

Pen City Current

Tuesday, January 7, 2020 | 14 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 15

2019 - A Year in Review

September & October

Central Lee votes approve \$12.9 bond

10,259 views, 1,471 engagements - Sept. 10, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELSON – Central Lee voters bucked a local trend of voting down school bond referendums and have passed a referendum to spend \$12.9 million to upgrade facilities at the campus just southeast of Donnellson.

Absentee ballots carried the election with just under 80% of 475 absentee ballots breaking in favor of issuing the bonds. Day-of voting still carried a majority in favor of the measure, but not at the state-mandated

60%+1.

Voters at the polls cast 278 votes in favor of the measure and 233 against for a 54% approval.

Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said he's a hometown kid and he gives credit to the community and parents who saw the value and need of the improvements.

"I'm a hometown boy and always credit our community and how they support us," he said. "Central Lee residents will make you work a bit, but at the end of the day, they'll support the district."

The funds will be used for new classrooms for band and vocal programs, along with new preschool classrooms that would free up two additional classrooms to meet space needs at

the elementary level.

There will also be a new competition and performance gym for elementary, middle, and high school events, and ADA-accessible locker rooms. Additional plans call for an expanded commons area for better student collaboration and improved building flow.

With the increased valuation in Lee County, the district was able to present the bond issue without increasing the property tax rate for next year. The current rate is \$12.19/\$1,000 of assessed valuation and the district said the debt service will not increase that rate.

Crozier has said all along that if the bond failed, that property tax rate would have dropped, but he said that dynamic helped get the bond passed.

Looking back on 2019

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.

Fate shines in double OT win

10,259 views, 1,471 engagements - Oct. 5, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FAIRFIELD – A radio station said it was the first time since 2000 that Fort Madison High School has won a football game over Fairfield.

Head Coach Derek Doherty said "it's been at least 12 years."

Whew...Where to start. Maybe with the score. The Bloodhounds

ruined Fairfield's Homecoming with a 23-16 thriller in double overtime in Class 3A District 6 football action at Fairfield's place.

But how it happened, you almost had to see it to believe. And the play that saved the game for the Hounds was a penalty on the Hounds with about 20 seconds left in the game.

Let's rewind a bit.

Fort Madison trailed 16-8 with :50 left on the



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Bloodhound football players and coaches celebrate a double overtime win over Fairfield in October. It was the first win over the Trojans in close to a decade.

clock and the ball at their own 41-yard line. Junior quarterback Will Larson threw three straight incomplete passes, but on 4th and 10, Larson

dropped back, rolled to his right and let fly with a pass down the Fairfield sideline that hit a Trojan defender's hands before slipping into Quentin

Schneider's breadbasket. Schneider wrapped up the ball and turned off balance to run and was tripped up at the 2-yard line.

City welcomed American Cruise Lines newest ship to pier

9,611 views, 1,667 engagements - Sept. 4, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – It's maiden voyage will bring it

to the shores of Fort Madison, and city officials want you there to see this ship.

Fort Madison City Manager David Varley said American Cruise Lines will

be bringing it's newest ship the Harmony to dock at the city's pier in Riverview Park on Sunday morning just before 8 a.m.

"We, and American Cruise Lines, are hoping we can put on a big welcome

for this ship because this is the first year it's been on the Mississippi and the first time here," Varley said Tuesday night during the Fort Madison City Council meeting.

"So we want to welcome and encourage everyone

to come down to welcome these passengers. We're hoping, because it's Sunday, to be able to get some music down there, maybe a school band or something and put on a nice welcome."

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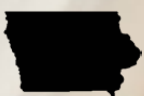
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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

Council approves city golf cart, ATV usage

7,620 views, 2,686 engagements - Oct. 15, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – It was an emotional hour of pros and cons that led the Fort Madison City Council to finalize approval for golf carts, ATVs, and UTVs on city streets... it was also in the bag.

At Tuesday's regular meeting, the council voted as it has the past two times on the ordinance to allow the vehicles on most city streets, by a 4-3 margin.

An amendment added by councilman Bob Morawitz to allow only vehicles that are certified by the manufacturers safe for city streets was voted down by the same 4-3 margin.

