

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Thursday, July 30, 2020 | 7 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 148



www.pencitycurrent.com

FOUR MORE: Lee County now at 83 confirmed cases; 14-day rolling total at 22

Area Covid surge continues

Area health care providers issue joint statement on health guidelines

LEE COUNTY The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and Lee County Health Department (LCHD) have identified four additional cases of COVID-19 in the county; two adults and two middle-age adults. This makes 83 confirmed cases in Lee County to date with 49 cases reported as recovered.

A joint public health message from LCHD, FMCH, and UnityPoint Health-Keokuk was released on

Wednesday afternoon and reads as follows:

“LCHD, Fort Madison Community Hospital, and UnityPoint Health-Keokuk, would like to stress the importance of people staying home when ill and/or have symptoms of COVID-19 to avoid potential spread of COVID-19 illness.

The Centers of Disease Control (CDC) lists a wide range of symptoms of COVID-19 – ranging from mild symptoms to severe illness. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. These include:

Fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or diffi-

See **CORONAVIRUS**, page 7

RIVERFEST 2020

Rock bands a hot ticket, but other events scaled back

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – RiverFest founder Charles Craft said this year’s event has been “very difficult”. But he said the easiest thing would have been to give up.

“We didn’t want to do that. We didn’t want to give up.” So a scaled down version of RiverFest presented by Frank Millard and Company, Inc, which has gained national attention as a growing venue with large national acts, will kick off on Wednesday Aug. 5 on the Fort Madison riverfront. The event is in its fifth year of a resurgence, born of a festival of the same name that took place in the 80s and 90s on the riverfront.

This year’s event will go on without the traditional carnival. Craft said that was out of his hands as no traveling carnival provider was operating in Iowa or Illinois this year due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The outbreak has also had its impact locally. A statement made two weeks ago by the Lee County Board of Health, said large scale gatherings are “ill-advised” as the coronavirus is surging in Lee County.

Craft said he’s been working, and in contact, with the Lee County Health Department’s Environmental Services Program Director Michael Shelangoski regularly to make sure everything that can be done to

See **MUSIC**, page 2



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Crews work on rehabilitation efforts of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church Wednesday afternoon. Workers have been working on the outside brick surface, tower, and trim on the building for the past two weeks.

Iowa State Penitentiary

C.O. struck at prison Tuesday night

FORT MADISON – A correctional officer was assaulted by an inmate at the Iowa State Penitentiary at approximately 7:10 p.m. last night.

The officer was handling the distribution of medications to inmates in a living unit. After issuing a verbal directive to an inmate, the inmate began advancing towards the officer in an aggressive manner. The officer attempted to deploy pepper spray, but it didn’t deter the inmate, who then proceeded to assault the officer with closed fist strikes. The officer was able to utilize defense maneuvers to restrain the inmate, and additional staff quickly arrived to assist.

The officer was assessed by prison medical staff and returned to his post. The inmate did not suffer any significant injuries.

This incident remains under investigation.

GRANT

Houghton FD gets Homeland Security \$56K

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Dave Loebsack (D-IA) announced today that the Burlington Fire Department and the Houghton Volunteer Fire Department both received grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as part of their Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program. Details of the grants are below.

“Our firefighters and first responders stand ready to serve us the moment disaster strikes,” said Loebsack. “This funding will ensure the Burlington Fire Department and the Houghton Volunteer Fire Department have the equipment necessary to keep our firefighters safe, while responding quickly to emergencies

See **GRANT**, page 4

INDEX

Business Directory.....P.6
CLASSIFIEDS.....Ps.5-6
Complete Rental.....P.2
FOR THE RECORD.....P.3
Great River Regional Waste Authority.....P.3
FROM THE FRONT.....Ps.2,4,7
HEALTH NEWS.....P.7

Hillcrest Hostas & More.....P.2
Perennial Plant Nursery.....P.2
LEE COUNTY NEWS.....Ps.3-4,7
LOCAL NEWS.....Ps.2,7
OPINION.....P.4
Pen City Current.....Ps.3,5-7
Pilot Grove Savings Bank.....P.8

