

Pen City Current

Wednesday, Jan. 8, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 16

2019 - A Year in Review

November & December

Shooting's top final look back

Looking back on 2019

17,254 views, 15,516 engagements - Dec. 10, 2019

Police shoot armed suspect at Scotts Dec. 10

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A man with a gun was shot by local authorities at Scotts Miracle-Gro Tuesday night after he ran into the warehouse armed.

The suspect, who was wearing a yellow hoodie, was shot twice in the chest and was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital. No additional details are available.

Law enforcement was called to the scene at about 10:55 p.m., with a report of a man running through the facility with a gun.

The call came about 45 minutes after a shooting took place in the 3100 block of Avenue O. It is not known at this time if the shootings are related.

According to an officer at the scene, a search team was being formed at that time to hunt for someone who shot a man in the neck behind a home on the block.

Fort Madison Police, Lee County Sheriff's deputies, and the Iowa State Patrol were on the scene of the shooting.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Area authorities gathered outside the Scotts Miracle Gro facility on Tuesday, Dec. 10 following an officer-involved shooting of an armed suspect running loose in the facility. The officer, Cory Brown of the Fort Madison Police Department, shot and killed the suspect and was cleared of any wrong doing.

Suspect involved in earlier Dec. 10 shooting in FM

11,439 views, 10,228 engagements - Dec. 11, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A suspect shot by a Fort Madison police officer inside the Scotts Miracle-Gro facility Tuesday night was the same man involved in a shooting about 45 minutes prior in a Fort Madison neighborhood

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark

Rohloff confirmed early Wednesday morning that the suspect, who was shot by a Fort Madison Police officer twice in the chest, was the same person who had shot a Fort Madison man in the neck about 45 minutes earlier.

The first shooting took place around 10:15 p.m. in the 3100 block of Avenue O. Officials at the scene said law enforcement officers were actively looking for the suspect in the shooting.

At about 10:55 p.m., another call

came in from LeeComm that a male subject had entered the Scotts facility and was running through the plant. A very short time later, the suspect was reported to have a gun and a radio and moments later officers reported shots had been fired and the suspect was down.

"We have an officer involved shooting at the Scotts facility and I can't go into much more detail than that at this point," said Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff.

WP man was suspect shot and killed at Scotts

10,541 views, 9,280 engagements - Dec. 11, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Authorities have released the name of the man shot and killed at a local man-

ufacturing plant Tuesday night.

Robert Allen Elfgen, 42, of West Point, was shot and killed by a Fort Madison police officer while brandishing a handgun at Scotts Miracle-Gro Tues-

day night just after 11 p.m.

An autopsy has been scheduled at the Office of the Iowa State Medical Examiner for Friday.

The officer who fired the shot has not been identified and has been placed on administrative leave per FMPD policy pending

the outcome of the investigation.

Investigators continue to look into the connection of the officer-involved shooting and a shooting that took place in the 3100 block of Avenue O about 45 minutes prior to Elfgen appearing at Scotts.

Editor's Note:

As the year comes to a close, it is customary to look back at the stories that affected us throughout the year. Being an all-digital newspaper with multiple social media channels, we have many avenues to consider when deciding to review the year behind us.

We chose to feature the best read news articles from our website pencitycurrent.com, the top social media posts, and the photos that impressed the most readers from each month.

Each issue of 2019 - A Year in Review will feature two months of these stories & photos based on that data.

These stories touched thousands of lives this year, whether they were heartbreaking or heartwarming, good news or bad.

We hope you enjoy looking back on the year with us as we usher in a new year filled with new stories. You can rest assured Pen City Current will be reporting those stories in a factual, unbiased way in the manner you've become accustomed to - whether you're reading them on our website, on our mobile app, in our e-Edition, or in any of our social media channels.

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

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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

'Caretakers' bring in Hopp family harvest

9,600 views, 6,548 engagements - Nov. 26, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELSON - "And on the 8th day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' So God made a farmer."

The words were made famous by legendary radio host Paul Harvey, but were quickly recalled by Jill Hopp Monday on a beautiful morning just southwest of Donnellson.

