

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, March 4, 2020 | 6 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 46



www.pencitycurrent.com



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Tuesday fire

A Fort Madison firefighters works on a house fire at 718 23rd Street late Tuesday afternoon at around 4 p.m. According to reports, the fire broke out in the front porch and quickly engulfed the home, but firefighters had the blaze contained minutes after arrival. No one was in the home at the time of the fire and it is unclear whether the home was inhabited.

CITY COUNCIL

FRA kicks in \$1.4M for depot project

City Manager says city could be \$500K short

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The Federal Railroad Administration has earmarked \$1.4 million to help offset the costs of relocating the Fort Madison Amtrak depot to Riverview Park.

City officials received a letter Monday morning from Amtrak outlining the money is coming as part of a one-time commitment from a program to bring Amtrak into compliance with the American's with Disabilities Act.

With that commitment, and Amtrak's original offers of financial support, the total from Amtrak comes to \$1.55 million. Amtrak had originally offered \$150,000 to build what was projected to be a \$1.4 million platform on to the building housing the North Lee County Historical Society and Museum.

In September a bid from Iowa Bridge and Culvert came in double the cost at \$2.83 million almost killing the project. Former mayor Brad Randolph, and former councilman Chris Greenwald and other staff went to work with Amtrak and FRA officials to try and come up with a last-minute resolution to the project.

City officials had gotten wind of a possible infusion of funds from the FRA, but the confirmation didn't arrive until Monday morning.

But during a discussion at Monday night's regular city council meeting, City Manager David Varley said the city was still short between \$500,000 and \$600,000 on the project.

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said that didn't track with his numbers, and Randolph, who was in attendance seemed shocked at the figure as well.

A meeting with Randolph, Mohrfeld

See DEPOT, page 4

Voters approve district PPEL levy bump

OVERWHELMING APPROVAL: District voters pass measure with 68% approval

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR



WONDRA

tute the new levy. The approval comes after multiple consecutive failures to pass a bond to build a new PreK-3rd grade elementary school

The issue on the ballot Tuesday was a voted Physical Plant and Equipment levy bump to \$1.34/\$1,000. The district had been collecting the levy at just .33/\$1,000.

See PPEL, page 2

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison Community School District will get about \$10 million over the next 10 years to help with security, maintenance, and facility upgrades as district voters approved the measure Tuesday night.

District voters approved the measure 734-339, or a 68.4% approval. The district only needed 50% plus 1 vote to insti-

SUPERVISORS

County gives support to Keokuk Library Park project

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – A group of Keokuk volunteers spearheading the ongoing work for the Keokuk Library Park asked for the county's support of the project going forward.

Jack Smith and Duane Taylor, members of the Keokuk Public Library Foundation, along with Mike Dunn, who's worked with U.S. Dept. of Agriculture grants, spoke to the Lee County Board of Supervisors during their regular meeting Tuesday in Montrose.

The group was looking for a letter of support from supervisors to be included as part of grant writing processes.

The group in the process of rehabilitating a city block in Keokuk where the

See PARK, page 4

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From the Front

All precincts, absentees had more than 50% support

PPEL - Continued from Page 1

District officials said the move will generate about \$1 million annually for upgrades to three of the district four schools, excluding the Fort Madison Middle School. Priorities include upgrading the security at Richardson and Lincoln Elementary school and completing the next phase of the Fort Madison High School air conditioning project.

Other projects could be determined by the district's current facilities assessment being completed by Estes Group.

School Board President

Tim Wondra said it was nice to see something finally get passed.

"It's nice to finally get a yes on something - some path they want to move forward with," Wondra said. "Now we can start to improve the buildings and make them safer. It's small steps, but positive steps in the right direction."

Wondra said he was surprised at the high approval percentage and said he had still heard negative comments from the public.

"I figured it would be closer. 68% that's great. I



SLATER

don't know if it was a matter of people finally just saying yes we need to do some-

thing or just trying to fix the school versus building a new school."