Morawitz, Mark Lair, and Chad Cangas all voted against allowing the vehicles on city streets, while Councilmen Chris Greenwald, Kevin Rink, Matt Mohrfeld, and Rusty Andrews voted to approve the usage.

The city will have to publish the new ordinance and then the law will go into effect.

But depending on how the election shakes out, it could be a short-lived ordinance. City Council candidate Jerry Hamelton, who opposes Rink in the upcoming election, spoke out Tuesday against the motion, saying the majority of people don't want the ordinance passed.

A Pen City Current poll of Facebook followers had close to 1,200 responses with 64% of them indicating they opposed the move.

Mayoral candidate Joe Helmick, who opposes Matt Mohrfeld, also spoke in opposition to the new ordinance.

The most emotional plea came from Julie Vorhies who told the council that the safety of the community is paramount.

"Safety is not negotiable," she told the council. "It's more important because it's fun, or cool, or for the sale of golf carts."

She directed her comments at Chris Greenwald who said, into the record, he wasn't going to be selling golf carts.

Mayor Brad Randolph cut the discussion short and

told Vorhies it was improper for her to bring unfounded accusations to the council and directed her away from the comments.

Jim Posz brought up how the specifications of golf carts make them unsafe.

"Who says that golf carts don't belong on streets? One answer – the companies that make them," Posz said.

Posz said he made a copy of the owners' manual of EZ GO Golf carts and recited the manual that said the vehicles were designed and manufactured for off-road use.

"They DO NOT, and that's all caps, DO NOT conform to federal motor vehicle safety standards of the United States of America and are not equipped for operation on public streets."

He also said brakes on golf carts are mechanical brakes on the back two wheels and don't stop as well as other vehicles.

"Go back here up 8th Street between C and D, how well can you stop if you only have brakes on two wheels. It's hard enough when you have brakes on all four. Try Sunnyside, that'll be an adventure," he said.

Three-car accident sends one to FMCH

8,247 views, 3,383 engagements - Oct. 1, 2019

FORT MADISON – A Tuesday afternoon three-car accident has sent one person to the hospital with unknown injuries.

According to a release from Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff, at 12:11 p.m., officers were dispatched to a rollover accident in front of Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Upon arrival it was discovered that a crash had occurred at the intersection of Avenue O and 53rd Street. The traffic lights at the intersection are inoperable,

and had been replaced with temporary stop signs and warning flags. Two vehicles were found in the intersection, with a truck on its side just west of the scene.

Witnesses reported observing a van and a car stopped at the intersection facing west waiting for traffic to clear, when at that point a west-bound pickup truck approached and struck the rear end of both vehicles. The force propelled both cars into the intersection and caused the pickup truck to roll multiple times before coming to a

rest across the street.

The driver of the truck, a 2017 Dodge Ram was identified as Kristopher Lee Amberger, 50, of West Point, IA. He was able to exit his own vehicle and refused medical treatment. The driver of the car, a 2001 Pontiac was Sandra Louise Seager, 58, of Donnellson, who had to be

extricated from her car by the fire department. She was transported by ambulance to the FMCH emergency department for treatment.

The driver of the van, a 2016 Honda, was identified as Sabrina Marie Brown, 37, of Niota, IL, who had a complaint of minor injury and would later seek medical care.

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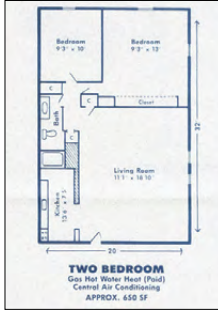

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Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Five-year-old Gattlin Anderson, left, and Ellison Piklapp, 6, were named All-Around Cowboy and Lil' Miss Rodeo 2019 at the pageant Monday night on the Tri State Rodeo grounds. Anderson is the son of Seth and Elizabeth Anderson of Keokuk. Piklapp is the daughter of Garratt and Tami Piklapp of Huxley, Iowa.

7,900 views, 1,367 engagements - Sept. 2, 2019

September chase, hunt lead to arrest of Burlington man

7,211 views, 2,813 engagements - Sept. 11, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

ARGYLE – A Burlington man has been arrested in connection with a chase and hunt that took place near Argyle Monday morning.

Lee County Sheriff's deputies attempted to pull over a stolen F250 truck out of Des Moines Monday morning and the driver led police on a chase through central Lee County at speeds exceeding 100 mph, before ditching the truck in a creek bed and taking off on foot.

