driven by Michael Edward DiPrima, 16, also of Wever.

Both men were wearing seatbelts. DiPrima was cited for failure to maintain his lane.

OCT. 8, 2020 - 6,186 views, 751 engagements



The winners of Carl A. Nelson & Company's 4th annual High School Skills Challenge, from left with their teacher, Clint Kobelt, were Fort Madison High School's Owen Kruse, Kane Williams, and Trey Edwards.

FM trades students win another skills competition

BURLINGTON, Iowa — In recognition of Construction Week 2020, Carl A. Nelson & Company conducted its fourth annual High School Skills Challenge on Oct. 8 to give local high school construction trades students an opportunity to bring classroom lessons into real-world practice.

Participating were Burlington High School, Mediapolis High School and two teams from Fort Madison High School. The event typically includes five schools with teams rotating through a series of skill stations, but was scaled back in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first-place team from Fort Madison High School, led by instructor Clint Kobelt, included Owen Kruse, Kane Williams and Trey Edwards. It was the third win in four years, and the second in a row, by an FMHS team.

Students spread out on the Carl A. Nelson & Company grounds to construct steel angle platforms with wood stairs. Skills being demonstrated included welding, carpentry, figuring stairs and cutting stringers.



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– Abraham Lincoln

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

SEPT. 9, 2020 - 5,310 views, 471 engagements



Courtesy photo

Dustin Yager, “Maverick”, Mike Barnes, “Justice”, and Steve Dill, “Rosco” all brought home hardware from a handlers’ certification exam last week.

SEPT 9, 2020 - 4,129 views, 449 engagements

County surpasses 1,000 coronavirus cases

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Lee County surpassed 1,000 positive cases of coronavirus on Thursday, and health officials again are cautioning residents heading into the holiday season.

The county’s 14-day positivity rate with increased daily testing is now 11.5% in Lee County, up a full 3% since Monday, showing spread is on the rise locally. In the past 24 hours, according to Lee County Health Department, 37 new cases were identified in the county.

LCHD Administrator Michele Ross said that positivity rate puts the county back in a moderate community spread risk level.

Iowa now has a positive rate of 13.1% with just under 115,000 people testing positive for the virus, and 1,693 Iowans have died from complications of the virus, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health. Lee County has seen 12 deaths since reporting began in March.

On Oct. 26 the state saw the highest one day total of positive cases at 2,724. The overall state 14-day positivity rate is 11.9%. In Lee County 32% of those testing positive are in the 18-40 age range, while 34%, are 41-60 years of age. LCHD is also reporting 672 of the cases have recovered.

“Unfortunately, COVID-19 virus is still spreading and cases are increasing across the county as well as Iowa and the United States,” Ross said Thursday.

SEPT. 19, 2020 - 4,487 views, 323 engagements

Hounds win Lee County seat

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – With 11:58 left in the fourth quarter, Levi Lowney did a little dance during a time out.

It almost was premature but with about 1:15 left in the 4th quarter, it was party time for the Hounds as the Keokuk Chiefs turned the ball over on downs sealing a 21-14 Homecoming win for Fort Madison.

The win sends the coveted purple and red County Seat back to the halls of Fort Madison High School after a year’s absence with 2019 loss to the Chiefs.

“I think mentally it means a lot for this program,” Doherty said. “That’s a really good football team across the field from us. This shows we can compete and they did a dang good job of that.”

The Fort Madison Bloodhounds show the County Seat to the remaining fans in the stands at Richmond Stadium after a 21-14 win over Keokuk Friday night.

The Hounds (3-1) had another slow start offensively with three straight four-and-outs. It looked like Keokuk was going to get on the board first when they put together a 13-play, 44-yard drive that had five first downs, but two penalties at midfield stalled the drive and forced a punt.

After the Hounds had their third four and out, the Hounds defense forced another Chiefs punt but the Hounds got through and blocked the punt recovering at their own 45. A Fort Madison holding penalty on 3rd and 5 killed another set forcing a punt.

Keokuk would cough it up on 1st and 10 at the Chiefs 40, and Keaton Poe jumped on it for Fort Madison.

The Hounds have been opportunistic all year and the turnover paid off again as Fort Madison would give the Chiefs a steady diet of Calem Maclearn and Landes Williams out of the backfield. The two would combine for 35 yards on seven carries and got Fort Madison inside the 10.

OCT. 29, 2020 - 4,321 views, 270 engagements

Four runners qualify for X-country state

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – Four runners from north Lee County schools will take on the 5K trek through Lakeside Municipal Golf Course this weekend.

