

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 | 7 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 83



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Board gives Slater pay bump

SUPERINTENDENT: School board extends contract, pushes pay to \$197K

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



WONDRA

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.

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COVID-19 UPDATE

Governor touts TestIowa for all Iowans

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – Gov. Kim Reynolds announced today that a new assessment and testing tool called [TestIowa.com](https://www.testiowa.com) is now open and all Iowans should take the assessment.

At Tuesday’s daily press conference from the state’s Emergency Operations Center, Reynolds encouraged all Iowans to take the assessment to give the state more information about the spread of the COVID-19 illness.

“I encourage every Iowan to go to [TestIowa.com](https://www.testiowa.com) to take the assessment,” she said.

The assessment can be accessed by clicking the following link: <https://www.testiowa.com/>

“The more Iowans who take the assessment, the more it will help us understand more about the virus, and the more we can do to mitigate and manage it.”

See GOVERNOR, page 7



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Crews tear up the intersection of Business 61 and 6th Street in the background behind piles of dirt being staged in Riverview Park. Several berms have been created in the park where fill dirt is being held while the highway goes under reconstruction.

CITY COUNCIL

City may redo two more parking lots with rebate

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

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 teleconfer-

ence, Public Works Director Mark Bouselot 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.

The two lots will get permeable pavers to allow storm water to run through the pavers and into the subsurface rather than

going into the city’s sanitary sewer lines.

That’s the crux of the rebate. It comes from money that the city spent rehabbing the waste water treatment plant several years ago at a cost of about \$27 million. The city took out state bonds to pay for the work and the state rebates part of the

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COUNTY

Ambulance bids due by April 30

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Fort Madison and Keokuk city officials are hoping to have ambulance service proposals to the county by Friday, according to a Lee County Supervisor.

At Tuesday’s regular meeting of the Lee County Board of Supervisors held via teleconference, Supervisor Gary Folluo said it’s his understanding both cities are meeting Thursday and should have a proposal ready to come to the county by Friday.

However, no special meeting was set to review the proposals, prior to next Tuesday’s regular meeting.

A committee was formed about a month ago comprised of county and city elected officials and emergency response personnel, to look into the issue of county ambulance

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WEATHER

WED 22 Apr Light Rain, 66.0° F / 53.8° F
THU 23 Apr Light Rain, 61.3° F / 46.2° F
FRI 24 Apr Moderate Rain, 51.1° F / 45.6° F

OpenWeatherMap

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LUCKY FOR LIFE 04/20.....1 3 6 34 45, Lucky Ball: 12
PICK 3 04/20 MIDDAY.....155
PICK 3 04/20 EVENING.....9 0 9
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Obituaries/Scene Around Town

OBITUARIES

DENNIS M. WHITE

Dennis Michael White, 65, of Keokuk, died Saturday, April 18, 2020 at his home. He was born on March 5, 1955 in Keokuk, IA, the son of Jerry and Norma Carter White. He graduated from Kahoka High school with the Class of 1974.



WHITE

Dennis was a veteran of the United States Navy and served his country during the Vietnam War.

On June 16, 1979, he married the love of his life, Linda Lasley in Alexandria, MO. She survives.

He is also survived by three daughters, Christina White Koltzenburg (Cliff) of Warsaw, IL, Katherine Johnson of Wichita Falls, TX and Cimberly White-Leever (Chad) of Platte Center, NE, his grandchildren, Jonathon White



(Erin), Lindsay Watkins (Bob), Jordan White (Danielle), Noah White Koltzenburg, Krista Bates (George), Juwan Johnson (Taylor), Dylan White-Leever (Brittany) and Nathan White-Leever (Brittany), great-grandchildren, Sophia, Braeden, Nathanael, Gracie, Hadassah, Baylor, Adam, Jackson, Lilee, Isaiah, Evalyn, Taleah, Henley, Ruxin and Brynlee. He is also survived by his mother, Norma Jobe (Walter) of Keokuk, and two sisters, Debbie Thompson (Johnny) of Keokuk and Terry Snyder (Glen) of Buffalo, MN.

He was preceded in death by his father, twin great-grandsons, Mason and Micah, and two brothers, Craig and Jeffrey White.

Dennis had been employed at Roquette in Keokuk for twenty years, retiring in 2017.