Wednesday morning,

Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber released information about an arrest made Tuesday evening in the case.

According to the release, on Tuesday the sheriff's Criminal Investigations Division, The Lee County Narcotics Task Force, and the Lee County Joint Special Response Team executed a search warrant in the 2400 block of 340th Street where they believed the suspect was located.

As a result they recovered a second truck stolen out of Hancock County and a trailer that was stolen with the F250.

A resident at the address, David Alan Londrie was taken into custody and charged with two counts of theft. Law enforcement officers also arrested Michael Joe Spring on an outstanding

warrant for providing false information.

At about 6:30 p.m. law enforcement responded to the 2900 block of 180th Avenue where a call had come in about a suspicious male who matched the description of the suspect from Monday, was being detained by citizens.

The male was identified as Scot Andrew Flora, 50, of Burlington, and officials allege that Flora was the man driving the stolen vehicle and eluding officers on Monday.

Flora has been charged with aggravated eluding and felony theft. He was taken to the UnityPoint Emergency Room in Keokuk for possible dehydration.

Weber said the case is still under investigation and more charges could be filed. Weber also extended a thank you to the citizens involved in helping bring Flora into custody.

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Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition Tuesday, December 24 through Wednesday, January 1. Our special 2019 Year In Review editions will publish Thursday, January 2 through Wednesday, January 8. Breaking news will continue to be published on our website 24/7.

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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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

FM Firefighters rescue deer on city's east side

7,394 views, 3,394 engagements - Oct. 30, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – On Friday morning, Fort Madison firefighters put their rescue skills to the test with an unusual victim that decided a fall swim was a good idea.

What appeared to be about an 80 pound doe had somehow leaped into an above ground swimming pool in the 800 block of Avenue A. The pool was covered with a tarp and the deer landed in the water in a way that it didn't get wrapped up in the tarp, but couldn't get enough of a run or leap to get out of the pool.

Firefighters tried to capture the animal at the side of the pool to lift it out, but the animal was pretty good at swimming away from the firefighters.

So they used a red rescue rope held across the pool to move the deer to the side and were able to get the rope around the neck and a leg and were able to get four firefighters on each side to pull the deer out of the pool.

Fire Chief Joey Herren said the shift was on scene for about 30 minutes working to rescue the deer, which he said was set free after it was retrieved from the water.



Fort Madison firefighters hoist a deer from a swimming pool in the 800 block of Avenue A on Friday morning. The deer leaped into the tarped pool and wasn't able to get the energy to jump back out.

PHoto courtesy of Fort Madison Fire Department

Local police looking for "clown" harassing residents

6,487 views, 2,468 engagements - Sept. 26, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – It's that time of year for clowning around, but Fort Madison Police Chief Mark Rohloff said the department may put some time into chasing down what he called "menacing" activity.

Fort Madison police were called shortly after midnight Wednesday morning to the 700 block of 13th Street where a resident reported someone dressed as a clown harassing a child and then a parent from the yard.

Police Chief Mark Rohloff said no one was hurt in the incident and police responded when the parent called to report the harassment.

"Whoever it was was acting like an idiot and had one of those clown faces on with the fangs and was scaring residents," Rohloff said.

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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October



Fire breaks out in Feinberg scrap pile

7,046 views, 3,141 engagements - Sept. 10, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – Fort Madison firefighters were on the scene of a fire at Feinberg’s Metals Recycling this morning.

According to fire officials, a fire broke out under some scrapped automobiles and set a fire in an area about 100 feet by 100 feet.

LeeComm dispatched fire officials to the scene at around 8 a.m. and then issued an all-call for additional manpower.

Firefighters were on the scene for about two hours dousing the blaze, citing oil and fuel that kept igniting under the piles of automobiles. Several tractors were brought in to lift the cars up so firefighters could get water on them and underneath the vehicles.

Fire Chief Joey Herren called in additional help and brought the department’s aerial truck in for back up. No one was reported injured in the fire.

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City barricades downtown building

7,026 views, 1,956 engagements - Sept. 26, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A portion of a building in downtown Fort Madison has been barricaded on the southwest corner for fear of falling debris.

