

PEN CITY CURRENT

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Tyson finds 86 positives

COVID-19: State sees largest single day positive coronavirus tests since outbreak

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

JOHNSTON – State officials released the highest number of positive coronavirus cases since daily updates began in March, due to an outbreak of positive tests out of the Tyson Foods plant in Columbus Junction.

At Tuesday's daily press conference on the COVID-19 outbreak, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said testing of plant employees Sunday revealed 86 new positives out of 189 positives across the state. The press conference was delayed about 40 minutes due to a website overload.

"As you're aware the Tyson Plant has experienced an out-

break among its employees. Public health is working closely with management to test staff there," Reynolds said.

She said state health officials have also confirmed three additional outbreaks in long-term care centers, two in Polk County, and one in Bremmer County.

"Local public health officials are working with the management and staff to ensure all steps are being taken to isolate sick residents, assign dedicated staff, and monitor all other residents," she said.

As a whole for the state, 189 positive tests were confirmed with 481 negative tests for a total of 670 tests conducted. The

See **STATE**, page 3

SCHOOL BUDGET

Central Lee levy comes in at \$11.32

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – Central Lee has some good news for tax payers.

At Monday's regular meeting of the Central Lee Community School District Board of Directors, the board approved the 2020-21 fiscal year budget with a residential property tax rate of \$11.32/\$1,000 assessed valuation.

The rate is 87 cents lower than a limit the district had relayed to voters as part of the recently passed \$13 million bond referendum to upgrade the district campus near Donnellson.

Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said the district told voters the bond would not go over a \$12.19 ceiling during the lifespan of the bond, which currently is 20 years.



CROZIER

"There was another increase in valuations in the district and that helped that levy go down. If the levy does start to creep up in coming years, we can use our sales tax revenues to offset some of that," Crozier said.

The district had initially told voters the debt service on the bond would be \$2.70/\$1,000 assessed valuation, but favorable bond bids brought that number to \$2.54 as part of the \$11.32 overall levy in the upcoming budget. Crozier said it is likely that figure will drop to \$2.40 for the following years.

"Whenever you lower the property tax rates no one comes out of the woodwork with complaints," Crozier said. "People should be pleased considering we passed a bond and told them the tax rate would be stable, and actually it's going down. So hopefully we can continue this trend."

The funds will provide renovations and common space for easier flow of students through the hallways, a new competition/performance gymnasium, two new rooms for fine arts, renovations of the K-8 building

See **BUDGET**, page 7

Well....will ya?

Someone looking for a bit of good news, in a temporarily bleak time, used Vinnie's Longbranch's billboard to propose marriage Tuesday afternoon in Fort Madison.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

SUPERVISORS

County getting proposals for new ambulance contract

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Lee County Supervisor Gary Folluo said Tuesday morning that the county has received two proposals for ambulance service starting July 1, but to date no contract for the next fiscal year has

been signed.

At the Lee County Board of Supervisors teleconference meeting Tuesday morning, Garry Seyb Jr., a Republican candidate for supervisor in the November general election, pressed the supervisors



FOLLUO

on whether Lee County Emergency Medical Services has agreed to extend their current contract.

Folluo said supervisors have allocated \$500,000 in the next fiscal year to supplement ambulance service in the county, but Lee County

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap
WED 15 Apr..... Snow, 40.1° F/ 31.9° F ❄️
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Sports/From the Front

Supervisors decline waiving fees for Mormon Pioneer Trail signs

COUNTY - Continued from Page 1

Emergency Medical Services officials have not resigned the contract at that funding level.

Folluo said the county does have a proposal from Richard Young, who's family owns the company, to continue the service. He said one other company has also submitted a proposal.

The county is also waiting to hear proposals from Fort Madison and Keokuk to have the fire departments in those cities provide countywide service.

Supervisor Matt Pflug asked if there is a drop date for proposals and Folluo said the county should be making a decision on that before the end of the month. But no deadlines were approved at Tuesday morning's meeting.

"We probably should make a decision here by the end of the month and we should have a special meeting to decide what we're going to do. That's my personal opinion."