All four are first time state qualifiers and all were surprised when they saw their times were fast enough to join

Central Lee senior Amanda Gilpin will wear

bib 472 and will start out of the southeast downhill gate in Box 1 at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

She said she hasn’t seen the course before, but did get paperwork sent to her. “It looks hilly on paper but I’m not afraid of that,” Gilpin said on Thursday.

She said she was surprised when she realized her time of 21:20.3 was fast enough to qualify. Gilpin’s time was 56th fastest in all of girls Class 2A during qualifying.

“I didn’t know, even after all the practicing I’ve done if I would qualify or not,” she said.

Gilpin said her expectations are to set a personal record at the meet and try to break into the top 30.

Fort Madison’s Will Gager and Austin Miller have had a fun year chas-

ing each other around events this season.

The two actually traveled to San Diego two years ago and ran a half-marathon together. The friendly competition has proven to be a successful tool this year.

Head Coach Brian Mendez said the two drive each other and that’s been seen this year with each of them surpassing the other at different meets.

Holy Trinity’s Mitchell Pothitakis finished 9th in the Ottumwa qualifier in Class 1A. The junior will wear bib 1060 and take off from the far left in box 22.

The Crusader ran an 18:27.1 in Pekin at the qualifier last week and said he wasn’t surprised that he was able to qualify with the top 10 runners.

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2020 – A Year in Review: September & October

OCT. 6, 2020 - 4,881 views, 498 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Concrete down

Concrete has been poured through the 6th Street intersection on the city's Highway 61 project, while the Burlington Northern Santa Fe bridge stands open for barge traffic Monday.

OCT. 6, 2020 - 4,881 views, 498 engagements

Mayor puts franchise fee on council agenda

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – After hearing a synopsis of the city's five-year financial outlook, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld told the City Council he was putting a franchise fee vote on the agenda for the next meeting.

During Tuesday's regular meeting, City Manager David Varley presented the city with a comprehensive look at what the city's finances will be like in five years and what options there are to get the city on solid financial footing.

Varley said the city expenses, 81% of which are personnel costs, are about \$400,000 more annually than the city is bringing in. He said the city has been surviving on one-time revenue influxes that can't be counted on, and by dipping into fund reserves.

He said a franchise fee on natural gas and electricity is one answer, possibly combined with bonding for

the rest of the Hwy. 61 improvements and moving the rest of that money in the Hwy. 61 fund into the city's general fund.

Mohrfeld said he favored starting small with the franchise tax, a 1.5% initial fee and then phase it up with annual reviews of the city's finances.

"I would like to see that phased up," he said. "If you're a corporation – if you're Matt's Greenhouse – Chief Mark (Rohloff) – we all have budgets. It's easier to ratchet something up than it is to leap into it, so we need to watch and stair step it," Mohrfeld said.

Varley said a 3% franchise fee closes the city's gap for five years, builds up an adequate fund balance, and provides funds for other city projects. He said bonding for street projects also frees up money.

"If you did that and a smaller franchise fee you can kind of get the best of both worlds. You take care of the funding gap for five years and you have some funds available to do some other projects," Varley said.

SEPT. 1, 2020 - 5,656 views, 1,837 engagements

Vacated property registry on city's radar

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – In two weeks, city officials will meet with residents to talk about a proposed ordinance that would require all vacant properties to be registered with the city.

The move, spearheaded by City Building Director Doug Krogmeier, will give the city a list of properties that are sitting idle or vacant within the city limits.

Property owners would also be charged a fee as part of the registration process, based on the size of the building and the time it's been sitting vacant.

A meeting has been set for Sept. 16 at 5:30 p.m. at the Fort Madison Public Library's Sheaffer Room.

Krogmeier said he hopes to get some questions answered while providing residents with the workings of the ordinance, which is still a work in progress.

He said aside from the fee structure, there are also some aspects, such as requiring insurance on the properties that are still up for discussion.

"We do have a fee structure, but I'm not confirming that anything is set in stone," Krogmeier said Monday afternoon.

"The mayor and I worked on it and he wanted to push it up a bit," Krogmeier said. "It needs to be there, but we're gonna get a lot of kick back on it. And you have to justify the program."

Fire Chief Joey Herren said the fee structure has to be set so that it has an impact on property owners who let structures fall into disrepair.

"It has to have some teeth to it to make it work," he said.

City Manager David Varley said the fee has to be reasonable to keep people engaged in the program.