City Building Director Doug Krogmeier said he asked crews to put out the barricades yesterday after observing some additional settling of the building on the southwest corner of 8th Street and Avenue G.

“This is has been going on for years with this building,” Krogmeier said Thursday.

“It’s more of precaution, but you also never know. Parts of that building are moving and we just didn’t want anyone below if more pieces fall off or worse.”

The building is owned



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison city officials have barricaded the 8th Street side of the Humphrey building in downtown Fort Madison. Settling of the structure in several columns prompted the city to take action.

by Brian Humphrey and Krogmeier said the city has attorney’s out of Cedar Rapids working on getting Humphrey to deal with the building.

“We just recently did that and I’m not sure where the attorneys are with it,” Krog-

meier said.

“I haven’t seen the documents yet, but I think he has until the end of October to get with us and tell us what his plans are with the building. If he contracts with a structural engineer then I believe he’ll get another 30

days to determine what is going to be done.”

Krogmeier said the city has been dealing with damage from the building for sometime, but he said it’s very clear from his observations, things are getting worse.

DM Register names Central Lee a top workplace

7,088 views, 1,174 engagements - Sept. 18, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

DONNELLSON – The Des Moines Register has named the Central Lee Community School District as one of its 2019 Iowa Top Workplaces.

The state’s largest newspaper recognized 135 businesses, organizations and agencies in this year’s list, which is based solely on employee surveys. Central Lee was one of five Iowa public school districts included.

“Recognition as an Iowa Top Workplace is both an incredible honor and a great accomplishment for the school district,” said Mark Hulsebus, president of the CLCSD Board of Education.

“A hallmark of Top Workplace winners is the fact

that their employees are actively engaged in the betterment of the team. In the case of Central Lee, this recognition is a clear testament to not only how hard every member of our staff works, but also to how excellent they are in their individual roles and, more importantly, in working as a team.”

CLCSD is a rural public school system known for the wide variety of academic and co-curricular opportunities it delivers to students. The district has about 350 students open enrolling into its schools each year, and many of its staff members are Central Lee graduates. Currently, CLCSD’s leaders—including the superintendent, principals and curriculum director—are all Central Lee graduates.

“Central Lee has always been a great place to work because of our talented staff and incredible students,” said Dr. Andy Crozier, superintendent.

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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Firefighter Mike Schneider drags a hose to the north side of a garage that was set on fire in October. The garage was a total loss and damage affected the neighboring garage causing smoke and fire damage there as well.

East side garage destroyed by fire

6,654 views, 2,495 engagements - Oct. 24, 2019

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – An early fire broke out at about 3 a.m Thursday morning in the 600 block of Avenue E destroying a garage.

Firefighters were called to the alley behind 606 Avenue E to find the structure fully engulfed and had the blaze under control in a matter of minutes. Flames began to catch the neighboring garage to the east on fire, but firefighters quickly had that under control.

Witnesses at the scene said someone had been living in the structure up to about a week ago, but had since been told to leave the property.

The property is listed as owned by Michael S. Carter.

No one was reported injured at the scene. Assisting at the scene were the Fort Madison Police Department and Lee County EMS.

West Point officials reset speed limits on X23 and Hwy. 103

7,871 views, 2,966 engagements - Sept. 10, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – Motorists in and through West Point will have to check their speedometers a bit more frequently after city officials voted to slow down traffic on Monday night.

At the regular meeting of the West Point City Council, two ordinances were passed on second

reading that will create different speed zones on Fifth Street (X23) and on Avenue D (Highway 103).

The first ordinance creates a new 20-mph zone from Avenue D south on Fifth Street to where Bel Air would intersect if extended to Fifth Street. The ordinance then extends the current 25-mph speed limit south to the north entrance of the South Park. From there, the city and county will again

ramp up speed going out of town with 35- and 45-mph zones.

The second ordinance passed extends the current 35-mph speed limit on Avenue D past the newly constructed Dollar General on the west edge of town.

City Administrator Dennis McGregor said the annexation of Dollar General requires the city to extend the reduced speed limit.

“As you’re going out of town and you’re ramping

up speed and you’re trying to turn into Dollar General or Agrineed, we’re just asking for trouble. So we want to push it out further. That’s the whole thinking on that,” McGregor said after the meeting.

