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Wednesday, March 25, 2020 | 6 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 64



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County may put more in EMS

LEE COUNTY AMBULANCE: Wednesday report could result in more county help

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Despite some released funds on an IRS lien, Lee County Supervisors may look at providing more funding to Lee County Emergency Medical Services this week.

According to Lee County Supervisor Gary Folluo, the countywide ambulance service provider had about \$18,000 released by the IRS on Monday against a lien, but \$8,000 of it went to taxes and liability insurance, leaving about \$10,000 to cover existing payroll.

On Friday supervisors funneled close to \$36,000 to help cover payroll expenses in March.

Lee County Attorney Ross Braden said the county's

assistance to the ambulance service is discretionary according to a contract between the two entities.

“Upon the request of the EMS service and the condition and precedent that they’re operating at loss, which we did verify, they can come to the county and ask for help, but it is discretionary,” Braden said Tuesday morning.

The parties involved including the mayors from Fort Madison and Keokuk, their respective fire chiefs, county officials, Lee County Ambulance representatives and others have had three conference calls since Friday to look at options of keeping ambulance service viable in the county.

See COUNTY, page 6

COVID-19

Educators keep adapting to coronavirus

Central Lee approves rolling paid leave: FM hands out Chromebooks

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST BURLINGTON – The landscape of suspended educational systems continues to change as the coronavirus spreads throughout the state and nation.

On Monday evening, Southeastern Community College made the decision to close all dormitories on March 27 and will be shutting down most on-site learning for the semester with the exception of some laboratory and vocational classes.

Jeff Ebbing, SCC’s Director of Marketing and Communications, said the college’s infrastructure is strong enough to allow most activities to be moved online.

“We’re going to full online classes for the rest of the semester, except in some cases where classes are lab and clinical focused,” he said. “Those situations will be determined by instructors, but you can’t paint a car online.”

Ebbing said since every sport has been canceled there is no reason to have students stay on site and it is probably be safer for them to go home.

Ebbing said the campus will still be open for students and prospective students who need college staff assistance.

But he said he’s not concerned with any close quarters virus issues with student and administrative services still reporting to work. He said the administration is allowing those employees to space out in the extra classrooms that are now available.

“Since we know we have classrooms and labs available, people are allowed to move

See SCHOOLS, page 4



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Construction crews begin tearing up the 400 block of Avenue H in Fort Madison just across from the old Sheaffer Pen parking lot Tuesday afternoon with the BNSF swingspan bridge in the background.

COVID-19: Dubuque County senior citizen is first reported death in Iowa

State suffers first death associated with coronavirus

DES MOINES – According to a release from the The Iowa Department of Public Health Tuesday night, the first Iowan has died from COVID-19.

The individual was an older adult, 61-80 years of age, and a resident of Dubuque County. The release was

issued shortly before 7 p.m. Tuesday night.

“Our hearts are heavy with the first loss of an Iowan to COVID-19. The thoughts and prayers of our state are with the family during this difficult time,” said Gov. Reynolds.

“I continue to urge all Iowans to protect their health and the health of others, especially older individuals and those with chronic health conditions who are most at risk. We all have a role to play in limiting the spread of this virus.”



SLATER



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WEATHER

WED 25 Mar..... Scattered Clouds, 58.1° F/ 55.1° F
THU 26 Mar..... Light Rain, 58.3° F/ 45.6° F
FRI 27 Mar..... Overcast, 51.1° F/ 50.5° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LUCKY FOR LIFE 03/23.....1 30 31 46 48, Lucky Ball: 8
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Obituaries/For the Record

OBITUARIES

JAMES E. KOLLER

James Ernest Koller, 73, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 7:55 a.m. Tuesday, March 24, 2020, at his home.



He was born on December 16, 1946 the son of Floyd and Mable (Denney) Koller. On November 28, 1970, he married Mary Jo Menke at St. James Church in St. Paul, Iowa. Jim and Mary Jo were happily married for 49 years.

Survivors include his wife; two daughters, Tina (Brian) Conner, Tonya (Jonathan) Hasleiet; two sons: Jimmie (Lauren Switzer) Koller and Daniel (Argelia) Koller; eleven grandchildren: Kelsi (Keaton), Payton, Tyler, Cameron, Jeron (JJ), Taylor, Avery, Lydia, Khanon, Grayson, and Joseph; great grandchild: Baby Loveall expected in April 2020; one brother: Robert (Patty) Koller; one sister: Bette (Steve) Muerhoff; and several nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents: Susie and Ernest Koller; his parents: Floyd and Mable Koller; and sister: Judy Schlicher.

Jim was a member of the Zion Mennonite Church. A graduate of Central Lee High School, he owned and operated Koller Trucking, Inc. and J&M Aglime, LLC. He loved his life's work. Jim was an avid St. Louis Cardinal, Iowa State Cyclone, and University of Iowa Hawkeye fan. Jim enjoyed watching his kids and grandchildren's sporting events. His family was his pride in life, he never knew a stranger and truly treated everyone around him like family.

