

# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Tuesday, January 5, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 5 • Issue 11



[www.pencitycurrent.com](http://www.pencitycurrent.com)

**TOP POST:** The most highly read post of March, April was rodeo lineup

**LOOKING BACK ON 2020**

## Coronavirus dominates spring news

*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.



VANDEMBERG

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.

Image courtesy of Tri-State Rodeo

April 24, 2020 - 27,452 views, 2,158 engagements

FORT MADISON – The Tri-State Rodeo was proud to announce the Entertainment Headliners for the 73rd Annual Tri-State Rodeo. The committee tried to hang onto the event in the face of the novel coronavirus, but pressures from the spread of the virus would eventually force the cancellation of the event in 2020.

**APRIL 15, 2020**

## Archaeologists pull artifacts from Highway 61 work

5,690 views, 1,335 engagements

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Archeologists digging through the sub-surface of the city's Hwy. 61 rehab project have stumbled upon some timbers that have their curiosity.

Lowell Blikre, an assistant director with Bear Creek Archeology, of Cresco, Iowa, said Wednesday that crews were working to unearth two sections of timbers with iron rods protruding from them.

Blikre said he's not sure what they are, but he has to treat them as if they are part of the original fort.

"We haven't absolutely confirmed this is fort stuff, but we have to treat it as though it is because we haven't found anything to indicate it isn't either," Blikre said Wednesday afternoon.

The timbers were discovered in locations where the new sewer line is going to go on the south side of the construction just past the west side of the former Sheaffer building.

Blikre said now his team of 11 scientists are doing a more controlled excavation and are screening the sediment around the timbers.

"From hand probing I can see there is another set of timbers



below these," he said. "So were taking the associated artifacts back and we'll analyze it."

He said the metal rods seem to run through the timbers and may serve as fasteners for the timbers.

"We'll expose them, go around the sides and find out how low they go, and what they are lying on so we can figure out what their context is," he said.

He said the subsurface level dropped fairly quickly where the timbers were found and that was curious to him. He said he was surprised to find the timbers.

"This could be the cellar for the guard house, but we just don't have enough data yet, so we have to treat it as though it's part of the fort right now."

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### WEATHER

TUE 05 Jan ..... Scattered Clouds, 34° F/ 24° F  
WED 06 Jan..... Broken Clouds, 36° F/ 30° F  
THU 07 Jan..... Light Snow, 33° F/ 28° F

### IOWA LOTTERY

PICK 3 01/03 MIDDAY .....639  
PICK 3 01/03 EVENING.....720  
PICK 4 01/03 MIDDAY .....6022  
PICK 4 01/03 EVENING .....0305

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

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 Lyle E. Acker  
 William M. "Bill" Adams  
 Mary L. Amann  
 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  
 Richard Lee Ballew  
 Warren "Barney" Barnum  
 Rodney J. Bartholomew  
 Jack Richford Bartlett  
 Rosanna Bartlett  
 William J. Bartlett  
 Philip "Phil" Beelendorf  
 Thomas J. Bell  
 William G. Bennett  
 Anna Mae "Mick" Bentler  
 Edna Martha Bentzinger  
 Rosalie Jane Bentzinger  
 Dr. Harvey Stanford  
 Benveniste  
 Betty Bernice Biddenstadt  
 Donald Gene "Biggie"  
 Bigelow, Jr.  
 Larry J. Blint  
 Ronald R. Blint  
 Sharon Kay Bode  
 Terry Lynn Bode  
 Elmer John Boegner  
 Jeannette P. Bolanos  
 Donald G. Boldt

Randy Keith Boltz  
 Tilden A. Bottger  
 Norma L. Boyles  
 King Edward Bradley, Jr.  
 Reggie Ray Brannon  
 Sandra "Sandy" E.  
 Bremhorst  
 John W. Briscoe  
 Devyn Michael Broeker  
 James William "Buzz"  
 Brooks, Jr.  
 Sharon L. Brotherton  
 Joy Lee Brown  
 Ramon D. Brown  
 Carmella Lucy  
 Brunnelson  
 Shirley Maxine (Bryant) Batley  
 William "Billy" Buckner  
 Matthew Warren Burford  
 Ronnie Lee Butler  
 Julia Louise Byrne  
 George William "Bill" Cackley  
 Kevin Greg "Pops"  
 Cahoon  
 Mary Louise Calfee  
 Margaret Jean Campbell  
 Mary Marjorie Campbell  
 (Peterson)  
 Ronald Eugene Carr  
 Billy Joe Carroll  
 Richard L. "Dick" Carson  
 Jackie "Jack" D. Carter  
 Charles A. Chambers  
 Brad J. Christensen  
 Evelyn D. Christian  
 Jeremy Scott Claman  
 Dewey Lee Clark  
 June Anne Clippert  
 Sharon L. Cockrell  
 Mary Jo Cole  
 Henry Edward Collins, Jr.  
 Louise Collins

Dustin Thompson Colyer  
 Cheryl Connors  
 Jay Frank Cook  
 Benita B. Coons  
 Laura Joan Cooper  
 Larry Gene Coppage  
 Rosena M. "Skip"  
 Coppage  
 Joseph "Joe" Daniel  
 Corvaia  
 Cecil Eugene Cossel, Jr.  
 Dr. Rick C. Courtney  
 Joyce S. Cowles  
 Karen J. Cox  
 Ruby Rose (Cron) Smith  
 Vida Suzanne Curtis  
 Barbara A. Custer  
 Edna Jean Dagg  
 John Charles Paul  
 Daugherty  
 Mary Alice Davis  
 Peggy F. Davis  
 Alma Cora Dawson  
 Gary L. Dawson  
 Patricia Beth Decker Finley  
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 Marianna Derr  
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 Dickson, II  
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 James L. Doore  
 Alga "Colleen" Douglas  
 Judith Kay Dowell  
 Thomas J. Durgin  
 Nancy Sue Eads  
 Donna S. Eaves  
 Jack Edward Eaves