Hopp was joined by her sons Jason and Jim, other family members and friends, as a couple dozen other 'caretakers' descended on three acreages that Jill and Bruce Hopp have owned in the area since the mid-70s.

The mood was light and supportive, but somber, as Bruce died just six weeks ago of pancreatic cancer.

Jill said the outpouring of support has been something she'd seen, heard, and been a part of, but was still overwhelming.

"My phone just hasn't stopped ringing. You don't have to ask - they just show up," she said.

She said it's an instinct of a farmer that has been perfected from generation to generation. Her husband was always in on any similar efforts for other farming families.

"He would be one of the first ones there to help. That's just what they do."

Hopp said they played the words of Paul Harvey's poem at the end of her husband's funeral.

"Bruce loved that poem," she said.

"Every day, Paul Harvey at the end of his show, would mention a couple that had been married for 50 years and Bruce always said we were gonna be on Paul Harvey for our 50 years.

"He died 10 days before our 50th anniversary. I'll never, ever forget that."

About \$8 million in equipment run by a couple dozen



Photo courtesy Jason Mueller/ ChemGro Agronomy

A drone photo shows about six tractors and combines from area farmers who came together to help bring in the crops of Bruce and Jill Hopp of Donnellson. Bruce died in October.

local farmers was fired up at about 9:30 a.m. and hit the rows of corn that were still to be pulled from the Hopp land.

Jill and other friends took to the barn to prepare a large meal befitting the effort. Gary Schiller, who helped organize the event, along with Bill Benjamin, said all three acreages, close to 450 acres, would be harvested in about four hours if everything went according to plan.

Combines lined up in rows and harvested eight to 10 rows at a time as grain wagons rolled next to the combines to capture the grain and haul it to other wagons that either took the grain to elevators, or to Roquette in Keokuk.

The grain wagons would then rotate back in parallel to the combines and the process continued until all the corn had been pulled from the fields.

Schiller said organizing the event was almost as quick, because it's wasn't an issue of if they will come. Farmers are an entrenched fraternity and Schiller said it was just a matter of where and when.

"This is what the community wanted to do. They wanted to come and help out the Hopp family," he said.

"Months ago this started and people called me. I told them we would do it and I said let's wait until everyone has their property under control. And then we just picked a day - and boy did we get a beautiful one."



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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

6,842 views, 1,225 engagements - Nov. 7, 2019

Fort Madison firefighters work on cutting a hole in the roof of a home in the 1500 block of Avenue E on Nov 7. The home was destroyed by a fire that broke out in the upper floors and spread to the back of the home.

FMHS teacher saves student from choking

8,919 views, 5,907 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A scary situation in a Fort Madison High School classroom last week has a student thankful for the quick action of a teacher.

Last week senior Diego Lozano was sipping on a bottle of water and had the cap of the bottle in his teeth when he laughed at something said in the room and the cap slipped down through the back of his mouth into his esophagus.

Lozano, who is ranked 9th in IAWrestle magazine for the upcoming wrestling season, said he alerted a friend sitting next to him that he was choking and then ran to a classroom trash can.

“It’s kind of sketchy, but I remember I was just sitting in class and laughed and it just went down,” Lozano said. “I told my friend Mike (Mosena) I was choking. I had the whole bottle cap on my lips and it went straight down my throat.”

Lozano said he began to vomit as his body reacted to the blockage and then he got very weak and sank to the floor and blacked out.

The next thing he remembers was he was standing over the trash can and someone was giving him the Heimlich Maneuver, which is quick thrusts back and up under a person’s diaphragm.

“I was standing over the trash can and my legs went weak. I went down and then she came in and Heimliched me seven or eight times and then I coughed it up,” Lozano said.

“I stopped breathing and was unconscious.”

Malissa Nelson, a special education instructor, was alerted to the situation when Mosena went running down the hall looking for help.

“I had just left the office and was heading back to my classroom. I saw a student sprinting and asked him what was going on,” she said.

“He informed me that there was a kid choking. I asked where the kid was and ran there. When I got there, the student was choking and moving very little air. I told the student that I was going to do the Heimlich and it was going to hurt.”