Due to the restrictions for public gathering caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, a memorial service for James will be held at future date. A private family burial will take place at the Mennonite Cemetery, Donnellson, Iowa. Please feel free to send a card or note to the family directly or through the funeral home website www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

A memorial has been established in his memory for the Zion Mennonite Cemetery, Fort Madison Community Hospital Home Health and Hospice, or St. Jude's Children's Hospital. Memorials can be mailed to the family at P.O. Box 95, Donnellson, Iowa 52625.

DORIS DITTO

Doris Ditto, 85 years, of Fort Madison, Iowa died at 10:20 am Monday, March 23, 2020 at The Madison, Fort Madison, Iowa. She was born December 31, 1934 in Hannibal, Missouri, a daughter of Clarence and Mildred L. (Cook) Lipe. She married Billie Edwin Ditto. He preceded her in death.

She was a homemaker and was one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

She is survived by her son, Raymond Ditto, of Keokuk, Iowa; one brother, Norman Lipe, of California and one sister, Donna Rae Lipe. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband and daughter.

A Memorial Talk will be held at the Kingdom Hall in Montrose at a later date. Barr Memorial Chapel is honored to serve the Ditto family and an online guest book may be found at www.barrmemorialchapel.com.

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

03/23/20 - 6:21 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1100 block of 26th Street.

03/23/20 - 4:32 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 3800 block of Avenue L.

03/23/20 - 5:46 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1200 block of 33rd Street.

03/23/20 - 9:51 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary on Alta Drive.

03/23/20 - 10:00 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Isaiah James Rutter, 32, of Fort Madison, in the 800 block of Avenue E on a warrant service. He was released on a promise to appear.

03/23/20 - 11:45 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2600 block of Avenue G.

03/23/20 - 6:21 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1100 block of 26th Street.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

03/23/20 - 5:45 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident on Hwy. 61. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Bradley Phillip Bartlett, 48 of West Point was traveling northbound near mile marker 20, when his vehicle lost traction on a curve and rolled several times. Bartlett was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital with injuries. No citations were reported.

03/23/20 - 12:47 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jade Renee Reynolds Vickers, 19, of Elveston, IL, in the 23rd block of White Plains Road, on a charge of interference with official acts. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

03/23/20 - 1:43 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Caleb Julian Hayden, 24, of Keokuk, in the 2000 block of White Plains Road, on charges of assault-displaying dangerous weapon, carrying weapons, and eluding at speeds 25 miles over the limit. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

03/23/20 - 14:47 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jaymes Anthony Stark, 33, of Keokuk, at the sheriff's office, on charges of 3rd degree burglary, possession of meth less than 5 grams, and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was held in custody. Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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- Cover your coughs & sneezes with your elbow or a tissue
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Local News/From the Front

Central Lee buys two new buses

SCHOOLS - Continued from Page 1

to different spaces. We're giving people the flexibility to do that, but a lot of folks will be allowed to work from home."

He also said the kitchen is staffed by a third-party contractor and those services will also end on Friday since very few students will on campus.

Operationally the campus will still be open to students and staff, but not to general traffic. Ebbing said with fall registration around the corner, current students should be able to do almost everything online to get ready for the next semester.

But he said incoming first-time students usually are seen by counselors when registering for the first semester. He said those students can call in to the counseling offices and enrollment staff will help with that scheduling, but 99% of what they need can be found online. He said arrangements can also be made with Zoom meetings and video conferencing.

"We just don't want to turn anyone away," he said. "We're encouraging everything to be done online if you are current students. Some prefer to do things in person and our enrollment folks are helping them with that."

CENTRAL LEE SCHOOLS

The Central Lee school board approved a rolling 4-week paid leave at a shortened telemeeting Monday night.

Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier said the district is trying to find jobs for all staff that may or may not be school focused.

"We're trying to find responsibilities that are not just jobs, but need-based and purposeful," he said. "Maybe not focused on school district, but the community."

Crozier said the pandemic resolution passed unanimously by the board includes language that gives him authority to extend closures and the paid leave.

"Obviously, I'm not going to do that without the governor's recommendations, but I think this is the right thing to do for

our staff," Crozier said.

The board also approved the purchase of two new buses from Blue Bird at a cost of about \$96,000 each. Crozier said he wanted to get the purchases approved at that price, in case economic conditions worsen and the prices increase for whatever reason. The buses will hold 77 passengers each.

A new seatbelt law has pushed the prices of the buses up about 12% this year.

Central Lee food service staff is also delivering home meals to any students regardless of family income. Any family interested in deliveries is encouraged to call the school offices. The district's website can be accessed by clicking here: www.central-lee.org

FORT MADISON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater said a new on-line learning resources button was added to the district's website Monday and the district continues to update COVID-19 information daily.

Chromebooks have also been handed out for home use during the suspension," she said.

"We handed out close to 200 electronic devices to families with students in grades K-8 Friday afternoon. We had a drive-thru delivery service stationed at the high school. Students in grades 9-12 at FMHS take their chromebooks home daily so they already had them at home," Slater said.

Families can contact central office if they could not make it Friday and their students does not have a device at home, but Slater said all students who've requested a chromebook through Monday have received one.