The proposed annual fee structure would start at \$10 for smaller accessory buildings up to \$250 for larger buildings. The fees double the third year they are registered in the program, and then double again the fourth year.

There could also be fees for non-compliance with the registry.

OCT. 25, 2020 - 9,060 views, 886 engagements

Dollhouse dreams rebrands as Shug's Tiny Town in FM

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – You can't miss the big, bright colorful sign announcing a rebranding at Dollhouse Dreams in downtown Fort Madison.

Owner Brenda Derr, renamed the educational toy store in downtown Fort Madison Shug's Tiny Town & Educational Toys, after closing up

her Burlington location in a contraction of the brand.

Derr said her initial plans were to have two locations and then expand, but COVID's impact on retail has forced her to go back to just one location.

"I was trying to use the funding I got, which was great, to keep both

locations open, but it was only for one location because of the way I'm

set up and we couldn't keep them both going," Derr said.

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–Chuck & Lee

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Art of Yoga	Donnellson Tire & Service Center	Hill Side Inn	Lowell Junkins	ServiceMaster
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Bagcraft Papercon	Doris' Tavern	Hoerner YMCA	Maggie Guzman	Shug's Tiny Town
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Baxter's Sports Complex	Dr. Timothy S. Benson	Decor & Furniture	Mardie Smith	Siemens Gamesa
Becky Fullenkamp	DuPont	Holy Trinity Catholic Foundation Board	Mark Rohloff	Silgan Containers
Big Bang Fireworks	DuPont Employees Credit Union	Holy Trinity Catholic Schools	Mark Smidt	Small Grand Things
Bill Griffiths	Dutchman's Store	Homestead Financial Services	Martha Wolf	Smith Electric
Bob Morawitz	Edward Jones – Larry Kelch	Hope Associates Real Estate	Martin Graber for Iowa House	Sonny's Super Market
Brad's Pad Pizza	Edward Jones – Tony Fullenkamp	HTC Bunny Hop	District 83	Soroptimist International of Fort Madison
Brian Mendez	Elect Ross Braden	HTC Music Boosters	Matt's Greenhouse	Southern Iowa Insurance Services
Brockman Chiropractic	Elect Tom Schulz for City Council	Huffman's Farm & Home	Matt Mohrfeld	Stacy Snaadt
Buffalo61 Bar & Grille	Faeth's Fowl Play	Humburd Auto Service	Megan Kruse	Stage 2 Consignment Shop
Building Materials	Fairfield Arts & Convention Center	Ian MacLearn	Megan Rempe	Standard of Beaverdale
Burlington Ear, Nose, & Throat	Fareway Food Stores	Industrial Motors, Inc.	Melanie Scheetz	Stanley Haessig
Burlington Spring Grove	Farm Bureau Financial Services – Larry Holtkamp	Inhance Corporation	Melissa Hobbs	State Farm Insurance – Thomas Klann
United Methodist Church	Farm Bureau Financial Services – Tammy Reynolds	Iowa State Penitentiary	Menke & Company	Steffensmeier Welding
Burlington Trailways	Farmers Savings Bank	Iris City Cleaners	Merschman Fertilizer	Steffes Group, Inc.
Burlington Youth Triathlon	Farmington Strawberry Festival	Ivy Bake Shoppe	Merschman Seeds	Stewart Automotive
Cabinetion	Fedler Specialties and Screenprinting	Jake Rashid	Michael Avery	SubArena
Carl Saunders	FM Bloodhound Sports & Activities	Jean Neuweg	Michael Wellendorf	Sun Meets Moon Healing
Carlos O Capdevila Agency	Floyd's EZ Way	Jeff Kurtz	Midtown Hairstyling Salon	SunnyBrook Assisted Living & Memory Care
Carol Harter	Fort Colony Family Restaurant	Jeff Reichman for Iowa Senate	MidWestOne Bank	Sunshine Child Care
Carrie Schneider	Fort Madison	Jerry Hamelton for City Council	Millwright Services, Inc.	Super 8
Casebine Community Credit Union	Fort Madison Area Arts Association	Jill Cordray	Mobile Nursing Services, LTD.	Susan Haeger
Catfish Bend Casinos	Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce	Jim Baier, Inc.	Mohrfeld Electric	Taco Taco Takos