Wondra also wondered if the crumbling building downtown didn't open people's eyes to the conditions of the elementaries.

Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater said the approval will let the district begin to address critical safety and security issues. "On behalf of the staff



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

A voter gets ready to cast her ballot for the Fort Madison Community School District's physical plant levy bump Tuesday night at Fort Madison City Hall.

and students of the Fort Madison Community School District, I wish to extend my thanks to the voters for a positive result tonight!" Slater wrote in an email to the Pen City Current.

"The successfully

voted Physical Plant and Equipment Levy (PPEL) allows the district to begin to address the physical demands of our current buildings. The safety and security of our students has always been and continues to be a top priority. The additional funds now allow us to continue to address these

needs without needing to make cuts in other areas. The voted PPEL will enable us to more adequately plan and execute needs in our district and we are thankful that the community supports our efforts. Thank you to the voters of the Fort Madison Community School District!

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For the Record

For the Record

The Pen City Current will be updating our For the Record in five day increments until we are caught up from being offline for the past two weeks.

Fort Madison Police Report

02/14/20 – 9:27 a.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Elaine Donna Newman, 31, of Burlington in the 800 block of Avenue G, on a warrant for parole violation. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/14/20 – 7:02 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Brandon John Victor, 26, of Carthage, Ill., in the 700 block of Avenue H, on charges of trespassing, public intoxication and disorderly conduct. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/14/20- 7:31 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1500 block of Avenue G.

02/14/20 – 9:13 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Andrew James Atwater, 34, of Fort Madison in the 3000 block of Avenue N, on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/14/20 – 10:21 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1700 block of 41st Street.

02/14/20 – 10:44 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Thomas Andrew Spears, 24, of Farmington, in the 2900 block of Avenue N, on a charge of driving under suspension. He was released upon citation.

02/14/20 – 11:45 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Viviana Sanchez, 34, of Fort Madison, in the 3000 block of Avenue L, on a charge of serious domestic abuse assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/15/20 – 10:32 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2900 block of Avenue N.

02/15/20 – 1:23 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of stolen vehicle, reported at the police station.

02/15/20 – 1:42 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 4500 block of Avenue O.

02/15/20 – 5:50 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 2900 block of Avenue J.

02/16/20 – 5:06 a.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Ashley Marie Privia, 28, of Fort Madison, in the 3500 block of Avenue P, on a charge of driving under suspension. She was released upon citation..

02/16/20 – 8:58 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2900 block of Avenue J.

02/16/20 – 12:32 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 400 block of 23rd Street.

02/16/20 – 8:36 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Jason Scott Coulter, 39, of Fort Madison in the 2600 block of Avenue L, on a warrant for 3rd-degree theft. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/16/20 – 9:54 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Treyvin Monroe Jarrell, 19, of Fort Madison, in the 2600 block of Avenue I, on two counts of possession of a controlled substance. He

was released upon citation.

02/16/20 – 9:54 p.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Brody Paul Monroe, 198, of Hamilton, Ill., on a charge of possession of a controlled substance. He was released upon citation.

02/17/20 – 12:59 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the Fort Madison area.

02/17/20 – 5:22 a.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Russell Noel Garriott Jr., 27, of Bonaparte, in the 900 block of Avenue E, on a charge of operating while intoxicated 1st offense. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/17/20 – 5:45 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of burglary in the 5600 block of Avenue O.

02/17/20 – 6:12 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 100 block of Formad Industries Drive.

02/17/20 – 12:45 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 5600 block of Avenue O.

02/17/20 – 1:15 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Trenton Levi Cochenour, 21, of Kahoka, Mo. in the 5600 block of Avenue O on an active warrant. He was taken

to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/17/20 – 2:30 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Shane Aaron Kupka, 20, of Keokuk, in the 1200 block of Avenue H, on a warrant for possession of drug paraphernalia. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/17/20 – 8:32 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a personal injury accident in the 1200 block of Avenue E.

02/18/20 – 8:12 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 1500 block of Avenue H.

02/18/20 – 8:13 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the Fort Madison area.

