

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, September 16, 2020 | 7 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 169



www.pencitycurrent.com

Health board sets mask hearing

PUBLIC HEARING: County Board of Health set to make decision after 7 a.m. hearing

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Residents will have a chance to voice concerns over a proposed Lee County Board of Health regulation that would mandate masks in certain public environments Wednesday morning. The Lee County Board of Health approved moving forward with a facemask regulation at their last regular meeting. The move requires a public hearing and another vote of the board. That hearing will take

See MASKS, page 7

How to join the hearing

The link to the meeting is <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/652812493>

You can also join by phone at 1-872-240-3311, access code 652-812-493. To move the hearing efficiently, the board chair is asking anyone that wants to comment use the chat feature in the upper right hand corner of the GoToMeeting window for the chair to address you. If you are calling in by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking to address the board. Also, the chair is asking that all participants calling in mute their phone by pressing #6. You can press #6 to unmute when the hearing is opened to call-ins to give input.

CITY BUDGET

Mayor to put franchise fee up for vote

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – After hearing a synopsis of the city's five-year financial outlook, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld told the City Council he was putting a franchise fee vote on the agenda for the next meeting.

During Tuesday's regular meeting, City Manager David Varley presented the city with a comprehensive look at what the city's finances will be like in five years and what options there are to get the city on solid financial footing.

Varley said the city expenses, 81% of which are personnel costs, are about \$400,000 more annually than the city is bringing in. He said the city has been surviving on one-time revenue influxes that can't be counted on, and by dipping into fund reserves.



MOHRFELD

He said a franchise fee on natural gas and electricity is one answer, possibly combined with bonding for the rest of the Hwy. 61 improvements and moving the rest of that money in the Hwy. 61 fund into the city's general fund.

Mohrfeld said he favored starting small with the franchise tax, a 1.5% initial fee and then phase it up with annual reviews of the city's finances.

"I would like to see that phased up," he said. "If you're a corporation – if you're Matt's Greenhouse – Chief Mark (Rohloff) – we all have budgets. It's easier to ratchet something up than it is to leap into it, so we need to watch and stair step it," Mohrfeld said.

Varley said a 3% franchise fee closes the city's gap for five years, builds up an adequate fund balance, and provides funds for other city projects. He said bonding for street projects also frees up money.

"If you did that and a smaller franchise fee you can kind of get the best of both worlds. You take care of the funding gap for five years and you have some funds available to do some other projects," Varley said.

See FINANCES, page 4



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Fort Madison Fire Capt. Mike Schneider, far right, talks with a Gregory Manufacturing employee late Monday night after a fire started in the air filter system causing the facility to fill with smoke. Firefighters had the fire extinguished shortly after arrival at 10:20 p.m. and were on the scene for about 90 minutes. No injuries were reported.

COURT HEARING TUESDAY

City says Humphrey building still not secure

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – An Friday inspection of the Humphrey building in downtown Fort Madison has left city officials leery of repairs made to

date.

According to Fort Madison Building Director Doug Krogmeier, an inspection was done to determine the current structural integrity of the building and see what repairs had been done inside to secure the

structure owned by Bryan Humphrey.

The building has visible settling that has occurred on its west side. Workers have put boarding in about

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WEATHER

WED 16 Sep.....Scattered Clouds, 82° F/58° F
THU 17 Sep.....Showers, 72° F/57° F
FRI 18 Sep.....Overcast, 65° F/50° F

OpenWeatherMap

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For the Record/Obituaries

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

09/09/20 – 9:14 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Matthew Scott Stephenson, 45, of Fort Madison in the 1800 block of Avenue E on a charge of driving while barred.
 09/09/20 – 10:54 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Elizabeth Charlene Mae Davis, 25, of Fort Madison, in the 4800 block of Avenue O, on a warrant for contempt of court. He was released on a promise to appear.
 09/10/20 – 3:56 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit and run in the 4600 block of Avenue L.
 09/10/20 – 7:47 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Danae Lee Larpenter, 32, of Fort Madison in the 700 block of 10th Street on a charge of driving under suspension.
 09/10/20 – 8:33 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit and run in the 1100 block of Avenue E.

