

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's **Black & White** and **Read** all over

Thursdays, March 12, 2020 | 5 pages | Volume 4 • Issue 53



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Photo by Chuck Vandenberg

Lee County Economic Development Group CEO Dennis Fraise talks with business owners, politicians, and other economic development investors Wednesday morning at Quality Inn and Suites.

CORONAVIRUS

SCC holds to regular class schedules

BY PCC STAFF

WEST BURLINGTON – Officials at Southeastern Community College have implemented a plan to address coronavirus (COVID-19) concerns and to ensure the safety of the campus community.

Although the coronavirus has arrived in the United States, it is too soon to predict the impact the virus may have on SCC. As a preventive measure, officials are taking all appropriate steps and will continue to follow the expert guidance of the Iowa Department of Public Health and related governmental agencies. Consistent with this guidance, SCC has no plans to alter, cancel, or suspend regular college operations at this time.

“Our number one concern is the safety of our campus community,” says SCC Presi-

See **SCC**, page 3

LCEDG keeps working at labor pool

I stopped in for breakfast with the movers and shakers of Lee County Wednesday morning.

Everyone from business owners, to educators, to politicians and economic development players sat over some hot food and hot coffee to listen to an update from Lee County Economic Development Group officials as to what's happening in our little corner of the world.

It's one of the first things I've done since the death of our daughter on



Feb. 20. I've been picking limited engagements where I can get in and out pretty quickly and steal some news. It's uncomfortable for me, ... and assuredly uncomfortable for others. Losing a child is terrifying, dark, and difficult to talk about. But it's ok. I love talking

about her.

But I wasn't the only one harboring a bit of emotion Wednesday morning.

LCEDG President and CEO Dennis Fraise talked passionately about the state of the workforce of Lee County, and the path we're headed down. He talked about what's currently being done to address local employers demand for productive workers, efforts to rebuild the county's workforce, growing it's tax base through attrac-

See **FRAISE**, page 2

FMCSO

District looking for volunteers for facility committee

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison School district, fresh off an voter approved bump to the physical plant levy, is looking for community members to help with future facility plans.

With the recent passing of the Voted Physical Plant and Equipment levy, (VPPEL) Fort Madison Community School District is inviting community members to participate in forming an ad hoc Facilities Committee to help develop a long-range facilities plan.

Voters approved a \$1.34/\$1,000 assessed valuation on March 3 by a 64% approval rating. School officials have indicated the bump will not increase the overall school levy because state formulas project the district levy, with the increased VPPEL contribution, to be

See **SCHOOLS**, page 3

SEVERE WEATHER WEEK: March 23 -27, 2020

Severe weather preparedness set for week of March 23

Submitted article

LEE COUNTY – March 23-27, 2020, is Severe Weather Awareness Week in Iowa.

Lee County Emergency Management Agency, the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and the National Weather

Service have joined together to promote severe weather awareness and preparedness during this week.

Changing seasons bring unsettled weather and Steve Cirinna, Lee County Emergency Management Coordinator, encourages everyone to be prepared and know how to stay safe during and

after the storm. You never know when a storm may hit, creating potential electrical hazards, damage to your home or property, or injuries.

The best solution is to plan ahead and be prepared. For each day during Severe Weather Awareness Week it is

See **WEATHER**, page 5

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WEATHER

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FRI 13 Mar.....Light Snow, 46.7° F/ 39.7° F
SAT 14 Mar.....Snow, 34.3° F/ 32.8° F

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From the Front

Baby boomer exit could lead to labor "winter"

FRAISE - Continued from Page 1

tion – and, not to go all Harry Potter, but talking about that which can't be talked about.

I know from brushing Fraise repeatedly for information about this rumor or that rumor, that these folks are tight lipped. But he professionally and pleasantly dismisses me, and then offers to buy me a sandwich.

The typical jovial Fraise was a bit more bristly on Thursday. As he thanked everyone for their continued partnership and touted the 50/50 public/private funding model in place, he talked about the "winter" that's coming as baby boomers retire. The winter being what could be a deadly cold spell in the labor market where Lee County ranks 88th of 99 counties in residents without post secondary certifications or educational achievement.

He talked about how 40% of the students in Lee County don't know what their career path looks like, and how the county has lost almost 9,000 people since the 1980 census, with more census data looming this year.

This is a man who, short of pom poms and a pleated skirt, is one of – if not the – biggest cheerleader for the county. He helped organize a World Record Tulip plant, has helped lead LCEDG to prestigious state, national and world economic development recognition, and ushered in Bridges Out of Poverty to address generational poverty. All while co-creating a nationally recognized economic development podcast that is gaining national attention.

He called that 'winning the battle – but losing the war'.

"I think we could be," he told the group of about 50



FRAISE

at Quality Inn and Suites.

He said contributions and investments to LCEDG efforts are at the highest level, and it's critical to keeping the momentum going.

"We take your investment very serious. Whether it's taxpayer dollars or private money – wherever it comes from is a big deal for us," he said.