Pothitakis Dentistry.....P.4
Public Notices.....P.5
SCENE AROUND TOWN.....P.3
Scotts Miracle-Gro Company.....P.5
Tri-State Outdoor Products.....P.4
United Way of the Great River Region.....P.4

WEATHER

THU 30 JulRain, 73° F/ 67° F
FRI 31 JulOvercast, 77° F/ 61° F
SAT 01 Aug.....Rain, 77° F/ 63° F

OpenWeatherMap

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MEGA MILLIONS 07/28.....17 20 27 31 34, Mega Ball: 19 Megaplier: 4
PICK 3 07/28 MIDDAY.....0 8 1
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From the Front

Starset has had 2 billion videos streamed worldwide

MUSIC - Continued from Page 1

protect festival goers, is being done.

A link to the website and the festival health and safety measures can be found by clicking here: <http://riverfestfm.com/health-and-safety>.

In addition to taking the temperatures of everyone entering the festival, Craft said you'll see hand sanitizers and wash stations throughout festival grounds that were expanded this year.

"We increased our grounds by more than 200% to allow plenty of room for people to social distance, while reducing our capacity by 50%," Craft said Wednesday.

"We are exceeding (World Health Organization) WHO, (Centers for Disease Control) CDC, and state health guide-

lines. There have been some keyboard cops out there blasting us for having this, but we're doing everything we're required to do, and then some, to make this a safe and fun event for everyone."

Food vendors will still be on hand for concert goers to grab a bite, and Craft said most of the games will still be available for people to play, but there will be no tournaments this year.

Craft said the musical lineup is one of the best in the past five years, and because of the shutdowns caused by the coronavirus, it will be one of the best shows in the country this year.

"Starset is the biggest band we've had yet," Craft said. "In only five years they've had more than two billions streams of their videos worldwide. "That's insane!" It's a well-choreographed show and people won't want to miss that one."

The band hails from Columbus, Ohio started in 2013 and that year's single "My Demons" accumulated more than 280 million views alone. The single came off the "Transmissions" 2014 album which also featured hit singles, 'Carnivore' and 'Halo'.

Front man Dustin Bates is an astrologist with a master's

degree in electrical engineering and has done research for the U.S. Air Force and taught at the International Space University. The Starset backstory is a fictional take on a message received from space.

Starset is the headliner Saturday night.

The other eclectic big draw for the event that runs Wednesday through Friday, could be Fozzy, which headlines Thursday night's grandstand performances.

Fozzy frontman Chris Jericho, of World Wrestling Federation fame, brings name recognition and some heavy metal chops. The band is set to release its eighth album this year with single "Nowhere to Run" already out.

80's metal enthusiasts will be taken back with Friday's lineup of Enuff Z Enuff, Autograph, and headliner Quiet Riot.

Other performers include Adelitas Way, Cole Hollow, Head First, Saul - an Iowa-based rock band formed by two brothers, Burden of the Sky, 9th Planet Out, Fidelio, Royal Bliss, and others - 18 bands in all.

"Adelitas Way put on a great show at Steamboat Days and Royal Bliss is a fan favorite. Chris Jericho and Fozzy - that's all that needs to be said," Craft said.

"And that's a one-two-three punch on Friday for 80s night. We'll have plenty of ice cold Busch Light on hand and we're working overtime to factor in safety and let people enjoy life."

Craft also said patrons will see plenty of Thin Blue Line and military flags at the event.

"We're gonna be thanking first responders and our military. During the COVID they didn't have the option to stay home and they're getting a pretty bad rap," he said. "So we'll have a lot of flags flying proudly at RiverFest this year as a hats off to those guys going to work when others are staying at home."

VIP ticket are still available for the four-day event, but all going into the VIP area will be required to have a mask with them. A 4-day VIP ticket is just \$76, while a general admission ticket for all four days is just \$46. Single day tickets run \$30.

Ticket information can be obtained by clicking here: <https://www.etix.com/ticket/v/16290/riverfest?fbclid=IwAR3anE4Mpm4uZSwCpMgSU4cz910UvaSLkpTx4q-SISwxGUqrYaQmJlht8c>.