Dale Joseph Eckhardt  
 Elizabeth Edwards  
 Lillian Renee Lynn Eid  
 Patricia Elder  
 Jerry Elliott  
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 David J. Fraise  
 Eugene Stace Fraise  
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 Kevin W. Fuget  
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 Judy Ann Fullenkamp  
 Bendlage  
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 Golembiewski  
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 Victoria Marie Green  
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 Steven Griffiths  
 Martha E. "Marcy"  
 Grimwood  
 Alice Jane Groene  
 John William Grogan  
 Aarin J Guzman  
 Eleanor Eunice "Ellie"  
 Hagmeier  
 Ora J. Halferty  
 Felix M. Hall  
 Evelyn M. Hamilton  
 Neoma M. Hamm  
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 Nedra Hardin Adkins  
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 John "Jack" Harrington  
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 Charles "Charlie" G. Harrison  
 Gary Dean Harryman, Jr.  
 Carla Hart  
 Connie Charlene Hart  
 William "Bill" Allan Hart  
 Jared Walton Hasek  
 Carol Ann Hasenclever  
 Hazel L. Hawes  
 Garnet M. Hayes  
 William Henry Hayes  
 Joan D. Hays  
 Patricia Heidbreder  
 Thomas R. Helling  
 John Joseph Helwig  
 Christopher R. Hemphill  
 Betty Kathryn (Herzog)  
 Thompson  
 Dennis A. "Butch" Heth  
 Rita Jeanne (Hierstein) Hull

Robert Martin Higby  
 Daril Dewayne Hill  
 Theresa Ann Hillgartner  
 Frances Marie Hilpert  
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 Delmar John Hirschler  
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 Jennifer L. Holliday  
 Francis E. Holmes  
 Raymond Homer Holt  
 Delbert Stephen  
 Holtkamp  
 Donald Ambrose  
 Holtkamp  
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 Jerry D. Honadel  
 Thelma "Louise" Hope  
 Linda Sue Horn  
 Michael Dean Horn  
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 Earl E. Hoskins  
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 Fredrick Leroy Howe  
 Patty F. Howell  
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 Harvey "Bud" Huffman, Jr.  
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 Dixie Diane Huss  
 Ruth Frances Hutson  
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 Norman (Putt) Alfred Inman  
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# DO YOUR PART

## CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS



WEAR MASKS



WEAR GLOVES



WASH HANDS OFTEN



KEEP DISTANCE

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



# for your community

[WWW.GRRWA.COM](http://WWW.GRRWA.COM)



## 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

# We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2020

Robert "Bob" Jack Jones  
Wade P. Jones  
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Elizabeth "Betty" Kaiser  
Maurice Fred "Junior"  
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Geraldine Mable Kayser Davis  
Sister Patricia Keating  
Kenneth James "Jim" Kersten  
Gertrude Julia Ketcham  
Anna Ruth King  
Michael J. Kinman  
Audrey A. Kipp  
Bernice Kirchner  
Patti A. Kirchner  
Hila (Kirkpatrick) Nickel  
Jerry J. Knapp  
David William Knowles  
Mary Maxine Kokjohn  
James Ernest Koller  
Lucene T. Kramer  
Charles "Chuck" Wayne Kratzer  
Lillian "Lil" Faye Kraus  
Hilda K. Krogmeier  
Judith Kay Patricia "Judy"  
Krogmeier  
Karen T. Krogmeier  
Ronald Eugene  
Krogmeier  
Linda Jo Kruse  
Terry Kunde  
Michael Todd Lamm  
Nellie Mae Ruth Lamma  
Annabelle Lammering  
Wendell Woodson Land  
Keith J. Landis  
Richard D. Lanfranco  
Neal Lassmann  
Kimberly Marie Lefler  
Analie S. Leininger  
Carolyn Jean (LeMaster) Potts  
Eleanor A. Link  
Georgia Ann Long  
James R. "Sonny" Lovell  
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Mark Lowman  
Anita Darlene Luckett  
James C. Ludwig  
Roland Edward  
Mansheim  
William Henry Marple  
Norma D. Marshall  
Richard Joseph Marshall  
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Larry G. Martin  
Karen R. Martinez  
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Allen Lee Matous  
Clifford Mathew Matta  
Gerald S. Matter  
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Wanda M. McClellan  
Vearl Hatfield McCombs  
Mary M. "Betty"  
McDowell  
Patrick Leonard McEntee  
Addison Layne McFerren  
R. Forrest McFerren  
Kevin McGee  
Ronald Lee McIntosh  
Helen McMillan  
Margaret Mary McMullen  
Emilie Jean (McNamara)  
Grice Miler


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Mabel Medaris  
John R. Medland  
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Meierotto  
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Mae Lu Meister  
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Amy C. Menke  
Corinne "Cory" Menke  
Leroy "Pete" Delmar Menke  
Susan J. Meredith  
Eileen Alberta (Mertens)  
Wheeler  
Sharon Ann Mertens  
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Messerschmitt  
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Nicholson  
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Nicholson  
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Benedict  
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Cynthia Christine  
Rippenkroeger  
Betty Sue Riter  
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Joan E. Roberts  
Ronald R. Roberts  
Leonard L. "Jeff"  
Rockhold  
Michael Paul "Mike" Rodefer  
Carla D. Rodeffer  
Eugene "Chink" George Rooney  
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Sharon E. Sander  
Carl Joseph Sanders  
Frances Lorinda Glory Sanders  
Francis John "Frank" Sartory  
JoAnn M. Saylor  
Connie Sue Schmitz  
Oweda Irene Schneider  
Robert Andrew Schneider  
Donald Lemoyne  
Schrader  
William Eugene Schulze  
Nicholas James "Nick"  
Schwartz  
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Franklin D. Secord  
Ray Stephen Selby  
Mary Kathryn Sickels  
Celia Siegrist  
Kelly F. Skelton  
Belva A. Skinner  
Barbara Ann Smith  
Irene Smith  
Joseph M. "Little Joe" Smith  
Michael T. "Mickey" Smith  
John "Jack" Smutzer  
David Eugene Soppe  
Jan Lee Sorensen  
Gary Allen Sprague  
Gregory John "Buzz" Stark  
Wayne Earl St. Clair  
Lois "Reta" Steele  
Richard "Rick" Steffen  
Dennis R. Stein  
Roxanne E.D. Stemple  
Philomena Rose  
Stephenson  
Madison Germain  
Sterne, (M.G.)  
Verlan Lee Stevens, Sr.  
Albert L. "Al" Stevenson  
Joan Lee Stevenson  
Veta M. Stewart  
Laura Evelyn Stoneburner  
Jean Ann St. Ores  
James "Jim" T. Strunk  
Patricia Stutes Pfeiferling  
Wendell "Wayne"  
Summers II  
Frank W. Sunden  
Charles "Chuck" Super  
Robert Allen "Bob" Sutton  
Sandra K. Sutton  
Gary Alan Swainey  
Amy Michelle  
Swinderman  
Mark Alan Swinderman  
Elizabeth "Betty" L.  
Thannert  
Jacquelin K. Thompson  
Richard A. Thompson  
Shirley Anne Thompson  
Dawn M. Todd

