

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Thursday, April 9, 2020 | 7 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 75



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SIGN OF THE TIMES



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

These pink signs went up Monday afternoon around Fort Madison School District's outdoor facilities across the city. Despite city officials reopening parks after a brief closure, the school decided to keep all its locations locked down until state officials had better news about the coronavirus.

City talks furloughs to ease budget woes

CITY MANAGER: Fort Madison could be broke in six months without cuts

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

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

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

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

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

Mohrfeld started the conversation with the option of shut-



MOHRFELD

tering or delaying some city services including the pool and library. He also suggested furloughing some employees. Furloughing would be temporary and allow federal, state, and local health and economic experts to determine what the impact of the viral outbreak will be.

Another option would be to layoff employees and allow them to immediately apply for the accelerated unemployment program and possibly an additional \$600 weekly stipend from the federal government.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation, or FPUC, allows states to provide an additional \$600 per week benefit to individuals who are collecting regular Unemployment Compensation. The payments are federally funded.

The payments under FPUC continue through the last week of regular unemployment before July 31, 2020 and



VARLEY

See BUDGET, page 7

ELECTION 2020

Reichman, Amos tangle for Dist. 42

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Two southeast Iowa Republicans will be battling for the right to take on State Sen. Rich Taylor in Iowa's 42nd District in June.

With a campaign season crippled by state restrictions on gatherings and social distancing, fundraising and getting out to voters will be difficult. Jeff Reichman, of Keokuk, and Nancy Amos, of Mt. Pleasant are both looking at different campaigns for the nomination to the general election against Taylor.

Both candidates said that boils everything down to digital media and phone contact during the primary.

Amos is on her first ballot, but has

See VOTE, page 6

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



Rosie the Riveter has become Mary the Mask Maker

Mt. Pleasant beauty salon owner, Judy Williamson, took in stride the governor's order to close taverns, restaurants, and beauty salons. She's a positive person and, as a quilter, had plenty of projects to keep her busy. She called her clients and canceled upcoming appointments for her salon, Hair Creations. She also applied for unemployment compensation, because self-employed people are now eligible.

Then she heard about the shortage of face

See SWARM, page 3

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap
THU 09 Apr.....Broken Clouds, 42.9° F/ 33.3° F
FRI 10 Apr.....Broken Clouds, 47.4° F/ 41.3° F
SAT 11 Apr.....Light Snow, 35.8° F/ 28.6° F

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

DALE W. JOHNSON

Dale Wayne Johnson, 56, of Dallas City, Illinois passed away Monday, April 6, 2020 at 6:25 PM at his home.

Mr. Johnson was born on February 5, 1964 in St. Louis, Missouri the son of Albert and Jesse (Welch) Johnson.

Dale enjoyed having parties with his friends and family. He also enjoyed spending as much time as he could outdoors; fishing and canoeing.



JOHNSON

Survivors include his mother, Jesse Johnson of Morning Sun, Iowa; three daughters; Jessica Johnson of Long Beach, California, Jennifer Johnson of St. Louis, Missouri and Rosita Johnson of St. Peters, Missouri; one son, Jacob Johnson of Texas; six grandchildren, Ejden and Liam Huscovic, Adrian Cortez, Diego and Alex Ravis and Chi Edwards; one sister, Betty (Jim) Ruble; three brothers, Larry (Michele) Johnson, Lester (Tery) Johnson and Roy Johnson.

He was preceded in death by his father; one sister, Alberta Pittman and one nephew, Jerry Pittman.

No services are planned at this time. Cremation has been entrusted to Banks & Beals Funeral Homes. To sign the guest book or leave a condolence please visit Dale's obituary at banksandbeals.com.

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.

OBITUARIES

ADDISON L. MCFERREN

Addison Layne McFerren, 29, of Farmington, passed away at 8:59 a.m. Friday, April 3, 2020, in Keokuk, Iowa.

She was born on March 24, 1991, in Keokuk, Iowa and was the daughter of Charlene and Dennis McFerren.