09/14/20 – 9:19 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2000 block of Avenue B.
 09/14/20 – 3:58 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 600 block of 18th Street.
 09/14/20 – 6:55 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 300 block of 12th Street.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

09/10/20 – 7:00 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jacob Anthony Haage, 27, of Montrose, at the sheriff's office on warrants for violation of probation. He was taken to Lee County Jail and held.
 09/10/20 – 11:28 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Cody Joseph Norton, 30, of California, at the intersection of Hwy. 61 and Johnson Street Road on a charge of

possession of drug paraphernalia, and possession of a controlled substance.
 09/14/20 – 7:15 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Brandon Dale Manton, 33, of Kahoka, at the Clark County Jail on warrants for possession of drug paraphernalia and manufacturing/delivering/possession of a controlled substance. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 09/14/20 – 8:48 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies cited James Eugene Martindale, 56, of Donnellson, was arrested in the 2300 block of Hwy. 2, on a charge of driver's license denied/revoked – OWI. *Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

09/14/20 – Fort Madison Fire & Rescue responded to five medical calls, smoke investigation at Gregory manufacturing.

OBITUARIES

ROSENA M. "SKIP" COPPAGE

Rosena M. "Skip" Coppage, 88, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away on Monday, September 14, 2020 at 8:47 AM at her home.

She was born on March 3, 1932 in Ft. Madison to Clyde and Rosena Winheim Harmon and was raised by her grandparents. On December 20, 1952 she married Jerry Coppage in Ft. Madison. Skip was a homemaker. She was a graduate of Donnellson High School and a former president of the Richardson PTA. Skip loved to bake cookies at the holidays and would take them all over to friends and family. She was a very kind person and loved helping anyone. Her greatest love was her family, especially her grandkids.



COPPAGE

Survivors include her husband, Jerry Coppage of Ft. Madison; one son, Bill (Laura) Coppage of Ft. Madison; one daughter, Evelyn (Harold) Husted of Montrose; four grandchildren, Mindie (Will) Druery of Anselmo, NE, Crystal (J.) Philips of Bloomington, IL; Levi (Chelsea) Coppage and Justin Coppage of Ft. Madison; four great grandchildren, Zane and Korbin Druery and Liam and Piper Philips. She was preceded in death by her parents and a sister, Betty Sunden.

Friends may call after 2 PM on Friday, September 18, 2020 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory where the family will meet with friends from 4-6 PM. The funeral service will be held on Saturday, September 19, 2020 at 10 AM at King-Lynk Funeral Home with Jamie Baier officiating. Burial will follow in Oakland Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial has been established in her memory and online condolences may be left at www.kinglynk.com.

Miller obtains debt relief for ITT students

DES MOINES — Attorney General Tom Miller has secured an agreement to obtain \$1.3 million in debt relief for former ITT Tech students in Iowa as part of a settlement involving 48 attorneys general and the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Nationally, the settle-

ment will result in debt relief of about \$330 million for 35,000 borrowers who have outstanding principal balances. The Iowa Attorney General's Office led the states' negotiations in the settlement.

The settlement is with PEAKS Trust, a private loan program run by the for-profit school and affiliated with Deutsche Bank entities. ITT filed bankruptcy in 2016 amid investigations by state attorneys general and following action by the U.S. Department of Education to restrict ITT's access to federal student aid.

"This settlement provides relief to Iowans who incurred debts for a questionable education at ITT Tech," Miller said. "It also holds PEAKS Trust accountable for engaging in a scheme to benefit itself at the expense of students."

PEAKS was formed after the 2008 financial crisis when private sources of lending available to for-profit colleges dried up. ITT developed a plan with PEAKS to offer students temporary credit to cover the gap in tuition between federal student aid and the full cost of the education.

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PEN CITY CURRENT

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From the Front

Mayor wants to phase in franchise tax

FINANCES - Continued from Page 1

He mentioned building a new fire station, and shop for the Streets Department, as well as having some money left for additional city beautification efforts.

Mohrfeld told the council to be prepared to vote on both issues at the Sept. 29th meeting.