02/18/20 – 8:49 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1900 block of Avenue I.

02/18/20 – 10:14 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 2800 block of Avenue O.

02/18/20 – 10:49 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of burglary in the 2500 block of Avenue L.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

02/14/20 – 3:37 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Miranda Danniell Ruffcorn, 35, of Keokuk, in the 3400 block of Mississippi River Road in Keokuk, on a charge of 3rd-degree criminal mischief. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and released on Feb. 15 on her recognizance.

02/14/20 – 4:12 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Simon Peter Burnett, II, 32, of Quincy, Ill., at the sheriff's office on a warrant for a judgment hold. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/14/20 – 4:48 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Mark Christian Harris, 43, of Hannibal, Mo., at the Marion County Jail in Missouri, on warrants for 3rd degree burglary and 4th-degree theft. He was held in custody.

02/15/20 – 10:40 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Matthew LeRoy Stice, 46, of Keokuk, at the sheriff's office on a judgment hold. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and released on Feb. 16 for time served.

02/15/20 – 10:40 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Douglas Paul Bowden, 35, of Donnellson, no location provided, on a charge of burglary and a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken

to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/16/20 – 3:36 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Loren Douglas Duffie, 68, of Keokuk, on the Hwy 61 bypass southbound on a charge of OWI-1st offense. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and released on his recognizance.

02/16/20 – 3:46 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Richard Edwards Huffman, 56, of West Point, in the 2500 block of 165th Street in West Point, on a charge of domestic assault choking with bodily injury. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

02/16/20 – 6:34 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Mathew Rohan Boon, 34, of Coralville, at the IMCC Oakdale facility on a warrant for a temporary hold. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and transferred to Oakdale on Feb. 17.

02/17/20 – no time listed – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Shane Aaron Kupka, 20, of Keokuk, no location given, on a warrant for trespassing.

02/17/20 – 8:23 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Michael Dean Marsh, 48, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff's office on a warrant for failure to appear. He was released on bond.

02/17/20 – 4:23 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a two vehicle accident on 303rd Avenue near 302nd Avenue. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Savanna Ellen Reiter, 17, of Fort Madison was headed southbound when her right side tires left the roadway and struck potholes causing her to slide across the center of the roadway where she struck a FedEx truck driven by Henry R. Ryan, 42, of New London causing the truck to flip on its side. Ryan was extricated by witnesses due to the smell of fuel and was taken to Fort Madison Community Hospital with suspected minor injuries. No injuries were reported with Reiter or passengers in the vehicle. Reiter was cited for failure to maintain control and failure to provide proof of insurance.

02/18/20 – 6:55 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies cited Khile E. Swartz, 33, of Old Hickory, Tenn., no location given, on charges of possession of a controlled substance and possession of drug paraphernalia. *Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*



2020 To Do List

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From the Front/Classifieds

DOT recommends bid \$300K higher than lowest offer

DEPOT - Continued from Page 1

and Varley took place in the Mayor's office immediately following the regular council meeting.

"We weren't all on the same page with that contingency figure," Mohrfeld said after the meeting. "I'm gonna work with Dave the next couple of days to find those dollars, but there's so many moving parts."

"This is a \$2.8 million project and with a contingency of 15% you're talking more than \$400,000."

Two new bids came in on the project with Iowa Bridge and Culvert, and Lunda Construction of Wisconsin both bidding, Lunda's project came in about \$300,000 less than Iowa Bridge and Culvert's bid of \$2.7 million, but the DOT is recommending the Iowa Bridge bid because of some hiccups with Lunda's subcontractors getting Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certifications by the state.

Those DBE's help bring smaller for-profit businesses into the contract stream as part of DOT bidding processes.

The bid is now \$676,000 over projected budget, but the shortfall will be made up as part of the FRA commitment. Other funds for the two fiscal years of construction will come from original state/federal grants of \$1.086 million in state and federal grants, \$150,000 from Amtrak, and \$859,457 from FRA, not including covering the shortfall.