DOT sets 56-mile detour for bridge work

8,919 views, 5,907 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

MOUNT PLEASANT – Local officials are concerned that a bridge closure on Hwy. 218 near Salem will send heavy traffic on secondary roads and bridges in Lee County.

Bridge repairs to the northbound U.S. 218 bridge over South Fish Creek in Henry County

will begin on Saturday and will require closing the bridge for approximately two weeks, weather permitting, according to the Iowa Department of Transportation’s Mount Pleasant construction office.

Dynamic Message Signs will be in place along state highway routes to alert

motorists of the pending bridge closure.

Through traffic will be directed onto a 56-mile marked detour route (see map) using Iowa 2 (east and west for approx. 8.4 miles), U.S. 61 (south and north approx. 22.4 miles), and U.S. 34 (east and west approx. 25.4 miles).

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Founded in 2016



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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

We Remember Our Loved Ones Lost in 2019

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| Leonard D. Anderson | JoAnn Marie Blind | William H. "Bill" Buntin | Roger W. DeBuhr | Donetta J. Gaylord | Margaret Elizabeth Holtkamp Schierbrock |
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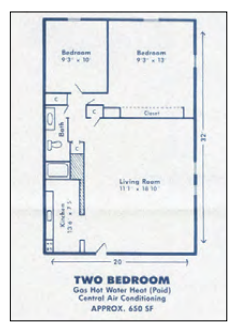
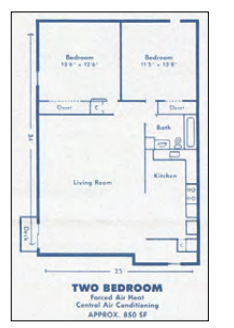
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As we enjoy the holidays with family and friends, we thank you for your support and patronage and wish you all a very Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!



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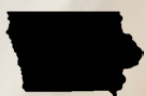
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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

Editorial - Pen City Current starts year four

9,085 views, 890 engagements - Dec. 14, 2019

They say when you climb a ladder quickly, about half the time you're dangling in the air and moving on momentum.

We just passed our third full year here at the Pen City Current and are flying into the fourth year. I'm not sure about climbing any sort of a proverbial ladder quickly, but we're certainly flying most of the time.



VANDEMBERG

During the holidays, typically it's slower moving news because everyone's gearing up for family time and well, people typically are getting ready to party.

Each time we've rolled over a year, I've tried to take the opportunity to do a few special things. First and foremost to thank the people of Fort Madison and the surrounding north Lee County communities for their support during the year.

Our advertisers are one of a kind people, who not only advertise because they feel we have a dynamic and up-to-date local news outlet, but also because they see value in the product. We have a unique offering that has open-ended exposure based on how compelling the news is and how good we are at writing it.

We've moved to more than 7,600 Facebook followers and have had 3.2 million views on our website. Again, those are up and down depending on the dynamics of the news day. This week was heavy, and one day we had more than 33,000 people check in. That's a lot of impressions due to very unique and tragic news.

But most people see what we see. Gathering news isn't a free enterprise. And even though we don't charge for subscriptions to our product, we have many people who pay us monthly for the product because they, too, see that value. We thank you, too! Without our advertisers and our subscribers we can't continue to climb the ladder.

It's our sincere hope that our momentum continues in the next decade. We had some personnel and product changes in 2019, but we think now we're positioned to bring you more of the news, sports, and information you need - when and where you need it.

No... we don't get to everything. I had a guy stop me in the street while I was at a police incident Thursday morning and say, "Man, you get to everything don'tcha?"

"We try," I replied. But we do miss things with a news staff of one and what's even greater about the people that support our product is they're there to help fill in the cracks with submissions and photos. We thank you, too! It's that partnership that makes this enterprise work.

We're looking at different ideas and how to take what we've built and create even more synergies within our coverage area. We're open to new ideas from you. I think you all have my phone number. You certainly have my email. Send me any thoughts you have. What would you like to see more of in a community news outlet?

It is our goal, and has been, to add writing staff this year. We don't know what that looks like yet, but we would currently be interested in talking to those who have some background in writing and have some experience with government, education, sports, photography, etc.