"Next meeting there will be two things on the agenda. One is a franchise fee and the other is for bonding for street improvements and a proposal to use some of the money in the bank for reserve, and maybe some budget gap financing," Mohrfeld said.

"Those will be separate agenda items and we will be able to discuss them, but that is coming for a vote next meeting."

Councilwoman Rebecca Bowker, who has advocated for limited income residents and families when considering the franchise tax in past discussions, said the city may not have a choice.

"I have a tendency to agree with Mr. Mayor that I think we seriously need to consider a franchise fee, whether it's 1% or 2%, whatever that looks like. I don't think we have a choice," she

said.

"I know that's not popular and I do express my concern for our lower income folks that may take that as an additional thing to struggle with."

She said the tax will impose extra costs on industry, but she said those same entities enjoy the services the city provides, such as fire, police and streets.

Councilmen Kevin Rink and Tyler Miller both agreed that a 3% tax might be a better place to start as it would solve the problems for the long-term and would alleviate any city staff or program cuts.

Councilman Rusty Andrews said the city has talked about franchise fees for many years and it's time to stop kicking the can down the road.

"Community's not gonna to like it, industry isn't gonna like it, but if we educate them and explain it well, they'll understand it's a necessary thing we're gonna have to do," he said.

The city actually has a franchise fee in place, it's just set at 0% currently. Moving the percentage up to activate the collection again would take a vote of city council.

Mohrfeld asked city attorney Pat O'Connell of Lynch Dallas out of Cedar Rapids, if the vote would require a simple majority or a super majority and O'Connell said he would have to research the issue.

Iowa code caps franchise tax at 5% and typically it takes about six months for revenues to circulate back to the city at the outset. However, since the city has the ordinance for a franchise fee in place, it could take slightly less time for the city to start to see the revenue.

Councilman Mark Lair said he favored a closer look at the franchise fee, but didn't support bonding for the Highway 61 work because he didn't want any chance of losing the project.

"We've been working on that for too long and it needs completed," Lair said.

Miller, who announced Monday he was resigning effective Wednesday, extended his time on council for two weeks after speaking with city staff on Tuesday. The next meeting will be his final meeting on the council.

Councilman Bob Morawitz was absent from the meeting, and according to Mohrfeld has been admitted to a hospice facility. Morawitz has been battling cancer.

Inspection shows additional shifting in Humphrey building

DOWNTOWN - Continued from Page 1

three stories high on that side in an attempt to secure falling brick and additional shifting.

Along with Krogmeier, Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld, Fire Chief Joey Herren, and Humphrey's engineer, along with several firefighters went through the building.

An initial court hearing initiated by the city with regard to the structure is set for Tuesday in North Lee County Court.

Krogmeier said some stabilization work had been done, but it was done 10 months ago and bricks have continued to fall onto the city sidewalk, as additional shifting has occurred.

"Their engineer says it's stable, but it's our determination more work needs to be done," Krogmeier said.

"We'll forward that to our attorney and he will take it up with them in court."

Herren said he took that shift of firefighters through the building so they would be aware of what the inside looked like should something happen.

"I wanted those guys to see what it was like in there. It would be a very dangerous situation for us if that were to catch fire or collapse," Herren said.

Krogmeier said there needs to be additional substantial shoring up of the building before any actual repairs, if planned, can begin.

The city closed off 8th Street from Avenue G to the alley between Avenues G and H in the fall of 2019, but reopened the stretch of roadway about six months ago. The sidewalk along that stretch of 8th Street remains closed to the public.

Mohrfeld said when the city filed for a hearing that if the repairs weren't made prior to any trial before the court, the court could impose an order required repairs be made or authorizing the city act.

"If the conditions are not abated voluntarily before trial, the City will seek a court order requiring the issues to be rectified and authorizing the City to rectify them if the defendant does not comply with the order," Mohrfeld wrote to the Pen City Current in January.



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Sports/Classifieds

HTC girls settling in with three-set win over Notre Dame

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

BURLINGTON — Holy Trinity's volleyball team was 24 hours better.

At this point in the season, it's what coach Melissa Freesmeier wants.

The top-ranked (Class 1A) Crusaders were pressed by Notre Dame, but found the answers in a 25-21, 26-24, 25-18 win on Tuesday night.