CBIZ Center for Business	Fort Madison Christian Church	Jimmy Keenan	Montrose Community	Tamara Grossman
Celene M. Coppage	Fort Madison Columbus Club	Joe Bowen	Fireworks Committee	Tammi Kircher
Central Lee Dance Team	Fort Madison Community Hospital	Joseph W. Carle	Montrose Customs	Taske Force
Century 21 Property Professionals	Fort Madison Community Hospital	Joseph W. Kowzan	Montrose Health Center	Team Staffing Solutions, Inc.
Chad Ward	Fort Madison Community Hospital	Judith Bray	Montrose Watermelon	Tena Dodson
Charles Scoville	Fort Madison Community Hospital	Judy Stuecker	Festival Committee	Test Kitchen Education Foundation
Charlie Knipe	Community School District	Julie Doherty	MPC Enterprises, Inc.	the Bees Knees PR, LLC
Charlie Korschgen Kiddie Parade	Fort Madison Downtown District	Karen Hope	Nancy Amos for Iowa Senate	The Colony Shop
Cheryl Untz	Fort Madison Eagles Club	Kate Lamb	Nancy Sanders	The Fox Theatre
Chuck Osmanski	Fort Madison Elks Lodge	Kate Menke	New Dimensions	The Funky Cowgirl
Cindy Roberts	Fort Madison Eye Clinic	Katie Cale	Oak Hollow Campground	The Kensington & Primrose Path
Cindy Steflik	Fort Madison Family YMCA	Katie's Cuts	Old Fort Players	The Madison
City of Fort Madison	Fort Madison Family YMCA	Kempker's True Value Rental	Palms Restaurant	The Samuel Hayes Show
Claws & Paws Pet Grooming	Fort Madison Housing Authority	Keokuk Auto Credit	Pam Dodds	Todd Schneider
Clear View Vision Center	Fort Madison Kids Committee	K's Fabrics & More	Paul Idol	Tony for Supervisor
Coats for Hope	Fort Madison Main Street	Kevin Rink,	Paul's Plumbing,	Tony Wolfe Insurance Services
Cobblestone Inn & Suites	Fort Madison	Fort Madison City Council	Heating, & Cooling, Inc.	Tracilyn Brown
Committee to Re-Elect Randolph for Mayor	Mexican Fiesta Committee	Kimberly Engle	Paul Schulte	Trish Eaves-Fedler
Complete Rental	Fort Madison Music Boosters	King-Lynk Funeral Home, Inc.	Peggy L. Steffensmeier	Tri State Outdoor Products, LLC
Conagra Brands	Fort Madison Partners	Kingsley Inn	Phyllis Anderson	Tri-State Rodeo
Connection Bank	Fort Madison Public Library	KLM Realty	Pilot Grove Savings Bank	Truck Repair, Inc.
Conrad Trucking	Fort Madison Rotary Club	Kristy Reid	Poole Communications	Under the Sun / The Avenue
Courtney Family Chiropractic	Fort Madison	Krueger Brokerage, Inc.	Pothitakis Dentistry	United Way of the Great River Region
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Dallas City Celebration	Fullenkamp Insurance	LCK Roofing	Quarry Creek Elk & Bison	Wendy Bailey
Dana Bushong Jewelry Co., Inc.	Full Steam Staffing	Lee County Attorney	Radio Keokuk	West Liberty Foods
Dan Reiter	Garden Bros. Circus	Lee County Auditor	Randolph Dental	West Point Care Center
Darin Gentry	Gary Folluo	Lee County Bank	Rashid Pharmacy & Wellness	West Point Fireman's Ball
Darlene Kraus	Geoff Shields	Lee County Democratic Party	Rebecca Bowker	West Point Fireworks Committee
Darrell Allman	George Shields	Lee County Conservation Board	Relay for Life of North Lee County	West Point Sweet Corn Festival Committee
Dave's Old Fashion Meats	Glo-Run	Lee County Crime Stoppers	Renee Clippert	W-M Johnson Truck Line
David Courtney	Great River Hospice	Lee County	Rich Harlow	Wondra Chiropractic & Acupuncture
Dawgs & Divas	Great River Regional Waste Authority	Economic Development Group	Rich Taylor for Iowa Senate	WorkSource Staffing
Dawn Helling	Green Acres Bar & Grill	Lee County Fair Board	River City Motors Plus, Inc.	Your Heat & Air Guy
Dawn Johnson	Gregory Design & Manufacturing	Lee County Health Department	RiverFest Fort Madison	
Debbie Miller	Greg Smith	Lee County Historical Society	Ron Fedler for Supervisor	
Denmark God's Portion Day Committee	Green Oak Development	Lee County IT/GIS Department	Ron Davoo	
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