Terry Kay Todd  
Barbara "Barb" Jean Tompkins  
Dennis Warren Toops  
Carolyn Vivian Trelstad  
William "Bill" Allen Trimble  
Elbert E. Tripp  
Kevin Lynn Tripp  
Michael Turner  
Geneva M. Tutwiler  
Linda Carolyn Uchida  
Darlene Mary Umthun  
Robert S. "Bob" Vance  
Kelsey Ray Vandenberg  
Randy K. "R.V." Vass  
Norma Jeanne Vaughn  
Margaret Joy Vice  
Irwin R. "Sonny" Wade, Jr.  
Edward L. "One Feather"  
Wagner  
Pumphrey Walker  
Stanley Eugene Walker

Susan P. Walker  
Thomas "Tommy" Dean Ward  
Carl Linn Washburn  
Josephine Marie  
Waterman  
James Ronald "Ron" Weber  
Lucille Helen Weiler  
Siegfried K. Weiler  
Miriam Ellen Weisinger  
David L. Weller  
Clinton J. Wellman  
Crescentia Wellman  
Eva Marie Wellman  
Gary Kimball Welsh  
Kathryn Ann "Kathy" Wemette  
Betty Jean Wendorf  
John Jack West  
John Charles Westercamp  
Billy "Rene" Whalen  
Kenneth "Duck"  
Whitaker

Dennis Michael White  
Linda Charlene Williams  
Theresa Jeannette  
(Williamson) Slaughter House  
Eugene "Gene"  
Wilmesmeier  
Mary "Joan" Wilson  
Harold E. Wilson  
Bernard Wingerter  
Bertha C. Witte  
William (Bill) Francis Wolf  
Christopher M. Wolfskill  
Norman Keith Woods  
Shirley Antoinette Worrell  
Deborah Amelia Wright  
J.D. Wyatt, Jr.  
Lasca E. Yerington  
Jane Ellen Zane  
Jeneale J. Zumdomme




*Holiday Stressed?*

If the holidays are stressing you out, remember to  
**Be Kind to Your Mind**

- *Control what is within your power*
- *Unplug & unwind*
- *Focus on taking care of yourself, both physically & mentally*

Call your healthcare provider  
if stress gets in the way of your daily life.



**Fort Madison**  
COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

319-376-2134 • [www.fmchosp.com](http://www.fmchosp.com)

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**PEN CITY CURRENT**

It's Black & White and Read all over

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Pen City Current and [www.pencitycurrent.com](http://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



# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**MARCH 3, 2020 - 10,498 views, 1,985 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison firefighters were on the scene of a house fire at 718 23rd Street that began on the front porch. The blaze was put down quickly and didn't appear to affect nearby homes. The structure was inhabited.

**MARCH 6, 2020 - 5,766 views, 288 engagements**

## FFA held annual fundraiser dinner

**PCC STAFF**  
FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison chapter of Future Farmers of America will be holding their annual fundraiser this Saturday beginning at 6 p.m. at the Elks Club in Fort Madison. The evening will begin with a free will donation pork loin dinner at 6 p.m. and the live auction will

begin at 7 p.m. to conclude the event. FFA members will be auctioned off for (4) hours of their labor/time with several items very generously donated from local sponsors; such as Cardinals tickets, ISU game day tickets, Rodeo tickets, items made from the Construction Tech and Welding classes, loads

of rock and dirt, coolers, baskets, and more.

FFA is so much more than just agriculture. It is about making a positive difference in the lives of students through developing their leadership potential, personal growth, career success, confidence, community service and work ethic. There is a saying that “they might outgrow the jacket, but they’ll never outgrow the experience” and it could not be more true. The experiences that come from being apart of the FFA bring real world skills, lifelong friendships, and next generation leadership to our youth.

**MARCH 21, 2020 - 5,668 views, 2,976 engagements**

## Henry County man 1st regionally to be diagnosed with COVID-19

DES MOINES – A Henry County man is one of 23 newly identified positive cases of COVID-19 in Iowa, according to a release today from the Iowa Department of Public Health.

According to the release, there have been a total of 68 positive cases in Iowa. To date, there have been 1,049 negative tests conducted at the State Hygienic Lab.

According to IDPH, the locations and age ranges of the 23 individuals include: Allamakee County, 1 middle age adult (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years) Black Hawk County, 1 middle age adult (41-60 years), 1 elderly (81 years or older) Dubuque County, 1 older adult (61-80 years) Fayette County, 1 adult (18-40 years) Henry County, 1 adult (18-40 years) Johnson County, 3 adults (18-40 years), 1 middle age adult (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)

Linn County, 2 adults (18-40 years), 1 middle age adult (41-60 years)

Muscatine County, 1 middle age adult (41-60 years)

Polk County, 2 middle age adults (41-60 years), 2 older adults (61-80 years)

Pottawattamie County, 1 middle age adult (41-60 years)

Story County, 1 adult (18-40 years)

Washington County, 1 middle age adult (41-60 years)

A status report of monitoring and testing of COVID19 in Iowa is provided by IDPH and can be found here. In addition, a public hotline has been established for Iowans with questions about COVID-19. The line is available 24/7 by calling 2-1-1 or 1-800-244-7431. The state of Iowa will begin to share the number of negative tests conducted at outside labs.

Iowans who have traveled recently for business or spring break vacations, whether internationally or domestically outside of Iowa, should strongly consider self-isolating for 14 days. This will support Iowa's ongoing efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and limit the introduction of the virus from other points of travel.

**MARCH 23, 2020 - 5,646 views, 1,412 engagements**

## Lee County still had no COVID positives

**PCC STAFF**

LEE COUNTY – Lee County is advising residents what they can do to help limit the potential spread of the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. As of the morning of March 23rd, no one in Lee County has tested positive for COVID-19.

“Since the start of this outbreak, Lee County Health Department has worked closely with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) to monitor poten-

tial cases of COVID-19,” said Michele Ross, Lee County Health Department Administrator. “We have and will continue to work with our local, state and national partners to be ready for when the virus does come to Lee County.”

Symptoms of the COVID-19 in people who have been exposed can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

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## APARTMENTS FOR RENT

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**APRIL 27, 2020 - 10,793 views, 971 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison firefighters are on the scene of a train engine fire at the 20th Street crossing. The train rolled along tracks through riverview park with flames shooting from the top of the engine and was stopped at 20th Street for firefighters to put out the fire.