Additional information can be obtained at the event website at www.riverfestfm.com or on Facebook at [https://www.facebook.com/events/608459693126207?actontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A\[%7B%22mechanism%22%3A%22search_results%22%2C%22surface%22%3A%22search%22%7D\]%7D](https://www.facebook.com/events/608459693126207?actontext=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A[%7B%22mechanism%22%3A%22search_results%22%2C%22surface%22%3A%22search%22%7D]%7D).

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For the Record/Scene Around Town

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

07/28/20 – 9:08 a.m.
 – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1100 block of Avenue E.
 07/28/20 – 10:11 a.m.
 – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 3000 block of Avenue N.
 07/28/20 – 2:50 p.m.
 – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism on Richards Drive.
 07/28/20 – 8:00 p.m.
 – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 3100 block of Avenue K.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

07/28/20 – 9:35 a.m.
 – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Austin Ray Triplet, 24, of Pulaski, Iowa, at the Lee County Jail on a charge of interference with officials acts and 1st-degree harassment. He was held in custody.
 07/28/20 – 5:25 p.m.
 – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Andrea Louise Blint, 36, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff's office on a charge of being a fugitive from justice. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

07/28/20 – 7:22 p.m.
 – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jessie Wayne Thompson, 59, of Montrose, in the 3000 block of Mississippi River Road, on charges of interference with officials acts and assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. *Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

07/28/20 – Fort Madison firefighters responded to three medical calls and one burn complaint.



Courtesy photo

Lee County Bank has been a strong supporter of the Fort Madison Food Pantry for the past several years. Given the current environment of 2020, this year was no exception. Pictured is Michael Culbertson, President of Lee County Bank, presenting Lin Cramer with a \$2,500 donation. Culbertson said, "The Fort Madison Food Pantry helps so many area families in need and Lee County Bank is proud to support them in their efforts."

Lee County Dems hold kick-off event

FORT MADISON - The Lee County Democratic Party is having a Kick Off Event at the Downtown Pocket Park on the 800th block of Avenue G, Fort Madison, on Saturday, August 1, 12:00pm – 3:00pm. All elections are important and the Lee County Democratic Party believes this one is even more critical than most. There will be an opportunity to register to vote and request to have an absentee ballot sent to you for the November election. In order to fill out the ballot request form, you'll need to have your drivers license, state issued i.d., or your voter PIN number that was mailed to you by the County Auditor. You will only have the PIN if you have neither of the first two items. This will also be an excellent opportunity to let the Lee County Democrats know if you are interested in volunteering during this challenging campaign cycle and to pick up a sign. Masks are definitely encouraged for this event and they'll

have some on hand. The Lee County Democratic Party will open their

Fort Madison office at 821 Avenue G the week of August 3rd.

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Opinion/From the Front

Letter to the Editor

Former chief weighs in on city's handling of police personnel

Dear Editor;

In the last five years the FMPD has had seven police chiefs. In the last twelve months three captains have left the department, taking with them ninety years of experience.

The city manager has orchestrated the coming and going of those officers. Apparently five of the seven chiefs and three of the captains did not meet Mr. Varley's requirements.

To the best of my recollection there are several Disciplinary Actions in the police manual.

- (1) Cautioning and counseling.
- (2) Verbal reprimand
- (3) Written reprimand
- (4) Suspension
- (5) Demotion
- (6) Termination

With those options the city manager decided to force Captain Niggemeyer to retire or be terminated. Niggemeyer was a thirty year veteran with fifteen of those years in supervisory positions.

The following are some comments made by councilman Andrews as printed in the May 6, 2019 edition of the Daily Democrat.

"I do not think some of our elected officials will ever be happy with our police department. Until then we will continue to run off good employees. If I was in law

enforcement I wouldn't work for this city."

Nancy Estrada hit the nail on the head with her observations made in the June 4, 2019 issue of the Daily Democrat. "It truly makes a difference when a law enforcement agency has the backing of their leaders in order to make their agency great." Estrada stated that she worked for 32 years at FMPD. She noted that in the last several years she had witnessed officers being "micromanaged, criticized, maligned and harassed for for even the most minuscule decision in their daily tasks." Estrada goes on to say, "Despite being harassed and maligned from the chief to the newest officer, the officers at FMPD try each and every day to perform their duties to the best of their abilities." Please take the time to read her entire letter as it is very informative.