You can't be afraid to ask questions and conduct interviews, but at the end of the day we're just writing stories about the people of these communities. It's their story, we're just putting it down on "e" paper.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Police take a position on Dec. 12, after a man was reported holed up with weapons at a home in the 3000 block of Avenue L. The situation was resolved peacefully.

Standoff resolved without incident

6,773 views, 4,773 engagements - Dec. 12, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDEMBERG PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Authorities were called to a home in the 3000 block of Avenue L on Thursday morning on a report of a man who had barricaded himself inside.

At approximately 8 a.m., Fort Madison police were dispatched to 3027 Avenue L where a subject with weapons and ammunition had barricaded himself in his home prompting authorities to cordon off the entire block, including some of Bus. 61.

After a short stand-off, the man agreed to come out and speak with law enforcement officers, and the scene was cleared at about 8:50 a.m. without incident.

Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff said Caleb M. Ford, 20, was arrested and

charged with a misdemeanor. Rohloff said the incident didn't involve someone possibly using weapons in a dangerous fashion. The man

had barricaded himself in the room with the guns because they were his father's, who had passed away years ago.



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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

Sheriff's deputy seizes \$20K in cash, cocaine

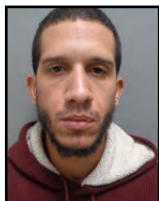
7,083 views, 4,608 engagements - Dec. 5, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A Lee County Sheriff's deputy seized close to \$15,000 in suspected cocaine early Thursday morning after stopping a vehicle from Florida for speeding.

The deputy made the stop on Hwy. 2 near Donnellson at 240th Street discovered \$5,000 in cash and the drugs.

Brayam David Chaparro Gardner, 30, of Ruskin, Fla, was detained and taken to the Lee County Jail charged with possession of drug paraphernalia. After further investigation additional charges of possession with intent to deliver cocaine, a Class B felony; violation of drug tax stamp, a class D felony and possession of marijuana, a serious misdemeanor, were added.



GARDNER

The deputy, who wasn't named in the release, had recently completed a drug interdiction training course, which educates law enforcement on detection and enforcement of drug trafficking.

"He was stopped for speeding, but the reason for the search was based on admissions of the driver, and observations of the deputy," said Lee County Narcotics Task Force Commander Chad Donaldson.

He said Lee County doesn't see a lot of cocaine, but with the major highways in the county, he isn't surprised to see it from someone in transit.

"Anytime we have someone trafficking in controlled substances though our jurisdiction its possible considering the major highways through Lee County," he said.

"You never know what can turn up during this type of contact. But for our area, meth and marijuana are common. We don't commonly come across cocaine in this amount."

The arrest will prompt a consultation with intelligence networks and the Division of Narcotics Enforcement to see if any additional charges are warranted, Donaldson said.

The drugs have been sent to the state crime lab for testing and the investigation into the incident continues.

"We haven't got the lab results back yet, but we suspect it's cocaine."

Gardner is currently in the Lee County Jail and no bond has been set, as he hasn't seen a judge.

Shopko building sold to Arizona investment firm

6,299 views, 3,691 engagements - Dec. 9, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Future plans for the former Shopko building in Fort Madison are still unclear, but the building does have a new owner and local officials are working on getting it cleaned up.

According to Beacon Schneider's website Cool Investments, LLC out of Scottsdale, Ariz., purchased the building and the outlying property in September for \$360,000 from a New York real estate firm helping to liquidate more than 60 properties as of the Ashwaubenon, Wis.-based company.

According to the Lee County Treasurer's office, the land and building are valued at just over \$915,000.

Fort Madison Partner's Executive Director Tim Gobble said he hasn't been told what the plans are for the building but said he has been asked to help get the area and property cleaned up.

"As of right now, I don't know what the plans are. They haven't been telling me anything other than they'd like it cleaned out," Gobble said.

According to a report in the Milwaukee Business Journal, Cool Investments, LLC is an Arizona-based company registered to Jeffrey Fry, who is also the registered agent for Fry Investment Co., of Scottsdale, Arizona.

Shopko initiated bankruptcy proceedings in January in Nebraska. After initially looking to restructure the company's finances through a buyer, the company decided to shutter most of its outlets.