**APRIL 24, 2020 - 5,383 views, 1,560 engagements**

## Gov. says it's time to start reopening the state from COVID shutdowns

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – On the heels of the biggest 24-hour jump in positive coronavirus cases in the state, Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds said “it’s time” to start reopening Iowa.

As part of her daily press conferences from the state’s Emergency Operations Center, Reynolds said hospitals and farmer’s markets were part of a new declaration effective Monday, aimed at getting back to business and service in the state.

Reynolds took restrictions off state hospital for elective surgeries and procedures for hospitals that can stand on their own resources for personal protective equipment. She said the hospitals also must continue to treat COVID-19 patients, and 30% of the medical beds and ICU beds must be reserved for COVID-19 patients.

Reynolds said the supply chain for PPE has improved and the number of trips by the National Guard to move supplies around the state has diminished.

With increased testing going on in the state’s manufacturing and long-term care centers, 521 more Iowans tested positive in the last 24 hour reporting cycle bringing the state’s total to 4,445. She said 31,973 Iowans have been tested representing 1 of every 98 Iowans.



REYNOLDS

**APRIL 26, 2020 - 5,185 views, 2,020 engagements**

## DM County loses first to COVID-related illness

DES MOINES – A Des Moines County resident is the first in the county to die from an illness attributed to coronavirus and the COVID-19 illness, according to the Iowa Department of Public Health’s Sunday update.

The resident was an older adult, only listed as between the ages of 61-80. The reports reflect the 24 hour reporting cycle that ended Saturday.

Today, the Iowa Department of Public

Health (IDPH) has been notified of 384 additional positive cases for a total of 5,476 positive cases. There have been an additional 1,356 negative tests for a total of 30,614 negative tests to date, which includes testing reported by the State Hygienic Lab and other labs. The number of positive cases will continue to grow as Test Iowa sites open and additional surveillance testing of large businesses and nursing home staff continues.

**APRIL 21, 2020 - 5,303 views, 1,245 engagements**

## District extends Slater’s contract

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Community School District has extended Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater’s contract by one year.

The extension was approved 5-2 Tuesday as part of the district’s regular Board of Director’s meeting held by teleconference Monday night.

According to a copy of the contract received from Slater Tuesday afternoon, The move bumps Slater’s salary package beginning July 1 to \$197,669 annually. That figure includes \$14,000 in the district’s buyback of seven days vacation at \$2,000 per day.



SLATER

The district also pays for a family health and dental plan with a \$1,000 deductible, long-term disability, and \$100,000 life insurance.

The board declined to extend Slater’s contract in 2019 after an issue came up regarding alleged interference with coaching decisions on playing time at Fort Madison High School’s sports programs. Her husband was also caught on video confronting FMHS head basketball coach Ryan Wilson, who then came forward with the allegations.

Board President Dr. Tim Wondra released a statement following the meeting Tuesday explaining the move and the 1.6% salary increase that comes with the extension. The board hadn’t taken action on Slater’s contract since 2018.

“During these unprecedented times the Board felt ensuring continuity at the top of our district has never been more paramount and thankfully our Superintendent, our District Administrators, Principals and Instructional Coaches are in place and will provide steady leadership to our staff and students,” Wondra wrote in the release.

“We will need all their experience and knowledge as we move forward. The FMCSB Board and Dr. Slater are committed to continuing the positive relationship they have developed over the past four years with staff, students, parents and the community.”

Wondra also highlighted Slater’s commitments to the community as a member of Kiwanis and Rotary, the Chamber of Commerce, and Lee County Economic Development Group. Slater was also appointed to the Great Prairie Area Education Agency’s Superintendent’s Advisory Council last year.

Slater’s board evaluation was conducted last month in closed session. The last evaluation took three closed sessions and close to five weeks for the board to determine they wouldn’t be taking action on the contract that year.

Board members Brad Menke and Brian Steffensmeier voted against the extension. Steffensmeier said he thought Slater was doing a good job, but in the current uncertain times he was concerned about spending the additional money.

**MARCH 26, 2020 - 5,038 views, 1,335 engagements**

## FM Firefighters battle small blaze at Siemens

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

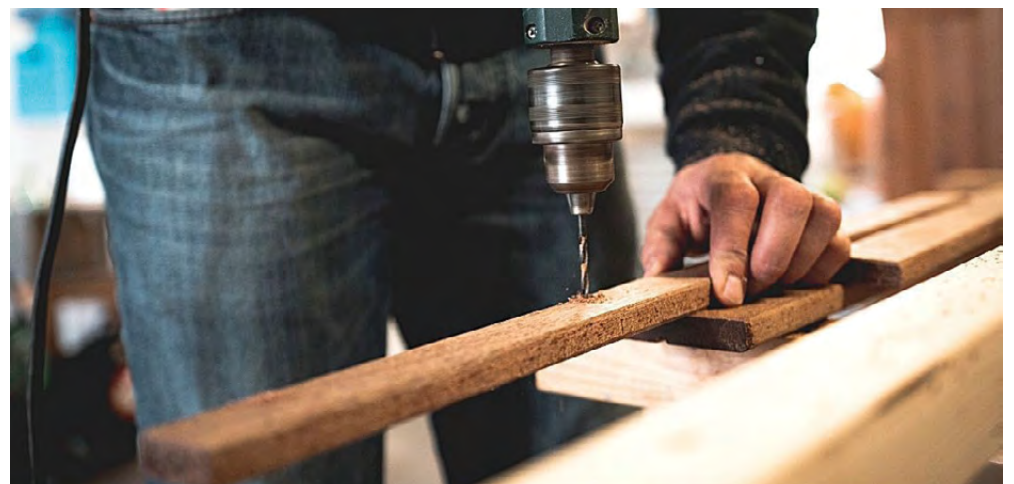
FORT MADISON – Fort Madison firefighters were called to the Siemens Gamesa facility on Highway 61 south late Wednesday for a small fire that had broken out in one of the paint finish facilities at around 10:30 p.m.

Fire Chief Joey Herren said it appeared static electricity had caught some of the filtration systems on fire, but the firefighters quickly had the issue under control.

Siemens safety officials cleared the building of employees while firefighters brought the situation under control.

Herren said firefighters were on the scene for the incident about an hour, but the aerial ladder truck encountered some mechanical issues on scene and had to be left at the site for a Thursday morning repair.

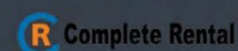
No one was injured during the incident.