He said the city has also alerted the county to the change and the county may have to address extending an acceleration

zone by moving the 45-mph zone further west before setting the 55-mph current speed zone on 103.

“Basically where it’s 35 mph will be extended to where it says 45 and then the county will extend the 55 out about another city block to the west,” McGregor said.

“The same way coming

in, because our city limits are between Agrineed and Merschman’s.”

The new zones will become effective as soon as the rules are published for the public in the Daily Democrat.

In a related issue, West Point Mayor Paul Walker asked police to start getting firmer on the golf cart ordinance issue.

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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

Platform bids come in \$1.4 million over estimates

6,297 views, 1,225 engagements - Sept. 17, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORTY MADISON – The city of Fort Madison took another punch in the gut on Tuesday when a construction bid for the railroad platform at the proposed new Amtrak Depot came in \$1.4 million over engineer estimates.

The bids were opened today at the Iowa Department of Transportation and the lowest bid was from Iowa Bridge and Culvert and came in at \$2.83 million, which according to City Manager David Varley is double what the city was budgeting.

“That’s correct. It’s double what we budgeted and finding another \$1.4 million is not gonna be easy,” Varley said engineering estimates from Klingner &

Associates were at \$1.3 million, but he said he was figuring closer to \$1.4 million.

“I don’t know. I thought this would come in a bit high. I mean you’re working with the railroad and they have so many rules and regulations and insurance requirements,” Varley said. “Working next to the tracks also means you can’t work all the time when trains are going by. I realize how difficult it is to work with railroads. I think engineers would be able to see this stuff, too.”

The bid letting is up for discussion at tonight’s City Council meeting. Varley said he just found out about the bid Tuesday afternoon and said it was a shocker.

This is the third major project in the past year that has come in substantially over engineering estimates. Two other projects, the Avenue G sidewalk and curb replacement that was planned with grant money from the waste water treatment rehab project came in way over estimates, as did the Old Highway 61

rehab that was supposed to start this fall.

Both of those estimates were from HR Green out of Cedar Rapids and were met with the furrowed brows of several city councilman and Mayor Brad Randolph.

Varley said he understands why the construction bids can come in high as they have on all three projects, but he’s perplexed as to why engineers haven’t been seeing a more accurate picture.

“They haven’t been very accurate. It’s not the same firm and all three had extenuating circumstances.”

He said much of the increased costs of all the projects are centered around the unknowns.

“I understand the the downtown project too, I just don’t know why the engineers didn’t get that. It’s like the railroad project...if I have to jump through these hoops, you’re gonna have to pay me a premium for it.

Budget woes force Thrift store closure

5,040 views, 1,139 engagements - Oct. 30, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – Budget woes and lack of sales performance are forcing the closure of the Salvation Army Family Store & Donation Center in Fort Madison.

According to Major Leanna Tuttle, the location at 927 1/2 Avenue G, in the Aldi’s building, wasn’t generating enough revenue to cover it’s operating budget forcing the closure of one of only two Salvation Army outlets in Lee County on Nov. 15.

The other store is located at 31 S. 30th Street in Keokuk and is open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

“It’s due to budget cuts and not bringing in the funds it needs,” Tuttle said Wednesday morning.

“Hopefully that will be temporary. We’re looking at different options and some reorganization, but I can’t give you a timeline or anything like that.”

She said the budget woes aren’t just a regional thing, although the Keokuk location is struggling as well. Tuttle said other parts of the nation are experience similar issues and facing or executing closures.

SPORTS

Lady Hawks shock No. 8 Crusaders

6,459 views, 811 engagements - Oct. 16, 2019

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

DONNELLSON - It was volley after volley on the final point of the fourth set.

Holy Trinity had eight chances to get the point to stay alive in the set. All eight were fought off by Central Lee.

When Avery Hopper’s kill attempt went into the net, Central Lee won the set to stay alive.

That series summed up the Hawks’ 22-25, 25-23, 22-25, 25-22, 15-12 win over the Crusaders in Tuesday’s SEI Superconference South Division match at Central Lee High School.

Central Lee (22-10) constantly fought the No. 8 (Class 1A) Crusad-

ers.

“This was huge,” Central Lee coach Amy Cook said. “Huge for us. We’ve been struggling the last couple of games, and of course HTC is somebody who is a rival for us that we want to win against.