A small presence of Shoptikals, which are Shopko Optical outlets are in operation, but Monarch Alternative Capital, bought up the Shopko's optical asset, and assisted in marketing close to 80 properties for sale or lease.

The Burlington Shopko property has also been sold, but Fort Madison mayor-elect Matt Mohrfeld said he didn't think it was to the same company. That building is being renovated for housing.

Pothitakis named to best law firm list

4,759 views, 916 engagements - Nov. 13, 2019

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Local attorney Niko Pothitakis has been named to U.S. News & World Reports "Best Law Firms" for 2020.

It's the 10th year that U.S. News & World Report and Best Lawyers, have given the rankings.

Firms included in the 2020 Edition of "Best Law Firms" are recognized for professional excellence with consistently impressive

ratings from clients and peers. To be eligible for a ranking, a firm must first have a lawyer recognized in The Best Lawyers in America, which recognizes the top 5% of private practicing lawyers in the United States. Achieving a tiered ranking signals a unique combination of quality law practice and breadth of legal expertise. Mr. Pothitakis has been named to The Best Lawyers in America every year since 2013.

"Choosing the right law firm can be a vital decision," said Tim Smart, executive

editor at U.S. News & World Report. "The rankings draw on U.S. News' 35

years of experience evaluating complex institutions to help individuals and companies alike make the best decisions."

"For the 2020 'Best Law Firms' publication, the evaluation process has remained a rigorous and discerning as it did when we first started then years ago," says Phil Greer, CEO of Best Lawyers.



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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

HTC senior starts his own auction company

6,595 views, 2,857 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – He hasn’t walked across the stage to get a diploma, or flip a tassel. But he’s ahead of his class for sure.

Holy Trinity Catholic senior Mason Holvoet worked his way through auctions in Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri, squirreled away some money and now, at just 17, owns his own auction and real estate company.

Without any funding help from family or loans, which he’s too young for anyway, Holvoet paid an attorney, bought a truck, bought a topper to call from, built a website and now is a legitimate business owner.

Oh yeah...and he’s also the president of the Fort Madison High School Future Farmers of America and has been class president at Holy Trinity for the past four years.

He can’t drink a beer, but he can hold a conversation with just about anyone in the room, and talks of his passion and excitement for auctioneering like a seasoned pro.

It would actually be kinda tough to prove he’s not one.

Holvoet owns Premier Auction and Realty Services LLC, out of Wever, and has been building and promoting his business for the past three months. As a senior, he qualified for an internship program at HTC and works for Sharpless Auctions in Iowa City on Wednesdays. The auction is the largest weekly auction in the state.

But he got his start calling one item at God’s Portion Day when he was in fourth grade. The next year he was able to call a couple more items and this year, as a senior, he had his own time slot from noon to 6 p.m.

Holvoet said he doesn’t even consider what has become his passion, work.

“I’ll never work a day in my life because I enjoy what

I’m doing. I truly do mean that. Some people hate going into work, but I love it,” he said.

“Others in my class, who have jobs here or there, complain and moan about going in. I never complain about going to work and it’s a joyous thing when you can say that. It really is.”

With auctions becoming more scarce with the advent of computers and online auctions, he said that auctioneers are becoming a dying breed.

“If you look around, there’s a need for auctioneers,” Holvoet said. “I think there’s a strong future in this. Auctioneers stand the test of the time. Even in an economic downfall, people still have to liquidate their merchandise, so we’ll be here to sell it.”

He spent time going to auctions with his father when he was little and thought it was something he could do even as a younger child. But now he speaks to the business like he’s an older generation bibbed-up auction enthusiast.

Technology has changed the face of auctions, he said, comparing the craft to half a century ago – a time he could carry no reference.

“I always say the auction business has changed more in the past 10 years than it has in the last 50 with the new technology coming in,” he said.

“Online auctions was a big curve for the older guys. They didn’t want to convert from a live-chain auction to going completely online. We’ll do both – onsite or online – whichever works best for the client.”

Holvoet said he wanted to work with other people first to get an education about how other auction companies do things. He’s sold in Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri.

He gives credit to other auctioneers as well as family and friends for helping. He said the opportunities are what has set him up for success.