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## 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**APRIL 20, 2020 - 4,922 views, 623 engagements**

### Siemens furloughs 100 in wake of virus

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – With the Siemens-Gamea plant labeled an essential business in the state and continuing operations, the COVID-19 virus is still having an impact.

On Tuesday Siemens officials from the U.S. headquarters in Orlando, announced that 100 Fort Madison employees will be furloughed due to problems in the supply chain caused by the global pandemic.

“The global pandemic is causing an interruption in our business operations. Driven by parts and material delays directly caused by COVID-19 impacts to our international suppliers, Siemens Gamea has made the difficult decision to furlough 100 employees at the Fort Madison, Iowa, facility and about 200 employees at the Hutchinson, Kansas facilities. The company informed employees on Monday, April 6,” said a company spokesperson.

Officials said they expect the temporary furloughs to last three to four weeks, but the company is doing everything they can to restore the supply chain as quickly as possible, and will resume full operations as soon as supplies are available.

**APRIL 23, 2020 - 4,906 views, 601 engagements**

### Fareway gives \$2,000 to FM Chamber

FORT MADISON – Fareway Stores, Inc. recently announced a \$200,000 donation to the Iowa Chamber of Commerce Executives (ICCE). The donation provided for \$1,000 or more in gift cards to ICCE chamber of commerce members in the communities Fareway serves.

ICCE distributed the Fareway gift cards to its chamber of commerce members. The Fort Madison Area Chamber of Commerce received \$2000 in gift cards, which were distributed to local small businesses and their employees that have been affected by Covid-19 shut downs and restrictions as well as decreased foot traffic to their businesses.

“Local chambers have the pulse in each community and how best to serve its small business members during this time of need,” said Fareway President and CEO Reynolds W. Cramer. “We hope this relief reduces some of the stress our community business partners are facing.”

**APRIL 18, 2020 - 7,923 views, 828 engagements**



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Shannon Hall and Domenique Garcia set up a Pop-Up Pantry donation station in Central Park and other city parks as residents tried to avoid as much public exposure to hide from the coronavirus. The girls put up the pantries different weekends through the spring and summer. The stations were stocked with cleaning and food supplies at no charge.

**APRIL 20, 2020 - 4,922 views, 623 engagements**

### Community responds with influx of masks

FORT MADISON – At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a request went out to the community for homemade cloth masks. The request was met with a huge show of support, creativity and generosity from community members anxious to do their part.

Hospitals in particular realized the benefit of having community members make cloth masks. Fort Madison Community Hospital (FMCH) was no different.

“Like every other hospital in the country, we want to keep a strong supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) in stock so we are ready to take care of our sick patients,” said Heather Oppenheimer-Smith, Infection Prevention nurse at FMCH.

“When the idea of homemade cloth masks went viral, we appreciated how this could help us conserve our surgical masks for our employees working in direct patient care, while also providing protection for all of our staff from patients presenting with respiratory symptoms.”

Fort Madison Community Hospital (FMCH) was also fortunate to have a community member, Liz Woodbury, wife of FMCH Orthopedic Surgeon Brent Woodbury, step up to organize the mask-making efforts.

“I felt this was an opportunity for me to do my part in the COVID-19 fight. I have a strong appreciation for the work being done at FMCH to keep our community safe and helping to orchestrate local mask contributions was a good way to support that work,” said Liz Woodbury.

Cloth masks were originally used for patients or visitors. If a patient or visitor to FMCH answered yes to respiratory symptoms, cough, sore throat or shortness of breath, at the screening stations they were given a cloth mask to protect others from them.

**APRIL 28, 2020 - 4,982 views, 1,980 engagements**

### Sheriff deputy injured in scuffle with subject

PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY – A Lee County Sheriff deputy suffered an injury Monday evening in a scuffle with a suspect after a traffic stop west of Denmark.

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber declined to give the deputy’s name but said the altercation occurred after deputies stopped an RV at the intersection of Hwy. 218 and Hwy. 16.

LeeComm dispatchers received a report of a recreational vehicle swerving on the roadway early Monday evening and deputies initiated a stop.

After the stop, the driver allegedly admitted to having marijuana in the vehicle and deputies initiated a K9 air sniff. Weber said the driver, Jody Morgan, 45, of Sigourney, then became combative with deputies one of whom was who injured in the scuffle. He was taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital where he was treated and released.

During the scuffle, deputies, with an assist from the K9 on scene, subdued Morgan and he was taken into custody.

“We pulled him over on suspicion of OWI and when he found out deputies were going to search his vehicle he started to ignore orders,” Weber said.

After reviewing the body camera footage of a deputy, Weber said he counted more than 20 times deputies gave Morgan verbal instructions that he ignored.

“One command should be enough and the deputies did everything they could to get him under control,” Weber said.

“Once he got bit, he laid down, but he wouldn’t give up his keys and there was more of a struggle, but there was no further dog deployment.”

Weber said Morgan allegedly admitted to having marijuana on him and then deputies were up front about the pending search, which is when Morgan took exception to the search making deputies suspicious.





# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**APRIL 29, 2020 -**  
5,094 views, 971 engagements

## HTC moves to required learning

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Holy Trinity students are going back to school Tuesday... sort of.

The Lee County Catholic school system has decided to transition to required distance learning starting Tuesday, April 14.

The Iowa Department of Education is requiring school districts that are offering continued learning through the COVID-19 shutdown, to declare by Friday whether they will do required learning or voluntary learning.

Fort Madison public schools and Central Lee schools have both indicated they will continue with the voluntary programs currently in effect.

Schools that don't offer any continued learning will be required to make up the lost educational time by the Iowa Department of Education.

Governor Kim Reynolds has closed private and public schools in the state through April 30. She said she would give districts two weeks notice on any additional changes, which would be tentatively next Thursday.

But Holy Trinity Catholic's Chief Administrative Officer Michael Sheerin said whether school is restarted or canceled for this year, HTC is positioned to move forward.

"The truth is we're planning long-term and I think at this point any school would tell you they are not on a 3-week plan. They are really planning to end the school year," Sheerin said.

**APRIL 23, 2020 -**  
5,024 views, 1,558 engagements

## Lee County Health Dept. finds 4th person with COVID

LEE COUNTY – The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Lee County Health Department have identified one additional case of COVID-19 in the county, an older adult who is currently in isolation. This makes four confirmed cases in Lee County to date.

The Iowa Department of Public Health has created a new Coronavirus Dashboard on their website, <https://coronavirus.iowa.gov>. We encourage interested residents to check this website if interested in knowing county testing data, confirmed case counts, and other useful information.