“The girls definitely had some perseverance today. We haven’t had that the last couple of games.”

Central Lee was swept by Holy Trinity (23-9) in a tournament at Mount Pleasant on Saturday, but this match had a different feel with the regional tournament beginning next week.

“Just to have a match where we’re playing against quality players — HTC has phenomenal volleyball players — it’s perfect timing for us to play a team like that,” Cook said. “And then to win, that’s an extra bonus.


“Like I said, I’m proud of the girls to have the perseverance to fight through to the end. I don’t think we’ve played many five-game matches. Plus it was Senior Night, so it was even an extra bonus.”


“They’re a great team,” Holy Trinity coach Melissa Freesmeier said. “We knew we would come in here tonight and it would be a dogfight. It’s a game of two points, two or three points every game. Maybe we made too many mistakes, but our kids fought hard. Both sides fought hard.


“They dug up some balls that should have been kills, that’s for sure.”


The first set was a sign of what was to come. Holy Trinity had a six-point run to take a 19-17 lead before the Hawks scored the next four points.


5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

TUE 03 Dec
 Clear
 High— 39.0° F | Low – 27.1° F

WED 04 Dec
 Scattered Clouds
 High— 37.2° F | Low – 30.6° F

THU 05 Dec
 Light Rain
 High— 53.7° F | Low – 38.0° F

FRI 06 Dec
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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

Biden tells West Point group 'It's time to get up'

4,972 views, 1,266 engagements - Oct. 23, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – Former Vice President Joe Biden told about 130 people at Small Grand Things in rural West Point Thursday it was time to get up.

It was a phrase his father used when Biden was a young boy. “It’s not that you get knocked down, it’s how well you get back up. So get up Joey,” Biden said recalling his father’s words of wisdom.

Biden had a stuttering problem as a child and needed special classes to overcome it, while putting up with ridicule from his classmates.

The 76-year-old former senator from Delaware, who grew up in Scranton, Pennsylvania, said America is being ridiculed around the world at the hands of President Donald Trump.

“My dad made what some of you have to make, the longest walk up a short flight of stairs to say, ‘Honey, you can’t go to that school anymore. You can’t play on that Little League. Daddy and Mommy lost their jobs and we have to leave.’”

Biden said his father moved to Delaware and then sent for Biden’s mother and brothers. “It’s a hard thing to do, to ask for help. The good news was my grandpop had the same values as my dad. It wasn’t hard for grandpop to say yes because it’s family,” he said.

“Today, too many hardworking middle class working class folks can’t look their children in the eye and say it’s going to get better...and mean it.”

He said Wall Street didn’t build America, people like those in Iowa, Scranton, part of the “great middle class” built America.

“There used to be a basic bargain in the country. If you contributed to the well being of the operation you worked for, you got to share in the benefits. Everything went up...everybody won. Management got a raise, labor got a raise. That’s not happening anymore.”

He said families in lower and middle class have no breathing room and statistically speaking more than half of the people in this country are afraid that their children will



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

2020 Presidential hopeful Joe Biden met with visitors at Small Grand Things in West Point in October. Biden was running about two hours behind, but ended up telling voters it was time to put the past behind them and get off the floor.

not have the same quality of life as they do.

“Folks, we have to rebuild the middle class. I’m not talking about it just because of economic fairness, but because the middle class has what’s allowed us the political stability, the social stability, and the economic stability of this country. Other countries’ democracies got in trouble without a strong middle class. That’s never been the case here no matter how bad it’s gotten.”

Public Works Director Larry Driscoll headed to Cedar Rapids

5,855 views, 1,977 engagements - Oct. 9, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

Director Larry Driscoll has submitted his resignation.

Driscoll’s submitted his resignation Tuesday morning and indicated his last day will be Nov. 8. Varley said Driscoll will be heading to the Cedar Rap-

ids area to work in that city’s water department.

“It will be a tough position to fill, especially if you want someone in water, because they tend to stay in that area so it’s gonna be tough,” Varley said.

“I’m gonna have to start praying to get some di-

rection. I hate to see him go. It will be a big loss and I can’t say enough about what he’s done for the city.