Supervisor Rick Larkin said the proposals were complicated and a special meeting would be warranted.

Seyb asked the board if that meeting would be open to the public. County Auditor Denise Fraise said it could be open, but left the door open to close the meeting as well.

State code allows for closed meetings to discuss negotiations on contracts. The reason would be to not tip one service provider's offer to others who may still submit a proposal for a contract within the county. Since no deadlines have been set to re-

ceive proposals from other provides, public discussion on the proposals could be disadvantageous to those being discussed in open session.

In an unrelated issue, the county voted to approve installation of 11 Mormon Pioneer National Historic Trail signs for up to \$200 each.

Kirk Brandenberger, executive director with the Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism Bureau, asked the board to consider waiving the fee to install the signs saying the county would see the financial benefit of the signage from people on the trail.

"Money will come back to you eventually through increased stops to our small towns and sites," Brandenberger said.

Folluo, along with Lee County Engineer Ben Hull, expressed concerns about the precedent waiving the fees would set. Supervisor Matt Pflug initially made a motion to approve the installations waiving the fees, but then amended the motion to include charging up to \$200.

In other action, the board:

- approved the 2021-25 Department of Transportation Construction program in Lee County, 5-0
- approved the 2021 Department of Transportation budget, 5-0

- approved a memorandum of understanding with the administrative, roads, and sheriff's union regarding waivers of leave time during the COVID-19 pandemic. Folluo cautioned that the documents are fluid documents and can be changing based on state and federal information on the pandemic.

Hawks' Ehret steps down as football coach

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – After just three years, Central Lee Head Football Coach Nick Ehret has announced his resignation.

The Central Lee School District board accepted Ehret's resignation effective immediately at its regular meeting Monday night.

Ehret compiled a 7-20 record over the past three seasons highlighted by a 5-4 year in 2018.

He said he and his wife made the decision to move to be closer to their families.

"It was certainly not an easy one as I feel we were making some good progress at the end of last year," Ehret said Tuesday.

"I enjoyed my three seasons at Central very much. I greatly appreciate the support the administration, school, and communities gave us."

Central Lee superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said Ehret was making the decision now so he could give the school ample time to find a replacement.

"I'm very sad to announce his resignation," Crozier told the board Monday night. "Nick was disappointed he had to resign and knew they would be moving this summer or early fall and didn't want to put us in a bad situation."

Ehret said the program has momentum and some solid players returning in the fall.

"I'm very proud of all the players I had to opportunity to coach. I think the state of the program is much better than it was a year ago. We have a lot of momentum coming off our two wins at the end of year," he said.

"We do graduate some key pieces, but the guys coming back have a lot of experience. I think the new schedule is a very competitive one for us, and I know Central is looking forward to renewing some rivalries with the new schools on the schedule."



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Obituaries/From the Front

Reynolds says meat packers are deciding when to reopen

STATE - Continued from Page 1

state lab has 3,415 tests available.

When pressed by pool reporters, Reynolds deferred the low number of tests to Iowa Department of Public Health Deputy Director Sarah Reisetter who said due to the Easter Sunday holiday, test numbers were down and that's a pattern the IDPH has seen on weekends, specifically Sundays.

The state has now had 1,899 positive tests confirmed by the State Hygienic Lab and has had 17,467 negative tests for a total of 19,366 tests. Ten percent of those tested have been confirmed positive. The state has also had 49 deaths reported with the peak of the outbreak now pushed back to the end of the month.

Reynolds said the meat packing plants across the state and in neighboring states are being very proactive. The Tyson plant employs about 1,400 people in Columbus Junction, a town of about 2,000.

Reynolds said the state was looking into the contact tracing of the positives to see how many other counties in the region could be impacted by the positive tests.

But she said the decision about when to open some of the facilities back up is being left to company ownership. She said Tyson officials wanted to "stand the facility back up" this week, but have pushed that back to Monday. The plant closed on April 6 when 12 positives were confirmed.

On Monday, National Beef announced it was closing its Tama facility until April 20, following numerous positive tests on employees at that facility.