Survivors include her parents: Charlene and Dennis McFerren; three wonderful children: Sophia McFerren, Ilynn Avery and Isabeau Avery; three sisters: Charlynnn (Heather) Avery, Jeneice McFerren and Julie Danaus; five brothers: Scott (Robin) McFerren, Anthony Markey, Nick (Chantell) Ferrel, Josh Ferrel and Brandon Ferrel; great grandmother: Charlotte Johnson; uncle: Donald (Donna) Johnson; god-mother: Marlene Walters; god-brother: Chris Walters and several nieces, nephews and cousins.



MCFERREN

She was preceded in death by her brother: Dalton Kemp; grandmother: Rhonda Johnson Markey; grandfather: Wayne Markey; great grandfather: Donald Johnson and great-great grandmother: Letha Schmitz.

Addison was a 2009 graduate of Central Lee High School and attended Kirkwood College. While in high school, she was involved in cheerleading, track and show choir. She was a member of Embury United Methodist Church. Addison was loved by her family and she loved her children and her dog "Rags". Addison had a lively spirit, a good and big heart and wanted to be everyone's friend. She will be missed so very much by her family!

A private graveside service will be held at Embury Cemetery, rural Donnellson.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers a memorial has been established in her memory for Autism Society of America and can be sent to the family at: 2647 140th Avenue, Farmington, Iowa 52626.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Farmington is assisting the family with the arrangements. Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

JAN L. SORENSON

Jan Lee Sorensen, 79, of Hamilton, passed away at 9:05 P.M. Friday April 3, 2020 at Memorial Hospital in Carthage.

Born December 13, 1940 in Monmouth, Illinois the son of Lee and Eva (Howard) Sorensen. October 31, 1970 in Nauvoo, Illinois he married Rosalyn Scott.

Survivors include his wife Rosalyn, brother-in-law David Leininger of Nauvoo. Also surviving are two cousins Tom Sorensen and Marge Winebright.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Jan attended Monmouth High School and was a United States Marine Corp. Veteran.

He worked most of his life in construction, building bridges in Illinois and Indiana. He was project manager of a hospital, dental clinic and tank ranges in Germany, Underground Bunker Fortifications in Saudi Arabia and the clean up of Super Fund Sites in the Chicago area. After retirement Jan did inspecting of hurricane cleanup for the Army Corp of Engineers and finally working on the Border Wall in Texas. Jan loved cats especially his German cat "Dinker."

His body has been entrusted to Schmitz-Banks & Beals Funeral Home for cremation. No services are planned at this time.

Schmitz - Banks & Beals Funeral Home in Nauvoo is assisting the family with arrangements. On-line condolences to the family may be left at www.sbbfuneralhome.com.

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PEN CITY CURRENT

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Coronavirus 2020/From the Front

Mt. Pleasant ladies join forces making masks

SWARM - Continued from Page 1

masks. She went to YouTube, found patterns, and went to work. Her quilting fabric was perfect for the job.

She contacted the emergency room in Mt. Pleasant, but they weren't taking hand made face masks yet. However, her pastor at the Open Bible Church in Mt. Pleasant, Mike Johnson, has a daughter, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law working at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. The Mayo Clinic needed face masks. Judy put a dozen masks in a package and sent them off.

Arbor Court Assisted Living in Mt. Pleasant also needed face masks. Judy delivered a package to them. She's contacting nursing homes in Mt. Pleasant to see if they need masks. You may contact her if you need one.

Judy's face masks are double sided and washable, with interfacing material in the middle for a filter. Being double sided, with a different pattern on front and back, the user can remember which side was in or out. You can choose elastic or shoestring ties for the headband.

In the middle of making all these face masks, Judy's sewing machine broke down. Not to be deterred (she's a quilter you know), Judy turned to her hand-crank, Singer Sewing Machine she uses for quilting demonstrations at Old Threshers. That's all she uses now. (I'm not kidding.) In her words, "I like giving back. I'm not a medical worker. But I can do my part." While she stitches she prays for those affected by COVID-19.

Debi Sliter Roederer of Mt. Pleasant, another quilter, is also making face masks from quilting material. She uses hypoallergenic furnace filter material for the filter, all of which is washable. "Quilters will find a way," says Debi.

She's been supplying masks to staff at various dental, care centers and doctors' offices, nursing friends, and the Mt. Pleasant Library, where she is a substitute clerk. "Once people find out," says Debi, "you become a resource." She also made quilts for the children of people who were killed in the 911 attack.