Reminder all residents should:

Stay home as much as possible. Leave only for essential errands like groceries or getting medication. When you run these errands, send only one person from the household, if possible and consider wearing a mask.

Maintain at least a six-foot physical distance apart from others outside your home when possible.

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**APRIL 5, 2020 -** 9,207 views, 1,632 engagements



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

## Sunday Cruise

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, above right, gives a thumbs up while leading a Sunday afternoon downtown cruise along Avenue G in April. Mohrfeld wanted to set up the cruise as a way for people to get out for fresh air during coronavirus shutdowns.

**APRIL 20, 2020 -** 5,022 views, 807 engagements

## FM DuPont kicks out hand sanitizer to area

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – State health officials are issuing a ramped up personal protection equipment shortage order.

During Gov. Kim Reynolds' daily presser from the state's Emergency Operations Center in Johnston, Sarah Reisetter, the deputy director of the Iowa Department of Public Health issues a stark warning about the supplies available.

"Unfortunately were in a position like many states and countries and were preparing for a time when we might not have enough of these supplies," Reisetter said.

The order requires all providers to work with the IDPH to assess, monitor, and extend use of PPE and is based on guidance from CDC. She said the order applies to all health care providers and medical response organizations in the state.

Fort Madison DuPont Plant Manager John Hellige said DuPont has been producing hand sanitizer and distribut-

ing it locally, but will expand upon that in the near future.

"For over 80 years, the DuPont Fort Madison plant has called this community and the surrounding Lee County home. The health, safety and well-being of our employees, customers and our local community continue to be our top priority during this unprecedented time," Hellige wrote in a statement Friday.

"I am so proud of our DuPont Fort Madison colleagues who have stepped up to answer the call by converting some of our manufacturing lines to produce and distribute hand sanitizer as a way to combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

"The site utilized a recipe provided by the World Health Organization to develop a process for production of hand sanitizer to support area hospitals, small businesses and community organizations. So far, more than 150 gallons of hand sanitizer have been produced and delivered in the community. We are all in this together, and the Fort Madison site is proud and humbled to assist in delivering essential materials to those who are most in need."

**APRIL 21, 2020 -**  
3,138 views, 347 engagements

## City uses grant to rehab parking

PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – City officials are still looking at options to spend almost a million dollars of a bond interest rebate from the state.

At Tuesday's regular meeting of the Fort Madison City Council held via teleconference, Public Works Director Mark Bousselot told the council that the city got some good bids on replacing two city lots with permeable pavers, but still had about \$1 million of \$1.6 million in rebates to spend on other projects.



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# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

## APRIL 27, 2020 -

**4,796 views, 1,115 engagements**  
**Reynolds relaxes restrictions**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
 PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Home bound residents of southeast Iowa, Illinois and Missouri could soon be turning their eyes toward Lee County as Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds included the county as one of 77 that are having restrictions loosened in the midst of the COVID-19 outbreak.

During Reynold's daily presser from the state's Emergency Operations Center, the first-term governor announced an initial phase of trying to get the state restarted in areas not hardest hit by the coronavirus.

The proclamation permits restaurants, fitness centers, malls, libraries, race tracks, and certain other retail establishments to reopen in a limited fashion with public health measures in place.

In addition, the proclamation lifts the restriction on religious and spiritual gatherings so long as churches and other gathering hosts implement reasonable public health measures. All other closures were extended until May 15, 2020.

She said 15 counties in the state haven't seen any impact from the virus and used that as a springboard to start relaxing some restrictions set forth in March emergency orders.

## MARCH 23, 2020 -

**4,730 views, 1,852 engagements**  
**West Point shuts down offices due to COVID**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
 PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – For all intents and purposes, the City of West Point has shut down.

City Administrator Dennis McGregor said Monday morning, the city is sending all hourly employees home with pay indefinitely as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

McGregor said city crews will share daily responsibilities of regular checks of the city's water and sewer intakes, but other than that almost all employees will be on an on-call basis, including West Point Utility workers.

"They've got daily routines they need to continue to do. Water checks...lift station checks... sewer intakes need to be checked and we'll continue to do those. But they won't be working together, they will be sharing that," McGregor said.

"We're not going to have them riding around in trucks side by side together."

If there were to be a power outage due to weather or other unforeseen circumstances, McGregor said utilities crews will be ready to handle those situations.

He said the city's office staff is still available by phone, but most of them are working from home as well.

"Our office is available and we've posted our number on the door and on Facebook. We're still here, taking phone calls and can do business if needed by appointment," he said.

## APRIL 6, 2020 -

**4,824 views, 1,082 engagements**  
**FM officials close all public rec areas**

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
 PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison city officials have closed all parks, playgrounds and campgrounds effective immediately, while school officials have said all district facilities will be closed beginning tomorrow morning.

The move comes on the heels of Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds expanded emergency declaration to include playgrounds and campgrounds in the state.

Shortly after the expansion of the emergency declaration was announced, Fort Madison City Clerk Melinda Blind sent an email to Pen City Current advising that the city's was moving in the same direction.

"In the continued effort to slow the spread of the coronavirus and abide by the Governor's list of closures, the Fort Madison Parks & Recreation Department will be closing all parks, playgrounds and campgrounds effective immediately until further notice. Public restrooms within City parks and all drinking fountains will remain out of service at this time," Blind wrote.

"All shelter rentals scheduled prior to Thursday, April 30th, will be postponed. Renters will be contacted by the Parks & Recreation Department to determine available dates for rescheduling purposes.

Then Monday evening at about 5:50 p.m., Fort Madison School District Activities Director Jeremy Swink announced that the district was also closing all facilities and school park equipment starting Tuesday morning.

"The school will fall in line with the governor and the city of Fort Madison's recommendations to close parks. This includes our outdoor facilities: track, outdoor fields, tennis courts and playground equipment," he wrote.

He said all facilities will be locked down until further notice.

"I am torn by this as I love seeing our students and community stay active during this tough time, but it would be irresponsible for the school to not follow the recommendations from our governor and city officials," Swink wrote.

"I anticipate some unhappy community members, but I want to remind everyone that the Fort Madison Community School District has the best interest of our students and community members at heart. During these tough times, we as a community need to come together now more than ever. Thank you for your support and cooperation."

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## 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**APRIL 19, 2020 - 4,419 views, 302 engagements**

### City looks at rezoning for ambulance service

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials will consider a move Tuesday that could provide facilities for a future potential ambulance service.