“It doesn’t matter how good you are in the business, it all depends on who wants to give you an opportunity



to take a chance. But that’s just with anything. It’s a risk. We’re trying and I’m young enough that I can afford to take the risk.”

Despite embarking on his own adventure rolling around the tri-state area helping people liquidate property and helping with fundraisers, which would seem to most to be a full-time gig, Holvoet still plans to attend Southeastern Community College after graduation and pursue a degree in business management.

The Premier Auction website can be found at <https://premierauctionandrealty.com/> or by calling 319-470-7372.

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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

Burlington FBI sting yields five arrests

5,192 views, 2,618 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

DAVENPORT – Eight defendants are facing federal criminal charges as part of a multi-year joint federal and state investigation of a large drug trafficking organization that operated out of Burlington.

Five of the federal defendants were arrested Tuesday. Those arrested will make their initial appearance in federal court at the United States Courthouse, in Davenport, today.

The charges were announced by Marc Krickbaum, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Iowa; Kristi Johnson, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Omaha Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Lisa Schaefer, Des Moines County Attorney; Dennis Kramer, Burlington Chief of Police; and Robert Copley, Chief of Police of the Quincy, Illinois, Police Department.

The charges stem from a long-term investigation conducted by numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies including: the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Southeast Iowa Narcotics Taskforce; Burlington, Iowa, Police Department; Des Moines County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; West Central Illinois Taskforce; Quincy, Illinois, Police Department; Drug Enforcement Administration; Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement; Henry County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, Police Department; West Burlington, Iowa, Police

Department; Keokuk, Iowa, Police Department; Ft. Madison, Iowa, Police Department; Lee County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; Iowa City, Iowa, Police Department; Johnson County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; North Liberty, Iowa, Police Department; Coralville, Iowa, Police Department; Muscatine County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; Louisa County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; Washington County, Iowa, Sheriff's Office; Bettendorf, Iowa, Police Department; Illinois State Police; Monmouth, Illinois, Police Department; Macomb, Illinois, Police Department; Galesburg, Illinois, Police Department; Adams County, Illinois, Sheriff's Office; and Fulton County, Illinois, Sheriff's Office.

Eight defendants were charged by complaint in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, stemming from a years-long investigation of this drug trafficking organization. Those arrested include Kendrick Page, Breon Raquon Armstrong, Lamar Harris, Tristan Davis and James Lewis Miles, Jr.

The identities of those who have not yet been arrested remain sealed at this time. Additionally, search warrants were executed at multiple locations in the Southern District of Iowa, Northern District of Illinois, and Northern District of Texas. Others involved in this drug trafficking organization have previously been arrested in both the Southern District of Iowa, and the Central District of Illinois.

Owner working with city on building repairs

4,945 views, 1,802 engagements - Nov. 14, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials increased a cordoned off area on 8th Street earlier this week for fear of partial crumbling of a structure on the corner of 8th and Avenue G.

The building, owned by attorney Bryan Humphrey, is dilapidated on the west side and is showing visible signs of deterioration and sagging.

The city had cordoned off just the parking spaces on the 8th Street side of the building for last few months. But on Tuesday they expanded that safety zone to include the entire street next to the building and north of the alley.

City Building Direc-



tor Doug Krogmeier said Humphrey has been cooperating through his attorney and has an engineer hired to look into the structure.

Krogmeier said the city had given Humphrey an

Oct. 21 deadline to submit plans to remediate the deficiencies in the structure. Krogmeier said the city didn't receive those plans, but has since heard from an engineer who has indicated he will be on site Friday.

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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

Local girls continue winter scarf exchange

5,264 views, 1,018 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – For the 3rd year the Pothitakis twins, Samantha and Nicole, have set up their annual Share-A-Scarf, Wear-A-Scarf program in Fort Madison's Central Park.

The girls set up this program to help others in need and to help those in the community. The seniors at Holy Trinity Catholic School have placed dozens of scarves in Central Park, tied around trees for anyone to take that may have a need for them or their children.

Samantha Pothitakis wraps one of many scarves around trees in Central Park. Pothitakis and her sister Nicole have been adorning the trees with the winter wear in a Share-A-Scarf, Wear-A-Scarf program in Fort Madison. Courtesy photo.