Varley said Driscoll has some water certification and licensing that he wants to put to good use and is looking forward to being able to wear just one hat.

Driscoll ushered in the city’s renovation of the waste water treatment plant, while at the same time running the street department. When John

Luna retired from running the city’s park and recreation department, Driscoll assumed those responsibilities as well.

Varley said he thinks Driscoll will be looking forward to working for one boss and not having the public pressure of his position.

“I think it’s just he’s been working in a city environment for so many years and he’s ready for a change. He doesn’t have to deal with all he does now,

he can go to work and do his job and he doesn’t get hammered as much,” Varley said.

Filling the position will require Varley to look outside of current staff in the departments.

“We’ll have to go outside with his wide array of skills. We’ve got good people in those departments, but not one person with a water license, plus knowledge of streets, knowledge of parks, and all the other odd jobs Larry had.”

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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

FM school board hears facility funding options

4,972 views, 1,266 engagements - Oct. 23, 2019

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – In very preliminary discussions, the Fort Madison Community School District is listening to other options for funding a new elementary school.

Voters in the school district have repeatedly voted down bond referendums to build new schools in Fort Madison. The first was a referendum to build the middle school in 2008 and the last three were to build a new elementary school on the campus by the middle school at 48th Street and Bluff Road.

At a Monday night’s workshop, the district heard a presentation from Piper Jaffray Managing Director Tim Oswald, who said with the state extending the SAVE (Secure an Advanced Vision for Education) program through 2050, the district would have some funding available there. Piper Jaffray is a financial consultant for the district.

Lee County voters approved the 1% tax option in August of 1999 and it went into effect on Jan. 1, 2000. At the time the tax was called a Local Option Sales Tax, or a LOST tax. The Iowa legislature changed the name to SAVE later.

At the time of that approval, the state had no sunset on it, and legislators decided to put one in for Dec. 31, 2029. Legislators have since extended that date to Dec. 31, 2050.

Oswald said the biggest take away from the discussion was that the board understand the school doesn’t have one more dollar today than they had before the legislative session extended the SAVE tax.

“When the board decided 10 years ago to build the middle school, they borrowed the money against the majority of that tax through 2029. So there isn’t a lot of play money until 2029,” he said.

“I want everybody to understand legislature added 20 years to the schedule but it starts in 2030. You borrowed through 2029 so what you picked up starts in 2030.”

Oswald said the formula is enrollment multiplied by revenue per student. Revenue per student is now statewide with all counties getting \$1,059 estimated in the current budget year.

Keokuk coach arrested for assault

5,139 views, 1,785 engagements - Oct. 22, 2019

LANCASTER, Mo — A football coach at Keokuk High School and his girlfriend are facing felony charges in the assault of a northeast Missouri woman.

According to a report from KHQA out of Quincy and its sister station KTVO in Kirksville, the crime happened Oct. 8, at the ROKA Apartments in Lancaster, Missouri.

The suspects are Dalton McCarty, 26, of Wayland, Missouri, an assistant varsity football coach at Keokuk High School, and his girlfriend, Khristian “Khrissy” Hill, 26, of Kirksville.

Both are charged with First-Degree Assault and First-Degree Harassment, both felonies.

According to court documents, McCarty told a Schuyler County Sheriff’s Deputy that he and his girlfriend had gone to the victim’s apartment to gather some of Hill’s belongings.

McCarty said soon after they arrived, a fight broke out and Hill was defending herself.

He told the deputy he then tried to break up the fight.

Witnesses told investigators that the victim was helpless on the pavement in front of the apartment building as if she was unconscious, and she was having seizures.

McCarty and Hill then fled the scene before deputies arrived. They later claimed it was self-defense, but they did not call an ambulance or law enforcement.

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2019 - A Year in Review: September & October

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-Chuck & Lee

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Chad Ward	Hillcrest Hostas & More	Relay for Life of North Lee County
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Chuck Osmanski	Holy Trinity Catholic Schools	RonDavoo
City of Fort Madison	Homestead Financial Services	RSVP of 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
Denmark God's Portion Day Committee	K's Fabrics & More	Stage 2 Consignment Shop
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Edward Jones - Tony Fullenkamp	Lee County Conservation Board	The Madison
Faeth's Fowl Play	Lee County Economic Development Group	Todd Schneider
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