"When I reached out to the CEOs at both plants they had already taken the steps needed. They are being very proactive. I called to see if there was anything else we could do," Reynolds said.

She said local public health agencies were already doing contact tracing at both sites.

Reynolds said the outbreaks at the production facilities in Iowa and neighboring states could have a huge impact on Iowa's economy and said it's important that the states move responsibly, but quickly, to get the facilities back open.

When pressed on whether she will extend the current emergency declaration into May, Reynolds said she wasn't ready to make any projections, citing again, that state officials were looking at metrics not only to extend the order, but also metrics to look at beginning to open the state back up.

"I'm not going to make any projections now. We're hoping we can start that process in May, but I'll have to see where we are at the end of the month. We'll keep you apprised of that as we move through the next several weeks," Reynolds said.

The state also released a new website at <https://coronavirus.iowa.gov> with an updated format with additional resources for the general public on state data.

Hy-Vee offers full service fueling

WEST DES MOINES - Hy-Vee, Inc. announces today that it will be offering free full-service fueling at its more than 165 convenience stores across its eight-state region, including its Hy-Vee Fast & Fresh stores.

The service will be offered at select fuel pumps from at least 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week. Upon arrival, customers who wish to use the service can select the pump's "Fuel Help" button or call a designated phone number found on signs at each pump. Food and items from the convenience store can also be ordered and delivered to customer vehicles using the service.

Once notified, employees will meet customers at their vehicle and process their transaction and fuel order without the customer having to leave their vehicle. Full-service fueling can be paid with cash or credit card. As an added safety measure, employees will be wearing gloves for every customer interaction.



REYNOLDS

OBITUARIES

CORINNE MENKE

Corinne "Cory" Menke, 68 years, of Fort Madison, Iowa died Thursday, April 9, 2020 at the Donnellson Health Center, Donnellson, Iowa. She was born October 6, 1951, the daughter of Eugene and Jeanette (Bolton) Martin. On August 28, 1976, she married Norbert Bernard Menke at Evanston, Illinois. He preceded her in death.



MENKE

Mrs. Menke was a 1973 graduate of Ottawa University, Kansas where she studied English Language and Literature. She taught preschool for several years, worked at Great Prairie AEA for 17 years, Mid-Iowa Family Therapy Clinic, and also provided direct support to adults with disabilities. She was a member of the Happy Hoppers, a group of AEA retirees, and the Baptist Youth Fellowship. She enjoyed reading, knitting, cross stitch, doing crossword and sudoku puzzles, and spending time with family and friends.

She is survived by one son, Eugene Menke of Fort Madison; one daughter, Melissa Helt (Kevin Penrod) of Burlington, Iowa; one brother, Michael Martin of Skokie, Illinois; two grandchildren, Kyle Eugene Menke and Nyla Brielle Helt; nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, one son Kyle James Menke, and a sister-in-law Suzanne Martin.

A private graveside service and burial will be at Sacred Heart Cemetery, Fort Madison. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. Barr Memorial Chapel is honored to serve the Menke family and an online guest book may be found at www.barrmemorialchapel.com.

KELLY F. SKELTON

Kelly F. Skelton, 54, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 10:20 p.m. on Friday, April 10, 2020 at Fort Madison Community Hospital. He was born on July 25, 1965 in Fort Madison, IA to Harold & Sandra Skelton. He was a mechanic and enjoyed working on his cars, racing cars and just being around people.

Kelly is survived by: 1-son: Jeremy Skelton of Fort Madison, IA; 1-grandson & several siblings. He was preceded in death by his parents, 1-sister & 1-brother.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory and no services are planned. Online condolences to Kelly's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