With Lee County EMS Ambulance operating on a week-to-week basis under heavy financial pressure, Fort Madison and Keokuk Fire Departments are scrambling to submit a proposal to county officials to provide services in the county, as an option to losing the service.

At Tuesday’s Fort Madison City Council meeting council members will vote on a first reading of an ordinance to rezone property owned by Bobby and Jessica Holtkamp at 2324 Avenue J, and city owned property at 2332 Avenue J, from residential to B-4 Highway Business District.

The move is an effort to identify a temporary location to house ambulance services and staff for the city.

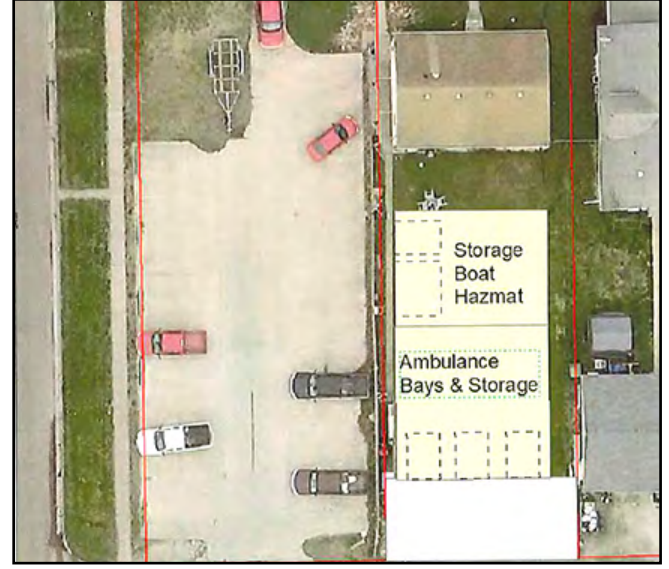
According to a report prepared for the council by City Building Director Doug Krogmeier, ambulance employees would be housed in a single-story home owned by

the Holtkamps at 2324 Avenue J. Bobby Holtkamp has indicated he wants to build a large garage/warehouse behind the home that could house the fire department and ambulance equipment. The warehouse is being planned large enough to temporarily house the fire department’s rescue boat and hazmat equipment as well.

The report also indicates that the city eventually wants to build a new fire station and that construction could include space for any ambulance services, should that come to fruition. If and when that would happen, Holtkamp would use the warehouse for his Holtkamp’s Floors, Decor & Furniture business.

Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren said right now this is all just leg work in the event that the city’s take over the ambulance service. He, and Keokuk Fire Chief Gabe Rose, are working on a proposal that would provide advanced services to the county. The two cities would each cover half the county, including their respective cities.

“They have hospital to hospital transfers that would be involved so we would have to have advanced services,” Herren said.



The city would pay a monthly rent or lease to Holtkamp for the space until a new fire station could be constructed.

The city parking lot at 2332 Avenue J is already considered commercial property in the city’s comprehensive plan, so the rezoning of the both properties would be compliant with that plan.

“The fire chief’s plan to use this building for ambulance service should be temporary, because a new station is needed,” the report indicated.

**MARCH 3, 2020 - 4,413 views, 779 engagements**

### FM school district voters approve \$10M physical plant levy

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Community School District will get about \$10 million over the next 10 years to help with security, maintenance, and facility upgrades as district voters approved the measure Tuesday night.

District voters approved the measure 734-339, or a 68.4% approval. The district only needed 50% plus 1 vote to institute the new levy. The approval comes after multiple consecutive failures to pass a bond to build a new PreK-3rd grade elementary school

The issue on the ballot Tuesday was a voted Physical Plant and Equipment

levy bump to \$1.34/\$1,000. The district had been collecting the levy at just .33/\$1,000.

District officials said the move will generate about \$1 million annually for upgrades to three of the district four schools, excluding the Fort Madison Middle School. Priorities include upgrading the security at Richardson and

Lincoln Elementary school and completing the next phase of the Fort Madison High School air conditioning project.

Other projects could be determined by the district’s current facilities assessment being completed by Estes Group.

School Board President Tim Wondra said it was nice to see something finally get passed.



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## 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**MARCH 6, 2020 - 4,125 views, 763 engagements**

### Fire chief reopens 8th Street after repairs

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials were on scene Friday afternoon reopening 8th Street from Avenue G to the alley south after engineers reported the Humphrey building was shored up enough to remove the barriers.

City Building Director Doug Krogmeier said Friday at the scene, engineers hired by building owner Bryan Humphrey have reported to the city that the building is safe to reopen the streets.

Particle board reinforcements are visible on the west side of the building from the street level to the third floor. Krogmeier said he's going to keep the parking spots on the west side barricaded off.

He said he, nor Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren, have been inside the building to look at the repairs, but wanted to go in with the engineer.

The barricades on the north side of the building were pulled down two weeks ago after city officials received an engineering report that the concern had been addressed.

"He's making progress to at least get the road open and hopefully that continues and he gets somebody signed up to make the proper repairs," Krogmeier said.

The city initiated court proceedings against Humphrey in January citing the building was a public nuisance and safety issue.

Krogmeier said a court date was set for March 30th and those court proceedings are still planned and would now entail further plans to secure and repair the building.

"We're still going to court on the 30th and now that will be just to talk about the plan going forward and fines. But until we get some major progress, we don't know what the fines will be," Krogmeier said.

The city barricaded the west side of the building in November blocking off the street after settling was observed in structural columns on that side. The city then put barricades on the north side in case settling would occur that could blow out windows and harm passersby.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren wraps caution tape around barricades on the west side of the Humphrey building in downtown Fort Madison. The road was opened up for the first time since November after Humphrey's engineers told city officials the building was shored up enough to reopen the street.

**APRIL 30, 2020 - 4,127 views, 389 engagements**

### No Fort artifacts found in Highway 61 dig

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Archeologists with the company digging through the dirt under Avenue H, have determined timbers found under the roadway do not appear to be a part of the original Fort.

Lowell Blikre, an assistant director with Bear Creek Archeology, of Cresco, Iowa, said Thursday tests done on samples taken from the site, which was just south of the former Sheaffer Pen plant, indicate they may be structure related to a train spur or an old trolley car line.

"Well we're confident they are not fort related at this point," Blikre said. "Most likely the interpretation is that they're a late 19th century structure related to the train spurs that went into the factory prior the Sheaffer Pen facility. Or possibly an old trolley car line as records show there used to be trolley cars in the town."

Blikre said crews sampled sediment within the timber feature and sampled some of the earth underneath and in a few other locations. He said the timbers were built on previously excavated soil and crews didn't pick up any additional findings from under the timbers.