He enjoyed going hunting and fishing with his grandkids and brother-in-law. He also enjoyed playing Euchre and relaxing in his recliner. He especially enjoyed his wife's wonderful cooking. Dennis was a loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather and his greatest joy was spending time with his family.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation and the restriction for public gatherings, a Celebration of Dennis' life will be held at a later date

The Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk is assisting the family with arrangements. On-line condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Bummer Summer

City signs stay posted at all city parks reminding residents to stay off playground equipment due to the coronavirus and COVID-19 outbreaks across the country. There is no sign of an opening as Iowa officials continue to expect a peak in infections later this month and into May.

Pen City Current obituary policy

The Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes.

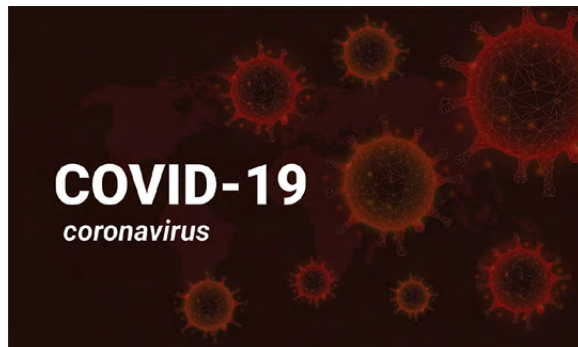
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From the Front

Cities meeting Thursday to discuss ambulance proposals

BOARD - Continued from Page 1

service, after Lee County Ambulance Inc, couldn't meet payroll.

The county gave the company about \$36,000 to cover payroll at that time and since then, the ambulance service has been operating on a week-to-week bases, while officials scramble to have continuing service at the end of the fiscal year, which is June 30.

Garry Seyb Jr., a volunteer firefighter with Jackson Township Fire Dept., questioned the board on several issues including timelines for proposals, the level of service being offered, and how the county will fund anything over the \$500,000 allocated in next year's county budget.

"It seems the board is waiting for Fort Madison and Keokuk to submit proposals, but even if you approved those today, they would have 70 days to get equipment in place. I guess I'm just asking how long you'll give them to submit a bid," Seyb asked at the start of the meeting.

Folluo said the county has received two proposals, one from Lee County Ambulance, Inc, the current provider, and the other from the Global Medical Response, the parent company of AirEvac, which operates an medical airlift base behind Fort Madison Community Hospital. That company is licensed to provide ground ambulance service as well.

He said the committee, which includes Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren and Keokuk Fire Chief Gabe Rose, has learned the cities should have a proposal ready by the end of the week.

Supervisor Rick Larkin, who also sits on the committee, said it's been his understanding that the committee would wait for proposals until April 30.

"During this whole process I've operated under the assumption by May 1 we would have all the bids in and then proceed with our meetings, get a decision made and get it to the Board of Supervisors," Larkin said. "That's not official but that's what I've been operating under - May 1."

Fort Madison officials are considering preliminary steps Tuesday night to rezone some private and public property behind the fire station for a potential temporary warehouse to hold ambulances and staff.

Folluo said the city's have been asked to answer a series of questions as part of their proposals including what level of service would be provided, among other things.

Fire Chief Joey Herren said Sunday that his proposal would be for advanced level service because the proposal would have to include hospital-to-hospital transfer service which mandates advanced level service.

Seyb said he's heard that Rose is considering a basic level service.

"Joey indicated they were looking at an advanced service and Gabe said basic service. I guess til you have proposals you don't know but those are real questions to ask," Seyb said.

Folluo said the committee asked the cities to submit a proposal by 5 p.m. at the end of the month.

"Assuming they can meet that goal by that point, we'll look at our proposals and review the answers to the questions. Then we'll come to the Board of Supervisors and see

what the board want to do," Folluo said.

Board chairman Ron Fedler said after the committee has all the facts and information, he will call a special meeting if need to address the issues.

"But I can't do that until they are ready to submit the proposals to the Board," Fedler said.

In an unrelated issue, the board also tabled action on design services for exterior rehabilitation of the North Lee County Courthouse.

Fedler said he wanted the issue tabled until the county had a better idea of what their financial position will be in the next 30 to 60 days depending on the disposition of state and federal pandemic orders.

"I think delaying it at this time is the probably the most prudent thing to do," Fedler said.

"We don't have the money to tuckpoint the Fort Madison courthouse and we would have to bond to pay for the work

and that would increase our tax on residents. I will not support this at this time and would like to see us save our money right now."

County Budget Director Cindy Renstrom said the county is down about 8% in property tax revenue compared to last year.