Holy Trinity swept Fort Madison on Monday night having not played since August 29, struggling early before taking control later.

This was a different kind of test, but one in which the Crusaders seemed to thrive.

"I think we just didn't make as many errors (as in Monday's win)," Freesmeier said. "We just knew we needed to continue to work with our offense. I think just some things clicked tonight."

Notre Dame (0-1) pressured the Crusaders throughout the match. Katy Stephens had 13 kills and Gabby Deery had 10 kills.

"We knew those two are good hitters," Freesmeier said.

But the Crusaders had a balanced attack, and it showed.

Still, there was a need for Freesmeier to send a message early, considering the slow start the Crusaders had in Monday's match. The Nikes scored the first three points, and that led to a timeout.

"Last night, it got ugly early," Freesmeier said. "I didn't like some of the things we were doing. I knew if we started out slow, that timeout was going to come fast. I wasn't sure it was going to be 3-0. Sometimes I do things, and my assistants look at me like I'm crazy."

But it worked.

The Crusaders scored six consecutive points midway through the game — three coming on kills from Claire Pothitakis — and took a 16-13 lead, but Notre Dame came back for a 19-18 lead, which led to another Freesmeier timeout.

Mary Kate Bendlage's kill out of the timeout tied the match, then Kassi Randolph added back-to-back kills moments later for a 21-20 lead. The Nikes tied the game on a Deery kill, then the Crusaders closed it out by scoring four of the final five points.

Notre Dame seemed to have Game 2 under control, especially

when Deery had two kills and two blocks in a 4-0 run that gave the Nikes game point. But Molly Johnson's serve was long, and the Crusaders were still alive.

Randolph had a kill to cut the lead to 24-23. Deery's kill attempt was long, and the game was tied. A Pothitakis kill gave the Crusaders match point, then Brooke Mueller's serve tipped off the net and fell to the court for the game winner.

"They just dug deep," Freesmeier said. "It's hard to come in here, get down by that many points, and come back and win."

Notre Dame led 15-14 in the third game before Holy Trinity rallied. The Crusaders took a 20-18 lead, then finished with the final five points. Mueller had three kills in that stretch, and then Bailey Hellweg finished the win with an ace.

Pothitakis had 10 kills. Mueller had eight, and Randolph had five.

It's a busy week for the Crusaders (5-3), who play host to Van Buren on Thursday.

"As I told them in the locker room, we're only going to get better," Freesmeier said. "Because that's what we do."

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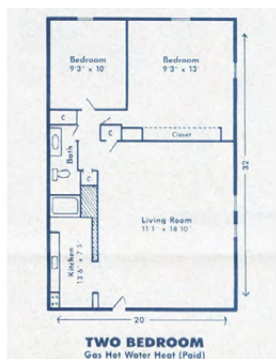
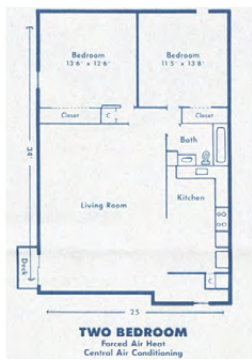
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- Designated positions in this job class require applicants to obtain a Commercial Driver's License and endorsements within a period of time as determined by the appointing authority at the time of hire.

To apply, click the following link: <https://doc.iowa.gov/about-us/about-institutions/iowa-state-penitentiary>

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Position – Fort Madison Housing Authority (FMHA) of Fort Madison, Iowa, is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Executive Director to lead the Authority in its management of its Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher Program. The FMHA administers 134 units of Public Housing, 70 Housing Choice Vouchers, and management / maintenance of 22 units for the Lee County Housing Initiative Program. The Executive Director is responsible for all aspects of its Public Housing and Voucher Program including but not limited to supervising a staff of six employees.

The qualified applicant should possess a wide range of skills in public housing operations, office management, accounting, customer service; computer proficiency and the ability to function courteously with residents and employees. The applicant must be PHA certified or certifiable within one year of employment.