MILLARD

"Six or seven years ago we were 100% funded by the Lee County Board of Supervisors. If you look at our organization today, we're a 50/50 partnership with the Board of Supervisors giving 40%, Keokuk and Fort Madison each at 5% and private money at 50%. That's a true private/public partnership and we're pretty excited about that."

He said economic development is a team game and almost every industry in Lee County supports LCEDG efforts.

"That's a report card we take a lot of pride in," Fraise said.

But he said the county has to keep its collective foot on the accelerator and raised a quote from former boxer Mike Tyson who's famously said, "Everyone has a plan until you get punched in the mouth,"

"Do you want to be the fist – or the face," Fraise asked.

"This is very real. When I think what's going to happen in the next 10 years, and think about the struggles in retaining our industry, this is what it looks like. This is how brutal it's going to be, and if you don't think it's going to be brutal – start reading."

But Fraise said the LCEDG's efforts gives companies in Lee County the confidence to invest.

He pointed as evidence to the recent expansion at Scotts Miracle Gro and ConAgra Foods. Scotts currently has more than 100 job openings and ConAgra will soon be adding 90 jobs to its production lines in an expansion announced earlier this year.

He paraphrased Abraham Lincoln who convinced his three top political opponents to join his campaign right after being elected president.

"We're better together. And we're better when we walk and act together, and when we work together," Fraise said. "He knew that was the right thing to do."

Fraise said there are major projects that Lee County is still being considered for that just can't be discussed because projects can blow up if information seeps out. A Joint Education Center for Lee County, to help address skills gaps, is taking up a lot of time and resources. But is invaluable to industries and educators in the area – and is finding its path.

LCEDG has been active in STEM programming at all levels of county educational systems. They've also been instrumental in bringing career exploration models to all grades of students, not just in Lee County but in southeast Iowa.

So the emotion is welcome. Right now there's a lot to be emotional about. Budgets are tight, viruses as freakin' everyone out, and death has come to our door.

But I went for breakfast because the connections here are important, and I like the passion of those folks and you should, too. They not only work very hard to protect the 4,000 manufacturing jobs and \$250 million in annual payroll, but help connect the dots for other companies looking for a new home.

I saw passion and confidence not only on the faces of Fraise and Dana Millard, LCEDG's Economic Development Project Manager, but in the faces of the investors in attendance as well.

These are bright people here, and they see the forest through the trees. The news isn't always good, but it should make us feel good they see that and are proactive with it.

Sometimes the news is good – and there's no better reflection of the effort than that.

Lee and I are trying to do just a bit more every day to bring our product back to full operation, but it's a tough go. We hope to have some expansion news of our own this spring, but for now...that's Beside the Point.

Chuck Vandenberg is editor and co-owner of Pen City Current and can be reached by email at editor@pencitycurrent.com.

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Charles Vandenberg, Editor

(319).371.1670
editor@pencitycurrent.com

Lee K. Vandenberg, Sales Manager

(319).371.4125
sales@pencitycurrent.com

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PEN CITY CURRENT

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Pen City Current and www.pencitycurrent.com are products of Market Street Publishing, LLC. Pen City Current is published Sunday through Friday mornings by 6AM.

Founded in 2016
P.O. Box 366 | Fort Madison, IA

From the Front/For the Record

SCC to monitor health situation

SCC - Continued from Page 1

dent Dr. Michael Ash. "We are following events closely and will take appropriate steps under the guidance of the Iowa Department of Public Health and the CDC."

On Wednesday detailed emails were sent to students and employees with information on what the college is doing and what individuals can do to prevent the spread of the virus and to promote good hygiene. They also include information about what to do if someone exhibits symptoms or thinks they are sick.

In addition, students received information on the class attendance policy relating to what to do in the event of an illness.

Ash says that his team is also in contact with other higher education institutions and area K12 districts.

"We're all in this together," says Ash. "While many of us are taking the same preventive measures, we all have to make adjustments to best suit our institution. The situation is quite fluid and subject to change."

In order to ensure the health and safety of the entire SCC community, officials have implemented a number of steps to minimize risk of exposure.

Steps include:

- Increased frequency of cleaning & disinfectant applications in common areas
- Increased number of hand sanitizing stations and cleaning wipe dispensers
- Posted signage on proper personal hygiene and handwashing practices
- Posted signage on how to spot signs of illness and what to do if you think you may be sick
- A centralized information and resources page on the SCC website
- A special attendance policy and procedures for students and staff who exhibit symptoms

Ash encourages members of the campus community to follow state and local health official communications regarding developments in our region and to exercise good judgment.

"If you think you're sick, stay home," says Dr. Ash. "Follow the guidelines set by the health professionals."

A central webpage detailing the steps the College is taking and containing communications and updates can be found at <https://www.scciaowa.edu/landing/coronavirus-response-updates.aspx>.

District looking for wide array of volunteers

SCHOOLS - Continued from Page 1

under what district taxpayers are currently paying this year.