Mohrfeld said the city is caught in the middle, and the city was just setting a public hearing on awarding the bid and would listen to any changes in the status of the bids, but the DOT would be handling the bids. DOT officials called Lunda's efforts "unresponsive".

"We will take input, but in terms of our options

they are to either accept the other bid or turn it down. When it's handed to us DOT tells us it's an allowable bid. If there is an intervention that would change things between now and then - then that would change what comes before the council," Mohrfeld said.

Ryan Drew President Southeast Iowa Building and Trades also advocated for taking the lower bid saying he was lost as to why the DOT called Lunda's efforts unresponsive.

"We find ourselves in this dilemma where for the life of us we can't figure out where the DOT is at with this," Drew said. "I know the council is in the middle so to speak by what the DOT has for policy."

Drew said Lunda got in contact with DBE vendors on Jan. 22, the same day the January bids were taken down. The next day that vendor was certified, so he said the same day it was posted to go out for bid, they made those efforts and contacted the DOT. But Drew said the DOT turned around and said they were unresponsive and had to be certified by Jan. 20 to be considered for the project.

"On bid date the state says 'you're two days late'. Now anybody in this room I would think would have to sit back and think where is the good faith effort from the state DOTs part to not include that," Drew said.

Mohrfeld said things would have been better if Lunda had gotten the bid because Amtrak is still committed to \$1.55 million no matter what the bid comes in at."

The public hearing was set for March 17, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. during the council's next regular meeting.

Project still needs \$500K to finish

PARK - Continued from Page 1

current public library stands. The project would be a full library park on a block defined by N. 6th Street and N. 5th Street from Concert St. to High St.

The library currently sits on the southeast corner of the block. The rest of the park will include another entrance on the northeast side, an Art and Sculpture Garden, an amphitheater, performance area, prairie garden with native Iowa plants and shrubbery, and seating throughout.

The park would also include walkways through the terraced and mowed lawns, and would include native shade, ornamental, and evergreen trees.

According to Smith, the group has already spent close to \$350,000 on the project, but the next phases will cost close to \$900,000.

"About \$100,000 of that is contingencies and we have about \$350,000 on hand, so that leaves us about \$520,000 which needs to be raised," Smith told the board.

Taylor said right now the group just needed to get a letter of support for some grant applications through a federal Community Facilities loan and grant program.

He also said the group will be looking for a state Community Attraction and Tourism or CAT grant, that will require some matching funds.

"At some point to get that grant we'll have to come back to the supervisors and ask for some modest monetary support," Taylor said.

Supervisor Gary Folluo said the county has in the past used its share of Hotel/Motel tax funds to help fund matching CAT grant requirements.

"Well, I certainly didn't want to surprise you at any point," Taylor said.

In other action, supervisors:

- approved new Iowa Local Workforce Development Board 16 bylaws, 5-0
- approved Family farm credits for 2019, 5-0

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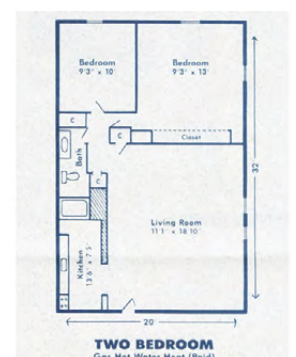
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LEE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT HOSPICE

YOUR #1 CHOICE IN HOSPICE

First Medicare Certified Hospice in Southeast Iowa - Since 1989



Our Hospice Services Include:

- 24/7 on-call nursing staff
- Skilled Nursing Services
- Social Worker visits
- Music/Massage Therapy
- Homecare Aide Assistance
- Spiritual & Grief Support
- Volunteer Services



We are proud to provide our Hospice Services in Lee, Des Moines, Van Buren & Henry counties in Iowa and Hancock & Henderson counties in Illinois



LEE CHD

Lee County
Health Department

Touching the Community with Care

#3 John Bennett Drive • PO Box 1426
Fort Madison, IA 52627
(319)372-5225 or (800)458-6672

www.leecountyhd.org

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