Courtesy photo

Samantha Pothitakis wraps one of many scarves around trees in Central Park. Pothitakis and her sister Nicole have been adorning the trees with the winter wear in a Share-A-Scarf, Wear-A-Scarf program in Fort Madison.

The girls indicate that they have found it rewarding to not only those that take a scarf, but for themselves as well.

“It has been such a great project. To see the number of scarves taken in our small community confirms our guess that there are so many kids out there that

could use a fun and warm accessory for the winter,” Samantha Pothitakis said.

What makes it even better this year has been the fact that most of the scarves were handmade.

“Rosie Schroeder heard about our project and over the past several months knitted us dozens of scarves

to give out this year. Her work is amazing and for her to reach out and provide us scarves was so appreciated,” Nicole said.

They want anyone that needs a scarf to head to the park and grab one they like. The girls check the park repeatedly and then add to the supply when it gets low.

HTC's Freesmeier receives IHSGAU Golden Plaque

5,192 views, 2,618 engagements - Nov. 20, 2019

FORT MADISON – Holy Trinity Catholic volleyball coach Melissa Freesmeier is the 2019 volleyball recipient of the Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union's Golden Plaque of Distinction. Freesmeier will be honored before the start of the Class 1A championship match on Friday, Nov. 15.

The Golden Plaque of Distinction Award honors the Iowa coach who has demonstrated a successful career while making notable contributions toward school, community and the coaching profession.



FREESMEIER

Freesmeier is in her 28th season of coaching volleyball and has taken 18 teams to the state tournament. In that span, she has won two state championships with four state runner-up finishes.

She won her first crown in 1996 at West Point Marquette High School and won the 2014 Class 1A state championship at Holy Trinity Catholic.

Freesmeier has won over 900 matches in her career. She has been named the Iowa Girls Coaches Association Coach of the Year twice and the NFHS Iowa Volleyball Coach of the Year for the 2017-18 school year. She has been named regional coach of the year 11 times and conference coach of the year 16 times.

Freesmeier also serves as the girls golf coach at Holy Trinity Catholic and teaches physical education, outdoor education and health at HTC Junior-Senior High. Melissa has three daughters; Jessica, Jenna and Jordan and two grandchildren.

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5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

WED 08 Jan
 Few Clouds
 High- 37.5° F | Low - 31.7° F

THU 09 Jan
 Light Rain
 High- 49.6° F | Low - 48.2° F

FRI 10 Jan
 Heavy Intensity Rain
 High- 38.8° F | Low - 26.7° F

SAT 11 Jan
 Cold and Snow
 High- 20.5° F | Low - 12.6° F

SUN 12 Jan
 Scattered Clouds
 High- 29.7° F | Low - 27.5° F

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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

Franchise fee may be part of future city budgets

5,192 views, 2,618 engagements -
Nov. 20, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A franchise tax on gas and electric consumption in the city appears to be the favored option of Fort Madison city officials to bring the city out of its financial pinch.

City Manager David Varley presented about five options Tuesday night to current councilman and council members-elect following the council's regular meeting. The options looked at the next five budget years.

In two of those options, Varley included a franchise tax was at 2% with an increase to 3% in the third year in one of the options.

Iowa code caps municipal franchise taxes at 5%. According to Alliant Energy, a franchise fee typically takes up to six months to be implemented after the franchise fee has been adopted by the city council by ordinance. Varley said it will take at least six months to educate the public on the issue.

He said the city could limp through another year under current budget conditions, but it would be difficult.

A third option presented by City Manager David Varley Tuesday night shows a positive cash flow through 2025 and additional funds for capital improvement projects. The plan also includes a 2% franchise fee on gas and electric in year one, which increases to 3% in the following four years. Graphic courtesy of Fort Madison City Hall

Mayor Brad Randolph asked if it would

be an easier sell to the public if there was a sunset clause on any ordinance implementing the franchise tax.

"What if you got up to your numbers up at 2024 or 2025 and sunset the franchise fee? But then how do you sustain it," he said.

"You're hoping that something happens for a better budget, better balance, other revenue sources. If it's a tough pill to swallow, you'd only have to swallow it for a certain period of time."