Next to her sewing machine, and before she sews each mask, she contemplates a sign by Mother Teresa. This thought goes into each mask: "I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that He will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do, what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things."

Victory over the coronavirus will be achieved not only by medical people, scientists and the government, but by everyone doing their part to contribute to the war effort. Rosie the Riveter becomes Mary the Mask Maker.

The CDC has recommended that everyone should wear a face mask. Homemade masks are fine for non-medical people who are out and about.

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, email him at 319-217-0526 or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com

State to expand grant fund to \$24M

However, IEDA will not take additional applications for grant funding

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – The state is going to pump an additional \$20 million into small business grants for Iowa businesses that applied prior to the March 31 deadline.

Iowa Economic Development Authority Director Debi Durham said Wednesday that the state will be expanding the grant program based on applications received prior to the deadline from \$4 million to \$24 million with the first round of checks being sent out Tuesday.



REYNOLDS

Five Lee County businesses received grants, including the Ridgewood Lounge (\$7,250), Annette Whorton (\$8,000), BMAT Inc, \$15,500, Get Wells Corporation (\$25,000), Hesler Inc (\$16,000), and Meyers Restaurant and Catering Service (\$10,000).

In Des Moines County, EBD4AK LLC, doing business as Farney's, received \$24,000, Hot Toddlies (\$25,000), Parkside Brewing Company LLC (\$20,000), Schnickers Karmelkorn Inc. (\$25,000) and Yarmouth Filling Station Grille (\$25,000).

The first round of grants, worth close to \$10 million in assistance, were sent to more than 500 restaurants, bars and breweries impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It is our goal to get them back up and running as soon as possible," Gov. Kim Reynolds said.

Durham said the state received more than 15,000 grant applications with a minimum of 15 from each county.

"Every application was triaged and I use this word purposefully because it explains the entire process. We determined eligibility and the greatest business disruptions were awarded first," she said.

"This program was designed to be short-term and a stop gap funding before federal resources became identified and available."

The state still has tax deferral programs and targeted business programs as well as other forgivable and low interest loan programs at the following link:

<https://www.iowaeconomicdevelopment.com/businessrecovery>

Reynolds said Wednesday as the rate of positive cases and hospitalizations declined over "the next few weeks" the state planned to dial up the economic response to that data.

The state saw 97 new positive cases over the past 24 hours for a total of 1,145 positives in 79 of Iowa's 99 counties combined. The lab now has testing for 1,328 individuals, while 122 are currently hospitalized and 431 have recovered.

Sarah Reisetter, deputy director of the Iowa Department of Public Health said the state is still facing shortages of personal protective equipment and is looking for help.

"PPE Shortages are real. We're continuing to look at all different avenues, federal and state agencies, and our manufacturing is looking to help increase the supply. But we feel pretty good about beds and vents, based on what were seeing."

Reynolds also recommended the public wear masks in the event trails and recreational areas are getting increased traffic as a secondary measure to social distancing.

She said she hopes the state doesn't have to mandate closing all parks and recreational areas due to over crowding and violating the 6-foot order and groups of smaller than 10.

"I hope not. We need that for our mental well-being. Get exercise and get outdoors but take a mask with you so you are protected that way as well," she said.

Reisetter said the jump in numbers of those hospitalized is due to a new way of collecting data straight from the hospitals, instead of through public health agencies.

"We're asking hospitals to report information directly to have more timely information on hospitalized patients. We're seeing about 10% of total cases requiring hospitalization and that's pretty consistent," she said.

"And maybe a little lower than national reporting 15-20% general hospitalization rate. So we're not seeing a jump, just more timely reporting."

Reynolds said she was going to stick to her previous statements on school closures, saying state officials will review data and any additional changes will be shared with state schools at least two weeks prior to the end of the current two-week shutdown.