**APRIL 8, 2020 - 4,065 views, 627 engagements**

### City considered furloughing some employees

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison city officials are looking at possibly furloughing employees to help salvage a crisis-riddled budget.

City Manager David Varley, who talked last week about the unknowns of the coronavirus' impact to local government budgets, told Mayor Matt Mohrfeld this week if things get much worse the city may not be able to pay its bill in six months.

At Tuesday night's teleconferenced City Council meeting, Mohrfeld put the issue in front of the council for recommendations.

"I met with Dave in our normal weekly update and he presented a budget projection that if things play out unfavorably, in six months we can't pay the bills," Mohrfeld said.

Mohrfeld started the conversation with the option of shuttering or delaying some city services including the pool and library. He also suggested furloughing some employees.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

**MARCH 15, 2020 - 3,981 views, 1,145 engagements**

## Area schools close doors for a month in March

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Central Lee, Fort Madison and Holy Trinity Catholic school officials have announced closures for the next four weeks due to the spread of the coronavirus, and at the recommendation of Gov. Kim Reynolds.

Reynolds has set a press conference for tomorrow to provide additional information.

According to a statement Sunday evening, Gov. Reynolds is making this recommendation in consultation with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and based on CDC guidelines.

“Earlier today, IDPH was notified of four additional positive cases of Iowans with COVID-19, for a total of 22 positive cases. According to IDPH, two cases are related to international travel. The individuals are residents of Allamakee County, one is a middle-age adult between 41-60 years; the other is a child, age 0-18 years. The third case is a middle-age Johnson County resident with no identified travel-related risk or exposure to a known COVID-19 case, and is considered the second case of community spread in Iowa. The fourth individual resides in Polk County and is a

middle-age adult and indicates a third case of community spread,” Reynolds said in a video statement Sunday.

Fort Madison school officials posted an email Sunday evening with the following message:

“As a school district, we have been closely monitoring the news and best practices regarding the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). At the direction of Governor Kim Reynolds, this evening, she is recommending schools in Iowa must close for four weeks. This closure will begin tomorrow, March 16, 2020.

The closure affects all school programming, including before- and after-school activities, all athletic and extracurricular practices and competitions, and all weekend events.

District teachers and staff have been considering e-learning plans for our students. Your teachers will be providing more information later this week. If you have any questions, please contact your child’s building principal. We understand we have some challenges regarding internet access in our community and we are trying to determine a viable solution.

More details on possible breakfast and lunch services will be provided in the coming days. “

**APRIL 28, 2020 -**

**3,975 views, 988 engagements**

## Man arrested after leading police through park

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – A Burlington man is in custody after leading area law enforcement on a chase near Ivanhoe Park Monday evening.

Officers with the Fort Madison Police Department, Lee County Sheriff’s Office, West Point/Donnellson Police Department and the Iowa State Patrol took to the woods and fields between Bluff Road and Avenue L for about two hours Monday night looking for the suspect.

According to Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff, officers responded to a call in the 4500 block of Avenue O just prior to 7 p.m. to investigate a motor vehicle theft. He said Ottumwa police had indicated GPS tracking placed a wanted 2019 Hyundai at the motel.

Upon arrival officers found the people in possession of the vehicle in the room and began questioning them. During that time, one of the suspects broke free and fled the scene with officers in pursuit.

The suspect, later identified as Loran L. Cheely, 38, of Burlington, eluded officers by entering a wooded area, and a manhunt began.

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# 2020 – A Year in Review: March & April

## MARCH 21, 2020 -

3,520 views, 415 engagements

### Ambulance issues prompt emergency board meeting

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Officials throughout Lee County met in an emergency joint teleconference on Saturday afternoon to discuss the dire situation of the Lee County Emergency Medical Services.

The ambulance service is facing disabling financial pressure highlighted by a \$36,000 infusion from the county on Friday just to meet payroll through March.

The meeting was attended by representatives of the ambulance service, two Lee County Board of Supervisors, Keokuk and Fort Madison mayors, Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber, the fire chiefs of both city's and other elected officials.

"This has become a crisis and this industry has reached a crisis," said Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld.

"Fort Madison and Keokuk have offered some resources of personnel to look into options to keep this going, and some of the smaller cities have had helpful participation."

Mohrfeld said no city has offered to contribute funds to the operation at this point. He said the efforts are focusing on determining what the service will look like going forward.

Lee County Supervisor Gary Folluo said Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren and Keokuk Fire Chief Gabe Rose are both looking into whether the service can be operated under those respective city's licenses to provide emergency services.

Folluo also said the Young family is making some inquiries through the IRS to release some incoming funds that are tied to a lien on the company.

"That phone call on Monday between Richard Young and the IRS will be very important. If we can get that to be the case, the fire departments are going to start talking to the state about operate off their licenses as emergency service providers, and then we go from there," he said.

Folluo said the current contract between the county and the ambulance service expires on June 30, 2020. He said a new contract is in the Young's hands, but he hasn't heard confirmation they are going to sign it.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

An employee with HRGreen, the city's engineer on the Avenue H reconstruction project, rolls through the traffic cones at the intersection of the Riverview Park entry and Avenue H Monday. Detour signs and barricades have been put in place, along with a stop sign at the intersection of Avenue H and 7th Street westbound. Crews are getting ready to replace the stretch of Avenue H from 2nd to 6th streets.

## MARCH 23, 2020 - 3,929 views, 385 engagements

### Crews start Hwy. 61 rehab from 2nd to 6th

FORT MADISON – The Avenue H from 2nd to 6th Street Reconstruction project has begun.

Effective immediately the following detour has been established: Eastbound Highway 61 traffic will turn North (left) onto 7th Street and proceed to Avenue E, turning right at Avenue E and traveling East to 2nd Street. Westbound Highway 61 traffic will turn West (right) onto Avenue E and proceed to 7th Street, turning South (left) onto 7th Street and proceeding to Avenue H (end of detour). The City of Fort Madison will be assessing the traffic on the detour and placing "no parking" signs as needed to help with the flow of

traffic.

This project is a full reconstruction project converting the existing four-lane roadway into a three-lane roadway.

This is one of several projects planned for the Highway 61 Business Route. Avenue H from 2nd to 6th Street will be closed during the reconstruction project. Weather permitting, this project should be open to traffic by November 15, 2020. The project has been designed to allow for access to Riverview Park and for traffic to cross the BNSF Mississippi River Bridge during construction.

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–Chuck & Lee

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