"From previous years to this year overall, we are just about 8% less than last year for getting taxes in. I'm including some of the money we get from the state for credits aside from property taxes. So we're not doing too bad," she said.

In other action, the board:

- voted 5-0 on a Child Abuse Prevention Month proclamation.
- voted 5-0 to approve a renewal of a lease agreement with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services for office space at the DHS buiding in Keokuk



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Health News/From the Front

Artifacts won't hold up city project

COUNCIL - Continued from Page 1

interest paid on the bonds to the city to help mitigate additional storm water runoff through sanctioned projects.

The snag is that the city can only use the rebated funds to pay for projects approved by the Department of Natural Resources. The fund aren't allocated to the city's general fund and cannot be used on any other projects.

City Manager David Varley also cautioned the council that there is time constraints on getting projects approved, and the funds are "use it or lose it."

"We've got a one chance shot at it and that's it. You don't get more out of it," Varley said. "If we don't use it in a certain time frame we lose it and it goes back into a state pool that others can use. So basically it's use it or lose it."

Back in 2017 and 2018 the city was looking at redoing all the sidewalks from 6th Street to 10th Street on Avenue G with permeable pavers but the project got tangled up with bids that were outside the scope of

estimates from the city's engineering provider HR Green out of Cedar Rapids.

After going back to the drawing board several times to rework the project and make it fit the \$1.6 million available, the city finally cut the project and looked for other options, eventually settling on the two city lots. The first is the city lot behind City Hall at 8th and Avenue D. The second is the city lot at 8th Street and Avenue F.

Meller Excavating and Asphalt of Fort Madison had the low bid for the project, which includes both lots, at \$429,533. After engineering fees and other associated costs, Boussetol said the city had about a million bucks left.

City councilwoman Rebecca Bowker asked what happens to the remaining money and how can it be repurposed.

"We've tried to figure out how to reallocate the funds," Boussetol said. "We're working with engineering and we've put together a plan for the DNR and we're looking now

at lot on 8th and Avenue H, which is a city lot, and the parking lot in front of council chambers."

In an unrelated issue, Boussetol told the council that he's not concerned a recent finding of old timbers under the subsurface of the Hwy. 61 reconstruction project underway in Fort Madison will slow the project.

Boussetol told the council his last conversations with Bear Creek Archeologists was that they were going to take some samples from the timbers back to be analyzed, but they think it may be a part of an old railroad spur in the area. But because they confirm the material on site, they have to treat it like it's part of the old fort.

"This is week 5 and they have a five-week contract. They anticipate taking some pieces back, but they plan on sticking to their schedule," Boussetol said.

"They think it has to be tied to a rail spur but they can't confirm that so they have to treat it as fort material."

LCHD still rolling out services

Submitted article

LEE COUNTY – With the Lee County Board of Supervisor's vote on April 7th to keep county buildings closed to the public through April 30, 2020, Lee County Health Department staff have been thinking "outside the box" and finding new ways to provide continued services.

"Our services are offered throughout the life span so we have found creative ways to continue our Maternal and Child Health programs, our HOPES home visiting services, and our Home Care and Hospice programs," states Michele Ross, LCHD Administrator. "It is how they continue that has changed a bit."

When the decision was made to close the buildings, and for staff to practice social distancing staff reached out to families enrolled in HOPES and Maternal Health programs to see what form of communication would work best for them. Telehealth, an approved video chat format, or an old fashion phone call were the options for many families. "For HOPES, we follow up after phone calls with emails for curriculum and information sharing," says Amy Cook, Family Support Worker.

For the Maternal Health program education to expectant mothers like stages of baby's growth, tobacco cessation if needed, and general what to expect when baby comes, plus more, continues.

"Although we miss the more per-

sonal, in-person interaction with our clients, we are happy that we are still able to provide support and guidance to these expectant mothers," adds Jillian Ireland, RN, Maternal-Child & Adolescent Health Program Nurse. "We have also reached out to our partnering OB offices about any changes they have implemented in their office due to COVID-19, so we are able to inform our clients as well."

The 1st Five Program works with families with children 0-5 on developmental skills, and can be a connection between families and service providers. Not only can providers get ahold of 1st Five Coordinators at the LCHD office, they can also fax (844) 296-0282 with information.

For programs like Child Health, Homecare, and Hospice social distancing can be difficult, however, providing quality care to clients, especially those at high risk is extremely important right now. "Our staff nurses and home-care aides are wearing the appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) when they go into a client's home," says Becky Worster, LCHD Community Health/Nursing Program Director.