See VIRUS, page 5



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Classifieds/Iowa News

Coronavirus now in 79 of Iowa's 99 counties

VIRUS - Continued from Page 1

According to IDPH, one additional death was also reported in the last 24 hours out of Linn County. The 97 new positive cases included:

- Allamakee County, 1 adult (18-40 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Benton County, 1 child (0-17 years)
- Black Hawk County, 1 adult (18-40 years), 3 middle-age adults (41-60 years)
- Cedar County, 3 adults (18-40 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Clinton County, 1 adult (18-40 years), 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years)
- Crawford County, 1 adult (18-40 years)

- Harrison County, 1 adult (18-40 years)
- Henry County, 2 adults (18-40 years)
- Johnson County, 10 adults (18-40 years), 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years), 2 older adult (61-80 years)
- Linn County, 1 child (0-17 years), 4 adults (18-40 years), 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years), 3 older adults (61-80 years), 2 elderly adults (81+)
- Louisa County, 4 adults (18-40 years), 5 middle-age adults (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Marshall County, 1 adult (18-40 years)
- Muscatine County, 4 adults (18-40 years), 5 middle-age adults (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)

- Polk County, 2 adults (18-40 years), 4 middle-age adults (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Pottawattamie County, 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Scott County, 4 adults (18-40 years), 7 middle-age adults (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Tama County, 1 adult (18-40 years), 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years), 2 older adults (61-80 years)
- Warren County, 1 elderly adult (81+)
- Washington County, 3 adults (18-40 years), 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years), 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Webster County, 1 older adult (61-80 years)
- Woodbury County, 2 middle-age adults (41-60 years)
- Worth County, 1 middle-age adult (41-60 years)

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

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The Fort Madison Public Library is seeking a Summer Reading Corps Associate service member. This position will help with summer reading activities in the library and help us take our summer reading program to local daycare facilities. The position will be 300 hours between May 26 and July 25. Compensation includes a living stipend as well as an education award from the National Service Trust upon successful completion of the full term of service. Application and complete job description can be found at www.FortMadisonLibrary.org or contact Sarah Clendinning at (319) 372-5721.



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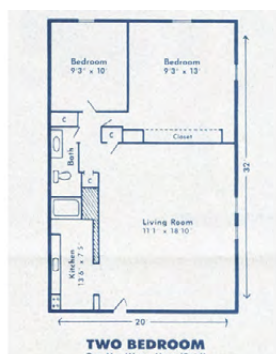
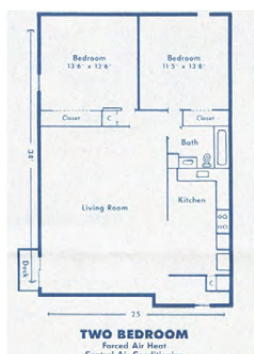
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Election 2020

Amos championing mental health; Reichman touts experience

VOTE - Continued from Page 1

extensive experience in southeast Iowa Republican committee. She said she's ready to represent the district in Des Moines.

"I'm constantly talking to people and posting different articles every day and phone banking," said the Mt. Pleasant wife, mother, and grandmother. "I was planning on the door-knocking and fundraisers and that's kind of been put aside."

Amos has a degree in psychology from Iowa Wesleyan College, is a teacher, former drug counselor and advocate, and said she has a unique perspective on mental healthcare in Iowa.

"That's my top thing. We lost MHI in Mt. Pleasant and we need more beds and dual diagnosing programs in this area. People need things accessible to them to get the help they need and that's not happening right now."



AMOS

Amos referenced the West Burlington suicide where the man was suffering from mental health issues and drug abuse.

"That man could have benefited from better programs."

Amos said she would also advocate for additional law enforcement funding to help increase training for mental health situations they encounter every day on the street.

"My thing is criminal justice and keeping our highways safer from sex trafficking. We need public awareness on what to do – not get involved but know what to look for," she said. "We need additional funding for officers and better training. A lot don't know how to respond."

She said growing up on a farm, the state's one-cent tax to help fund natural resource efforts was also a good idea and supports continuing that program. Her website can be found at www.nancyforiowa.com. She also has a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Nancy-Amos-for-Iowa-Senate-2073222812743400/>

The pro-life advocate is also a small business owner operating an over-the-road semi trailer with her husband, and said impacts of the coronavirus will be long-lasting on small businesses.

"I think more businesses, especially small businesses, are going to need help to stay in business, I know we're doing loans and bailout packages, but I'm not sure I agree with all they are doing," she said. "I'm glad this is a temporary relief package because sometimes this make it easier for people not to go back to work."