The district continues to provide meals from 11 to 11:30 a.m. at ten locations listed on the website. Those meals are provided Monday through Friday to any student regardless of income. The website can be accessed by clicking here: www.fmcsd.org/

Food Pantry offering food to all residents

BY CHUCK
VANDEBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Food Pantry may have had to change some delivery methods, but officials there say they have plenty of supplies are ready to help anyone who needs food assistance.

Lin Cramer, president of the food pantry board, said the state has relaxed restrictions as part of Gov. Kim Reynolds emergency disaster order. As part of that order, anyone can now come get food at the pantry without income guidelines or visit restrictions.

"Anyone can come and pick up food now regardless of your income," Cramer said Tuesday. "And there is typically a limit on visits of 12 per year, but during this time, visits don't apply to that limitation."

All orders are being delivered curbside to help with the state's recommendation for social distancing as the coronavirus runs rampant across the nation.

Cramer said that change went into effect on Wednesday and the pantry was very busy that day, but since then the traffic has slowed.

"We just want people



Food Pantry volunteers Joy Main and Brad Kurtz practice social distancing as they assist a local household with its food needs.

to know were stocked and ready to go. They can just come in, give us their name and zip code and they get the food. You don't have to be signed up right now or anything."

The Iowa Food Bank dropped off 4,000 pounds of food this week and Cramer said grocers, who were a wary about donations and supplies the past few weeks are starting to get shelves replenished and now can help with food pantry contributions as well.

She said people in Fort Madison have been very generous since the outbreak began.

"We have the best citizens here and they

really stepped up with donations when all this started, so we're in pretty good shape right now," she said.

For drive up service visitors should pull their vehicle to the Pantry's front entrance, and show their ID through the glass in their window. Each visitor will be instructed to pop open their trunk and volunteers will load the trunk with approximately 40 pounds of pre-selected food.

The Pantry located at 3421 Avenue L (across from MacDonalds) is open regular hours—Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9 to 12 noon and 1 to 3 pm.

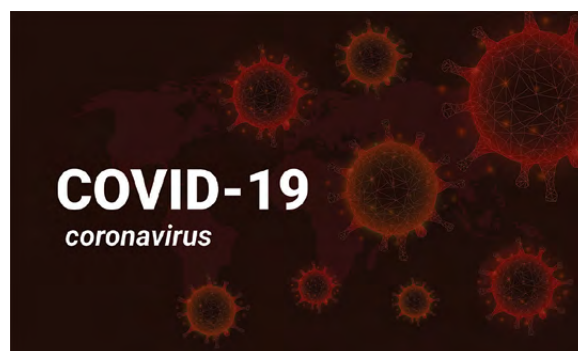
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Classifieds/From the Front

One other private provider has approached county

COUNTY - Continued from Page 1

Friday was a call to approve the supplemental funding assistance, and Saturday's call focused on what the options for providing ambulance services in the future looked like.

Monday's call, according to the Folluo, was focused on funding going forward and what progress is being made at the state and federal level to uncover more funding options.

"The agent for the state with the IRS released the lien and some money did start coming into the ambulance service. However, there was \$18,000 that came in and \$4,000 went out to taxes and another \$4,000 went out to the liability insurance," Folluo said.

He said the county should expect another report on Wednesday as to revenues that have come in. He said it's everyone's hope that the service can get closer to having enough money for the next round of payroll.

Folluo said in the event the service didn't have enough money, supervisors may have to get together again this week.

"We may have to have another meeting like we did last week, if there is another gap with their payroll," he said.

On Saturday, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said he wasn't optimistic that the ambulance service would sign another contract with the county, so talks centered on determining what a future ambulance service might look like.

Supervisor Matt Pflug asked Folluo, who's been on all the conference calls, if the Lee County EMS has given any indication as to whether it will enter into another contract with the county.

"As of right now, I don't believe so," Folluo said.

Folluo said there has been one private entity with a ground ambulance license that has shown some interest in providing services, and more investigation on that will take place.

He said the county was also looking for input from citizens and interested parties on cost-savings measures and other options for the continued service.

"I want to put out there that if you have information or would like to discuss things with the supervisors regarding the ambulance service you can reach me at 319-795-1348," Folluo said.

In Iowa, ambulance services are not considered essential services and therefore are not publicly funded. However, a bill was to be presented in this year's legislative session, but it was scheduled on the day the legislature was sent home due to the coronavirus outbreak and no movement has been made with the proposal.

Bill Young, the director of Lee County EMS has said the reimbursement rates from Medicaid and Medicare are putting the company in a bind because of the high number of Medicaid recipients in Lee County. He told supervisors in January, that the company wrote off more than a half a million in Medicaid services alone in 2019.

Board Chair Ron Fedler said the county saw some of this coming, but not to this extent.

"We saw some of this coming earlier this year, but we didn't realize it would be this kind of financial trouble," he said.

"We're all doing a good job trying to solve this situation and I think Gary and the rest of the board will be doing whatever we can. There are options out there to keep it private or go non-profit."

The county budgeted an additional \$50,000 in the 2020-21 fiscal year budget to help the service offset some of its losses, but the company is now facing critical shortfalls.



**2020
To Do List
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