Varley said he didn't think it would be possible in just five years for revenues to increase enough to offset funds the franchise tax would bring in.

"I don't think, through property tax or anything other source, or property or sales tax combined, I don't think by year five we could make up enough to equal a 3% franchise on both electric and natural

gas. I just don't see it," Varley said.

Randolph said a sunset would at least force another conversation on the issue.

The franchise tax cannot, by Iowa code, be collected concurrently with a Local Option Sales Tax, which is in place in Fort Madison. A 2% tax on gas and utilities would generate roughly \$560,000 per year. However the utilities would not be able to collect the 1% LOST or about \$81,000 per year, for a net gain from the franchise tax of approximately \$479,000 per year. A 3% tax would net the city \$759,000 per year.

One advantage to the franchise tax is that every penny would stay in Fort Madison, paid quarterly. The city only gets about 30% of the sales tax collected in the county. Sales tax is paid to municipalities based on the amount collected in the entire county, split up by a complicated formula of population and valuations.



IOWA LOTTERY WINNING NUMBERS

Lotto Drawings

Game	Draw Days	Sales Cutoff Time	Approx. Drawing Time
Lucky for Life®	Mon & Thu	8:30 pm	9:38 pm
Mega Millions®	Tues & Fri	8:59 pm	10:00 pm
Powerball®	Wed & Sat	8:59 pm	9:59 pm
Lotto America™	Wed & Sat	8:59 pm	10:00 pm
Pick 3 - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:20 pm
Pick 3 - Evening	Daily	9:40 pm	10:00 pm
Pick 4 - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:20 pm
Pick 4 - Evening	Daily	9:40 pm	10:00 pm



1/6
5 8 15 33 48
Lucky Ball: 2



1/6 MID-DAY
8 7 2
1/6 EVENING
6 5 0



1/6 MID-DAY
4 0 8 0
1/6 EVENING
8 7 1 8

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2019 - A Year in Review: November & December

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-Chuck & Lee

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Arctic Glacier	Friends of Geode	Montrose Health Center
Art of Yoga	Fullenkamp Insurance	Montrose Watermelon Festival Committee
Bagcraft	Garden Bros. Circus	New Dimensions
Baxter Construction Company	Great River Regional Waste Authority	Oak Hollow Campground
Baxter's Sports Complex	Green Acres Bar & Grill	Old Fort Players
Big Bang Fireworks	Green Oak Development	Palms Restaurant
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Chad Ward	Hillcrest Hostas & More	Relay for Life of North Lee County
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Cobblestone Inn & Suites	HTC Music Boosters	Saunders and Bunger Law
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Courtney Family Chiropractic	Industrial Motors	Shug's Tiny Town
Cullen Pest Control	Jason & Stephanie Runge	Sidelines Sports Bar & Grill
Cyberhounds Team 7141	Jean Neuweg	Small Grand Things
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Dawgs & Divas	Jim Baier, Inc.	Southeastern Community College PACE Program
Dawn Johnson	Jimmy Keenan	Southern Iowa Insurance Services
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Dodd Printing & Stationery	Katie's Cuts	Steffensmeier Welding
Dollhouse Dreams	Kempker's True Value Rental	Stewart Automotive
Don Peterson	Keokuk Auto Credit	SubArena
Donnellson Tire & Service Center	Kevin Rink, Fort Madison City Councilman	Taco Taco Takos
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Dutchman's Store	Lee County Attorney	The Funky Cowgirl
Edward Jones - Larry Kelch	Lee County Bank	The Kensington & Primrose Path
Edward Jones - Tony Fullenkamp	Lee County Conservation Board	The Madison
Faeth's Fowl Play	Lee County Economic Development Group	Todd Schneider
Fairfield Arts & Convention Center	Lee County Health Department	Tony Wolfe Insurance Services
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Farmington Strawberry Festival	Lee County Mutual Insurance	Tri-State Rodeo
Fort Colony Family Restaurant	Lee County Speedway	Truck Repair, Inc.
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Fort Madison Mexican Fiesta Committee	MidWestOne Bank	Wondra Chiropractic & Acupuncture
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