She said she would like to see funds targeted at small businesses and no-go to things like, "the Kennedy Arts Center".



"And we need to be careful that it doesn't go to people and businesses who will turn around and fire people after they get their money," Amos said. "I think this had to be quick but more thought out."

Reichman was born and raised in Keokuk and graduated from Southeastern Community College, has a business degree from Iowa Wesleyan College, and is a Marine Corp Command staff graduate. He now makes his home in Montrose and works in the shipping department at Roquette. He also runs his own home inspection service, Tri State Home Inspection.

Kurtz is making his second run for public office after losing to Rep. Jeff Kurtz (D-Fort Madison) for Iowa's 83rd in 2018.

Reichman said this campaign will be different having already canceled two fundraisers and meet and greets. He said he learned a lot from the last campaign.

"You take a step back and think about a lot of things – what you could have done better and what we should have done differently," he said. "But then I get approached to run for the Senate this time. They said I ran a good campaign."

Reichman said this primary, and a possible general election campaign will be a huge challenge for making that connection with people and moving them with layoffs, the economy, the virus duration, and then getting people to donate in the first place.

His platform hasn't changed much since 2018, and he says past trade agreements have been devastating to the blue collar small town demographic of southeast Iowa. He said President Donald Trump's United States – Mexico-Canada Agreement has been good for the economy.

"The USMCA has already brought billions back into the economy and we will continue to see that growth," he said. "Big industries are coming back and they will need feeder operations because that place getting parts from China is no longer feasible, so they could look to get those in the Midwest."

Reichman also wants to advocate for additional high school trade programs to help fill some of the job vacancies in southeast Iowa.

He said Scotts Miracle Gro in Fort Madison was advertising for more than 100 people and ConAgra will be looking for people as well with their expansion.

sion. But he said this problem has been brewing for decades.

"It's been a 30-year problem that's been snowballing. We have the ability to change that. We've seen some grants down here as we move forward," he said. "There are a lot of counties doing much better than those in southeast Iowa, but there's targeted legislation to look at better grants for different counties and zones that need different help, too."

Reichman said Iowa is going to stay a Republican majority after this year's election and the party needs a senator at the majority table.

"I've been doing some door-knocking but that came to a screeching halt. But what I'm seeing is an aging population," he said. "We really have got to give the kids growing up here a reason to stay, or a reason to come back or we're going to continue to see population diminish here."



REICHMAN

He said groups like Keokuk Economic Development Group and Lee County Economic Development Group are making strides to program with that focus, but schools need to a better starting point.

He said college preparation in schools is still taking too much of the education resources.

"We need to close the gap on jobs and workers with the right skill set to fill those jobs," he said. "We're spending too much on curriculum for college prep and the stats when that's not the right way. Sixty percent of kids go to college, but only twenty-five percent finish. So we're spending eighty to ninety percent of our budget to benefit twenty-five percent of the students."

He said that transformation is taking place but not at a quick enough pace.

"Too many kids are still being prepped for college that may not really want to go or could have a better career somewhere else. What are we doing with those kids in high school?" Reichman said.

The state is still bleeding too many of its residents to other parts of the country and he'd like to be involved in budgeting at the state level to help stem that tide.

"I think somebody like myself whose been in the private sector and worked with budgets can help that cause," he said.

Reichman said he's been through a lot in southeast Iowa, including layoffs and being unemployed, and that gives him a better understanding of what the people of southeast Iowa need than other candidates.

Reichman also wants to contribute to the discussion of rural broadband access in southeast Iowa. He said some infrastructure is in place, but it's not moving at the pace it needs to.

"Throughout the nation, the system hasn't supported enough growth to have private entities do it, and it's being helped along by the government. It's something we've all talked about it at all levels. But that's just it, there's a lot of talking and not much doing."

One thing the state is doing well, Reichman said, is managing its finances. He said because of the surplus from last year, Iowa will weather the storm of the coronavirus better than most states.

"We're definitely in a better place than a lot of other states. (Gov. Reynolds) had a budget surplus, and there were calls to spend that and throw money at everything to make sure we used it, but it sure was good that we didn't because now we're gonna be down some revenue."