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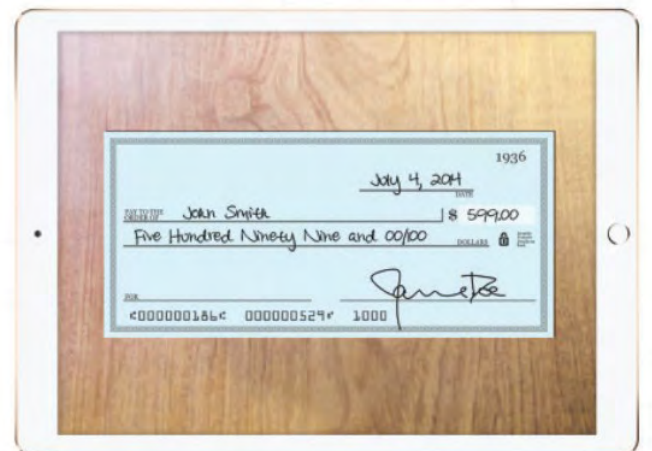
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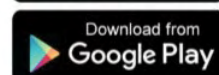


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PUBLIC NOTICE NEW CONSTRUCTION ANNOUNCEMENTS

REVISED Notice to Bidders Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Sealed bids will be received by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources by email, at procurement@dnr.iowa.gov until 11:00 am, April 16, 2020 for the public improvement projects listed below, at which time they will be opened publicly.

REVISION NOTICE

In an effort to mitigate the spread and effects of the COVID-19, the Department of Natural Resources will ONLY be accepting proposals submitted via email for these projects. No bids shall be accepted by FAX, mail or hand-delivery.

After the bid opening, information concerning bid results may be obtained by visiting the Department's website at www.iowadnr.gov.

Note: The bid opening for this project will be held by conference call only. No facilities will be available for an in-person meeting. Interested parties may call in to the following number to listen to the bid opening:

Conference call number:
513-464-9687

PIN: 854 350#

In order to improve sound quality, please mute your phone by pressing *6. If you have questions, you can unmute your phone by pressing *6.

Project documents, including drawings, specifications, proposal forms, and addenda items for the project are available at Beeline and Blue, at 2507 Ingersoll Ave, Des Moines IA 50312. Please visit www.beelineandblue.com or contact (515) 244-1611 for more information.

Alternatively, Bid Documents can be viewed or printed online at <https://programs.iowadnr.gov/engreal/projectlist.asp>

The Department shall comply with all public improvement procurement laws, as outlined in the plans and specifications and including but not limited to: Iowa Code chapter 26 related to public construction bidding; Iowa Code chapter 73 related to preferences; Iowa Code chapter 573 related to labor and materials on public improvements; rules promulgated by the Department of Administrative Services – General Services Enterprise as they may apply; rules promulgated by the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resources Commission, as they may apply; and any federal statutes, rules and/or executive orders that may be associated depending on funding sources. Bidders shall comply with these laws to be considered and are encouraged to be familiar with public improvement procurement requirements and the bidding documents before submitting a bid.

Each bidder shall accompany the bid with a scanned copy of the bid security as defined in Iowa code section 26.8. Additionally, bid securities in the form of a certified check, cashier's check, or money order must also be mailed to the De-

partment at the Wallace State Office Building, 502 East 9th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319. The bid security must be in an amount set forth in the bidding documents and made payable to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Failure to execute a contract for the proposed work and file an acceptable Performance Bond in an amount equal to 100% of the contract price and a certificate of liability insurance within thirty (30) days of the date of the award of the contract will be just and sufficient cause for the rescinding of the award and the forfeiture of the bid security.

JONES COUNTY PROJECT NO. 18-06-53-01

Indian Bluffs WMA
Road Maintenance

Proposal Guarantee:
\$12,500.00

Completion Date:
10/31/2020

Bid Letting Date:
4/16/2020

Project Description:

This project consists of granular roadway maintenance - clearing/grubbing,

reshaping/cleaning ditches, roadway realignment, ditch check construction, culvert cleaning, blading/shaping and spreading new rock.

HARDIN COUNTY PROJECT NO. 19-02-42-01

Pine Lake State Park

Shower Buildings & Cabin Renovations

Proposal Guarantee:
\$62,500.00

Completion Date:
4/30/2021

Bid Letting Date:
4/16/2020

Project Description:

Pine Lake State Park is located just North East of Eldora, Iowa. The park will receive a new host, full hook-up camp site, two (2) new shower buildings, a new pit latrine, a new slab on the Center Point shelter, and interior renovations in the four (4) cabins. As an alternate, a new Design Guide shelter and demo of the original shelter. Also, the contractor shall demolish the existing shower/restroom buildings and miscellaneous other items as shown in the drawings.