Salary is negotiable and the Housing Authority offers an excellent benefit package and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Interested applicants must submit a resume and cover letter marked Confidential to:

Chairman of the Board, Fort Madison Housing Authority, 1102 48th Street, Suite #1, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Or email to: fortmadisonha@mchsi.com.

Deadline for resumes: October 15, 2020

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From the Front

County seeing reduced numbers of positives

MASKS - Continued from Page 1

place via teleconference at 7 a.m. Wednesday.

Lee County Health Department Administrator Michele Ross said the Board of Health agenda, following the public hearing, includes possible action regarding the regulation. If approved again by the Board of Health, a resolution would be sent to the Lee County Board of Supervisors for an up or down vote.

“There is an action item on the agenda to discuss, review, or revise to propose a regulation that’s been posted on our website and then they can take action to move to the Board of Supervisors or not,” Ross said.

“That will be done tomorrow.”

Supervisor Rich Harlow said Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds has deemed facemask mandates unenforceable

“This mask mandate situation is a very emotional issue,” Harlow said.

“When you tell someone they have to do it, they really get their hackles up. I’m reading that Gov. Reynolds says it’s not enforceable. I’m also hearing that Sheriff Stacy Weber said it would be very difficult for him and his people to enforce.”

Supervisor Matt Pflug said it was important for people to fully understand what would be taking place. He said Johnson County has a similar Board of Health regulation in place and it’s working well.

“First of all let’s make sure our board understands what were talking about here,” he said.

“Johnson County has it in place now and I’m being told it works very well. Not a lot of citations are being issued- it’s more of educating people on why they should be wearing it.”

Pflug said people driving cars, or walking down the street doesn’t necessarily mean you have to be

wearing your mask.

“A lot of people think as soon as they walk out of the house they have to wear a mask. That’s not the case. Let’s make sure we understand what we’re talking about, not just the conclusion that this isn’t good for Lee County,” Pflug said.

Lee County is below double digits in its 14-day positivity rate at 8.3% down from a high of over 18% two weeks ago. The county’s total positive case rate is 1.5% higher than the 14-day rate at 9.8%

Supervisor Gary Folluo initiated the conversation with the health department and Lee County Attorney Ross Braden about the legalities after fielding calls about a possible mandate.

“The premise of this was to help us help friends family and neighbors stay healthy and to prevent spread of COVID-19 when going out to the public,” Folluo said.

“It’s an educational thing coming from the supervisors, I hope that’s the direction we go and I strongly recommend that people wear masks. Regardless of your politics or your feelings of the government, you should be wearing a mask to protect your family and friends.”

Board Chairman Ron Fedler said he’s received numerous calls about the mandate and said only one was in favor of it.

Supervisor Rick Larkin said he’s fielding calls on all sides of the issue and said about 1/3 of those are from people who aren’t for it or against, but are trying to figure it out the best thing to do moving forward.

Harlow pointed to the shrinking positivity rate being reported locally and by the state.

“If numbers are going down, why are you making

LEE CHD	
LCHD is reporting 4 additional cases added to the total case count in the last 24 hours.	
Total Positive Cases (as of 3:30pm 9/15/2020)	555
Total Cases Reported as Recovered	200
Current 14-day average Positivity Rate <small>(number of people tested/number tested positive in last 14 days)</small>	8.3%
<small>LCHD continues to encourage the public to practice social distancing, wash your hands, avoid large crowds where social distancing is not possible, and to #MaskUpLeeCounty.</small>	

me wear a mask,” Harlow said.

Folluo said the regulation would help keep numbers from spiking again.

“Nobody wants our numbers to go back up to 18. When you get to 20 there are some serious issues and we want to make sure people stay safe. The more you can limit it, the better off you are.”

How to join the hearing

The link to the meeting is <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/652812493>

You can also join by phone at 1-872-240-3311, access code 652-812-493. To move the hearing efficiently, the board chair is asking anyone that wants to comment use the chat feature in the upper right hand corner of the GoToMeeting window for the chair to address you. If you are calling in by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking to address the board. Also, the chair is asking that all participants calling in mute their phone by pressing #6. You can press #6 to unmute when the hearing is opened to call-ins to give input.

More information on the proposed regulation and the public hearing can be found at www.leecounty-hd.org.

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