Homecare aides are still assisting clients with their needs. Hospice clients and families are still receiving nursing visits, and needed support during this difficult time. "Right now, it is even a more difficult time for families, but our staff continue to step up to the plate to make sure that clients and families have what they need," adds Worster.



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PEN CITY CURRENT
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From the Front

FM School board approves new \$58K FMHS scoreboard

BOARD - Continued from Page 1

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.

"I feel in these times we should table this until we know if the budget is going to be cut," Steffensmeier said when casting his vote. "We're in uncertain times. Erin, you're doing a good job, but where do we start cutting. We know the budget's going to get cut and I feel bad that your evaluation has come up at this time."

Slater came to the district at the start of the 2016 school year with a contract for \$170,000 per year. However the district bought out 15 days of her vacation increasing her pay to \$188,000. For the next two years the district again purchased seven vacation days at \$2,000 per day taking her total compensation to \$192,000 in 2018. Her 2017-18 contract called for a salary of \$178,000.

No extension or salary adjustment was given in 2019.

In other action, the board:

- approved the purchase of a new football scoreboard for the high school field at a cost of \$58,702. The board also approved lifetime advertising contracts with Lee County Bank, Pilot Grove Savings Bank, Connection Bank and Mohrfeld Electric. The three banks committed \$15,000 each for lifetime

spots on three of the boards, while Mohrfeld Electric will get a spot as trade for costs associated with the erection and installation of the sign.

- suspended graduation requirements for the senior class of 2020 due to the pandemic outbreak.
- suspended the 2020 school calendar in the wake of Gov. Kim Reynolds cancellation of the rest

of the school year.

- approved an independent audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019 with high marks for the district's financial processes.

- heard from a parent who was concerned the district's system for calculating GPA at the high school is detrimental to some students taking additional coursework.

State to set up drive thru testing

GOVERNOR - Continued from Page 1

The new system is a public/private partnership that assesses Iowans, sets up testing for those that are eligible based on the assessment, and then can initiate contact tracing for those who test positive.

The state will be setting up drive thru testing sites that reflect TestIowa's data on where hot spots and clusters are located.

Iowa is only the second state in the nation to use the system. Utah was the first state to work within the partnership and just this week hit 3,000 additional tests per day.

Reynolds said the new program will let the state ramp up to the additional 3,000 tests on top of what the state is currently doing.

Representatives from three private groups representing the partnership, were brought into the presser, who said all data provided is owned by the state of Iowa and is protected at all points of data transmission.

"This will be very helpful as Iowans go online and take the assessment and see where hot spots are, where clusters are, and where we're healthy where Iowans were doing what they were supposed to do," Reynolds said.

When Iowans visit the

TestIowa.com site, they will take an assessment and provide basic information. Once the assessment is complete a follow up email will be sent, and if the assessment triggers a test, individuals will be allowed to pick a time at some point in the future to be tested, and then tracing will begin for anyone testing positive.

Health officials are going to focus efforts initially on first responders, health care workers, and other essential

workforce, including the food supply chain and manufacturers.

Results from the drive thru swab stations are typically available in 48 to 72 hours and are at no cost to the individuals, according to Reynolds.

State health officials are setting the first drive thru site at a Tama long-term care facility Thursday, and the first public site will be at the Iowa Events Center parking lot in Des Moines.



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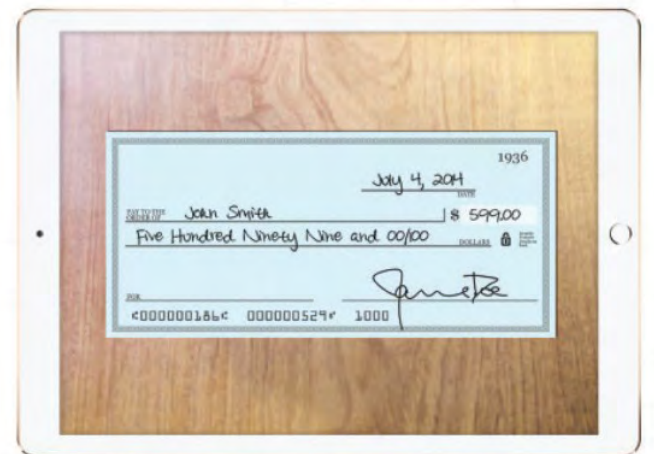
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