In the May 6, 2019 edition of the Daily Democrat there was an article titled, "FM Police Chief (Sittig) Announces his Retirement." It reports on the opinions of some councilmen on making Sheriff Weber the Chief as well as the treatment of Sittig.

Councilman Andrews spoke of a letter that was sent to Sittig from Varley which referenced Sittig having a performance review on May 3, 2019, listing concerns and directives that had not yet been addressed. "He (Sittig) could see right there he wasn't wanted or respected."

Councilman Rink said he too believes Sittig "may have felt pressured" to announce his retirement now.

Also mentioned was the 2015 request of Chief Niggemeyer to be reassigned to a Captain position. Although he declined to specifics at that time, Niggemeyer expressed his frustration with some city officials during his tenure as Police Chief.

In February of 2016, there was a proposed resolution which would prohibit an elected official from serving as a reserve officer. At the time this directly impacted both Mayor Randolph and councilman Greenwald. The resolution was approved 4-3. There was approximately four months between Chief Niggemeyer's request to return to the position of captain and the passing of the resolution. Considering the time frame, I believe the passing of that resolution was the direct result of Bruce Niggemeyer's treatment.

The May 22, 2019 Pen City Current ran a piece called, "City Approves using Sheriff as Interim Chief." In this article Rich Harlow, from the audience, brought up when Niggemeyer was Police Chief. Harlow said he left because of the "heat" he was getting as Chief. He also stated there were reasons why Sittig is leaving. "Why do you think he's leaving? Because he wants to retire? You think there's more to that? Let's be honest and tell it like

it is."

Councilman Greenwald replied, "I want to go to the truth with you. Council's bullying the police chief, let's go right to that. We've been bullying chiefs of police for a long time... that's the elephant in the room."

Councilman Morawitz said he was going to support the issue to keep staffing levels safe even though he didn't think it was the right way to go to bring in an outside person as interim.

Councilman Cangas added that one of his concerns was that they were taking a Captain from the sheriff department in as supervisor of the police department. He went on to state in another article from the Daily Democrat that "If you think morale is down now with the men on the force, what do you think will happen when we bring in officers from another force and use them as supervisors?"

Much of what is in this letter has been in my prior letters. I was hoping that the information would be helpful in understanding the past treatment of FMPD as a whole, especially the Captains, and Captain Niggemeyer, in particular.

What I have written, is based on what had taken place at that time. In no way do I claim to know those persons viewpoints at this time.

Sam Lozano

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Burlington FD gets \$287K from Homeland Security grant program

GRANT - Continued from Page 1

and keeping families out of harm's way."

The AFG program allows our first responders to purchase firefighting equipment, implement wellness programs that focus on health, and improve facilities. Funds can be used for a myriad of needs, including new protective equipment, health and safety modifications to stations and training for emergency personnel.

This round of AFG includes area grants to Burlington Fire Department for \$287,727.27 and Houghton Volunteer Fire Department for \$56,808.57

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PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
FORT MADISON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
PUBLIC HEARING
August 3, 2020
6:00 P.M.**

AGENDA

- I. Call meeting to order and determination of a quorum
- II. Approve the agenda
- III. PORT Trail Easement Agreement with the City of Fort Madison
- IV. Receive written comments
- V. Receive oral comments
- VI. Adjourn

**PUBLIC NOTICE
FORT MADISON
COMMUNITY SCHOOL
DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SPECIAL MEETING/
WORK SESSION
August 3, 2020
6:05 P.M.**

AGENDA

- I. Call meeting to order and determination of a quorum
- II. Approve the agenda
- III. Approval of PORT Trail Easement agreement with the City of Fort Madison
- Resolution Exhibit A
- IV. Approval of revised school calendar for 2020-2021
- V. Return to Learn discussion
- VI. Announcements
August 17, 2020 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting, Board Room, Central Office
- August 31, 2020 6:00 p.m. Work Session, Board Room, Central Office
- September 21, 2020 6:00 p.m. Regular Meeting, Board Room, Central Office
- VII. Adjourn