He said he would have preferred more of the money go to small businesses and not so much to special interests. He said people are spending more online now that they are cooped up at home and that should help a bit, but the revenue lost, will be lost.

"You won't make that money up. What's lost is lost. But I'm really kind of upset with people for putting special interest money in the relief bill and disappointed in those who voted for it. I don't think that hits the target as much as it should."

More on Reichman's candidacy and issue platforms can be found on his Facebook page at the following link: <https://www.facebook.com/Jeff-Reichman-for-Iowa-Senate-279201999287923/>.



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CAUTION

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From the Front

City suspends rental inspections, nuisance complaints

BUDGET - Continued from Page 1

would start back-dated to the individual's original unemployment eligibility date, or the date the state signed the agreement with the Dept. of Labor, whichever is first.

For more information on the program, click here: <https://www.dol.gov/newsroom/releases/eta/eta20200404>

Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker said the city should look at asking for volunteers to furlough.

"Have we floated that by anyone or any department heads?"

Councilman Chad Cangas agreed with the voluntary furloughs, adding that some might welcome the chance to be at home right now.

"It's a bad spot to be in, but we're at a point where we have to look at stuff," he said. "There are people that want to be at home because they are concerned about the pandemic. They don't want to be at work, but they don't have a choice."

But Councilman Robert Morawitz said the city should consider taking out a loan as a gap funding measure to keep the city moving. He said the options of furloughing and laying people off put the onus of the problem on a few people. A loan could be assessed and cost everyone a few pennies, rather than city employees hundreds of thousands of dollars, he said.

Cangas said the city can't operate with empty pockets and they are going to have to make some tough decisions, but he said he would like more information on the unemployment support because with the \$600 added on maybe the employees aren't taking that big of a hit financially.

Varley said the city should immediately begin cutting some of the consultation and professional services expenses that are planned, which would cut \$30,000 to \$40,000 out immediately, when coupled with reduced

fuel costs.

"There's no question about that," he said.

Varley said he thinks the city can keep the library and the Old Fort open but all staff would have to be put on leave except directors Sarah Clendineng and Dr. Eugene Watkins. He said that, coupled with a tightening of budgets and the reduced fuel costs, could get the city through for the time being.

But furloughing Watkins, Varley said, could result in him quitting and taking 50 to 60% of the exhibits at the Fort, which are owned by him, with him. Varley said he'd almost rather fire Watkins than furlough him, and buy out his vacation. Then hire him back after the crisis has passed.

Varley said he has the authority as city manager to manage employees and he did send home library staff earlier this week with pay. But he said that pay was only guaranteed for one week and he wanted to reassess the situation.

Councilman Rusty Andrews said the council only meets every other two weeks and they're going to have to rely on city staff to make decisions.

"We need more information before we can make decisions," he said. "We're gonna have to rely on Dave and the mayor to make some decisions. The city is going to lose income out of this, and we can't forget that. As much as we care about our employees, we've got to still keep in the back of our minds finance."

Bowker also encouraged Varley to seek FEMA reimbursement for some of the city's COVID-related expenses. Varley said he is having city department heads use a worksheet to document all expenses going forward.

In an unrelated issue, Fire Chief Joey Herren told the council that he, along with Keokuk Fire Chief Gabe Rose, were deep into the process of trying to get authorized to help provide ambulance service in the county through the Fort Madison and Keokuk fire

departments.

Lee County Emergency Medical Services, who currently provides countywide ambulance service, is operating week to week trying to sustain payroll with their contract ending on June 30. There has been no official word on whether the service plans to sign another contract, and conversation to this point has indicated it will not.

Herren said the state is fast tracking all his paperwork, but he still has some hurdles with Medicaid and Medicare who want a list of equipment, and the city has currently has none.

In other action, the board:

- Heard from Building Director Doug Krogmeier that the city has temporarily suspended rental inspection and most nuisance inspections to allow people to focus on virus mitigation and safety.

- approved, 7-0, a second reading of an ordinance to rezone property located at 1731 39th Street and the adjoining alley between 38th and 39th streets, as well as 1729 39th Street from single-family to service and wholesale district.

- approved, 7-0, the reappointment of Jody Schulte to the Southeast Iowa Regional Riverboat Commission and Joel Amandus to the city's Planning and Zoning Commission.



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