DICKINSON COUNTY PROJECT NO. 20-01-30-16

4/16/2020

Project Description:

Emerson Bay and Hat-tie Elston Ramps

Courtesy Docks

Proposal Guarantee:
\$6,250.00

Completion Date:
7/22/2020

Bid Letting Date:

This project consists of removing the existing courtesy docks and installing commercial floating courtesy docks with concrete decking, gangways, placing concrete between boat ramps at site 1, and incidental work as directed by DNR inspector.

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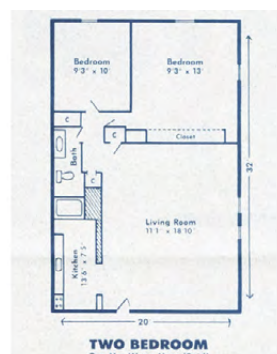
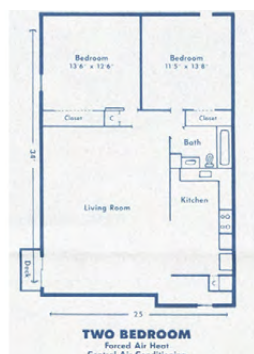


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From the Front

Schools risk losing funding by laying off staff

BUDGET - Continued from Page 1

for a new early childhood center, and improved parking and traffic flow on the campus.

Because of the favorable bond market and a premium that was extended to the district by investors, Crozier said there is room for some additional paving to be done as part of the campus upgrade.

Jones Contracting of West Point was awarded the contract for paving upgrades. Estimates for that work were \$285,000, but Jones came in at \$192,700.

“Obviously everything has come together nicely and it only makes sense to do this now, but it also makes sense to do this under the bond budget,” Crozier told the board.

Crozier recommended additional paving adjacent to the new bus parking lot, plus a sidewalk that would run around the parking circle that would connect the K-8 to the High School as well as paving the area near the current propane tank which will be moved to increase parking capacity in the K-8 lot.

“Honestly, I didn’t expect the bid to be so competitive and didn’t want to waste peoples time proposing projects I didn’t think were possible two months ago,” Crozier said about not including the work in the original proposals.

Board President Mark Hulsebus said the district has been working on improving the campus paving for the past five years and this could help get a lot of those projects out of the way.

Crozier said additional paving that the district should consider in the future would be repairs to the main parking lot and the area between the shop and the softball fields has quite a bit of traffic. He also said the staff parking lot on the west side of the campus could use expanding as it serves as a spill over for events.

In an unrelated issue, the board voted to continue to pay hourly non certified staff their current base wages. Crozier said pushing those employees to a furlough or unemployment status could jeopardize future funding.

He said the CARES Act has specific language in it that says school districts that move employees to unemployment or furlough may be ineligible for funding.

“It specifically states schools may be ineligible for funding from the CARES Act if they force employees onto unemployment. They consider that double dipping if you went down that road of not paying them, but keeping funding,” Crozier said.

He said Iowa doesn’t have that specific language, but after about a dozen meetings with state officials and attorneys most recommendations have been to pay the employees.

“Our legislature hasn’t come out and said one way or the other, but I feel the same thing applies,” Crozier said. “We’ve already received funding. If you furlough and then keep that funding, you’re double dipping so we

decided let’s pay people our normal wages for the time being.”

In other action, the board:

- rejected two proposals for repositories for the bond funds. Crozier said rebidding with some additional requirements may result in better savings for the district. Repositories hold the bond funds for the district and charge a fee for the service.

- approved tentative plans for a 2021 trip for the high school Spanish class to Belise.

- approved a music teacher share program with Keokuk.

- approved a sharing agreement for swimming with Burlington Community School District.

- accepted the resignation of high school football coach Nick Ehret effective immediately.



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