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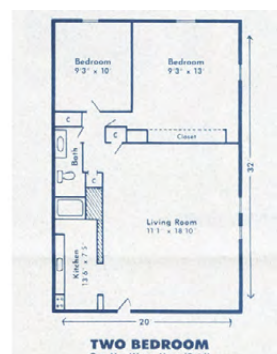
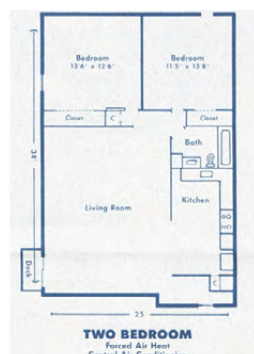
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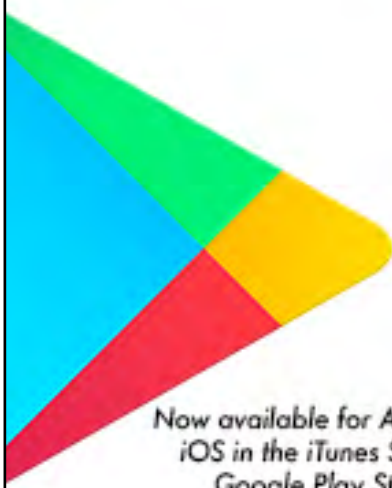
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Local News/From the Front

Experts remind residents of health guidelines to help curb COVID-19

CORONAVIRUS - Continued from Page 1

culty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea

If you are exhibiting these symptoms, please stay home. If you need medical attention, please contact your medical provider by calling first. An exposure to the virus can result if you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19. Exposure can occur when:

- You were within six feet of someone who has COVID-19;
 - You provided care or reside in a home with someone who has been sick with COVID-19;
 - You had direct physical contact with the person (touched, hugged, or kissed them);
 - You shared eating or drinking utensils;
 - They sneezed, coughed, or somehow got respiratory droplets on you.
- When you have a known exposure to someone with COVID-19 you should avoid close contact with others and self-isolate or “quarantine”. This helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow guidance received from local public health or their medical provider.

When in quarantine monitor your health by:
 Staying home for 14 days after your last contact with a person who has COVID-19; watch for fever (100.4 degrees F), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19; if possible, separate away others, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.

Guidance for reducing exposure and spread of COVID-19 illness for yourself, your family, co-workers, and community members include maintaining a social distance from those outside your own household whenever possible, wearing a face mask when in public, washing hands often with soap and water, cleaning all “high touch” surfaces frequently, covering your coughs and sneezes and then washing hands, avoiding large gatherings of people where social distancing is not feasible, and staying home when ill.

Look for emergency warning signs for COVID-19. Call 911 or call ahead to your local emergency facility to notify the operator that you are seeking care for someone who has or may have COVID-19.

If someone is showing any of these signs, seek emergency medical care immediately:
 Trouble breathing; Persistent pain or pressure in the chest; New confusion; Inability to wake or stay awake; Bluish lips or face.

Note: This list does not include all possible symptoms. Please call your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning to you.

Police increase traffic watch during National Picnic month

FORT MADISON - The month of July is a National Picnic Day with the celebration of summer activities, warm weather and outdoor barbeques in the United States. Families get together for fun and laughter in local parks or backyards, which require traveling long or short distances for many. With increased road use and the possibility of increased alcohol consumption, the risk of traffic crashes rise. An analysis by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety showed that on average, more people die in motor vehicle crashes in July than any other month of the year. The study found that alcohol and speeding were big contributors.

To combat the impaired driving problem in the month of July, there will be increased law enforcement officers on all of Iowa’s roadways to spread the message that drunk driving will not be tolerated. It is NEVER okay to drive after drinking. Have a plan to get home safely if you will be drinking. Call a family, friend, cab, or Uber to pick you up. Everyone wants you to be safe.

The Iowa Department of Public Safety and the Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau and the Fort Madison Police Department want to remind you that the best way to protect yourself in any crash is to be wearing your seat belt, and don’t drive drunk or buzzed.

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