Members of the committee will help shape the future of FMCS D by developing plans that address building and learning space needs. The final plan and recommendations will then be taken to the school board.

A forthcoming Estes report will be the foundation of this committee's work as the group will analyze their findings of both the Facility Condition Assessment as well as the Facility Needs Assessment. Estes Construction is a highly touted school construction management company that has been conducting a full-scale facilities assessment on the district's high school, and

two elementary schools.

The committee may meet as early as the end of March or early April to get a foundational understanding of FMCS D's facilities and options.

In a announcement on the districts website at <https://www.fmcsd.org/2020/03/06/join-the-fmcsd-facility-committee/>, district officials are looking for members from a variety of different groups listed below.

Parent Representative (High School); Parent Representative (Middle School); Parent Representative (Elementary School); Certified Staff (High School); Certified Staff (Middle School); Certified Staff (Elementary

School); Classified Staff; Students (High School); Local Business Representative; Local Government Representative; Local Community Member

"We are looking for a diverse group and hope that you will consider joining. Please note that not all groups may ultimately be represented on the facilities committee. Further, signing up does not necessarily mean that you will get a spot on the committee as seats are limited. FMCS D cabinet (department directors) will select members from the list of applicants.

To sign up, candidates can fill out a form at <http://bit.ly/AdHocFacCom> or contact the district's central office at 319-372-7252.

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

03/10/20 - 12:55 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2000 block of Avenue G.
 03/10/20 - 1:53 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2000 block of Avenue G.
 03/10/20 - 2:50 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1100 block of Avenue G.
 03/10/20 - 2:55 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 6000 block of Avenue O.
 03/10/20 - 4:02 p.m. Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1200 block of 26th Street.
 03/11/20 - 10:11 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Chad Dean Sintern, 34, of Fort Madison, in the 800 block of Avenue G, on a warrant service. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 03/11/20 - 10:14 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Charles Eli Boyle, 26, of Fort Madison, in the 2200 block of Avenue L, on warrants for probation violation.

He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 03/11/20 - 7:22 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Bradley Bohnenkamp, 33, no address listed, in the 1600 block of Avenue G, on a warrants for driving while suspended. He was taken to the Lee County Jail.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

03/10/20 - 1:39 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident on Hwy 61 southbound near mile marker 19. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Shannon Esther Pfeiff, 47, of West Burlington, was left abandoned in the southbound lane with severe damage. Authorities spoke to the owner of the vehicle identified as Lori Hogberg, who let Pfeiff allegedly told officers she didn't remember much about the accident and left the scene because she didn't know what she was supposed to do. No injuries were reported, charges are pending.

03/10/20 - 1:37 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Brandi Rae Briggs, 26, of Keokuk at Hawkeye Village in Keokuk, on a warrant for contempt of court. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and released on bond.
 03/10/20 - 3:52 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Andrea Lacey Thacher, 27, of Keokuk, at the intersection of 204th Avenue and 240th Avenue in Keokuk, on a warrant for contempt of court. She was released on bond.
 03/10/20 - 8:58 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Stephanie Sue Allen, 47, of Keokuk, at the Van Buren County Line in Keosauqua on a warrant for contempt of court. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. *Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.*

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

03/10/20 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to two medical calls.



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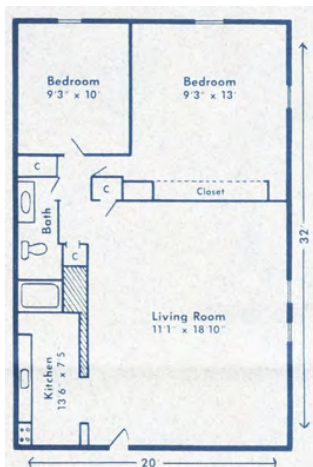
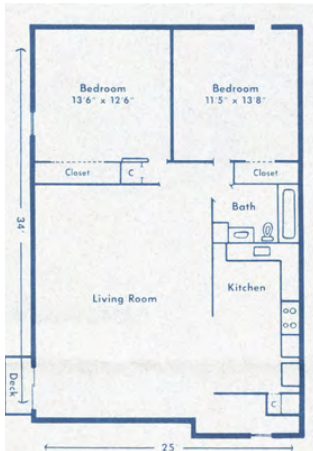
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Local tornado testing set for March 25

WEATHER - Continued from Page 1

suggested that you review a different subject that will help you get prepared for the anticipated storms that will strike our area.

- Monday – Severe Thunderstorms
- Tuesday – Receiving Warning Information
- Wednesday – Tornadoes
- Thursday – Family Preparedness
- Friday – Flash Flooding

The highlight of Severe Weather Awareness Week is the annual tornado drill scheduled for Wednesday, March 25. A test tornado watch will be issued, by the National Weather Service, at 10:00 am, followed by a test tornado warning at 10:15 am.

Schools, businesses, state and local governments and individuals are strongly encouraged to participate in the drill. The weather service will activate the all-hazards weather radio system and Emergency Alert System (EAS).

The cities of Denmark, Keokuk and Fort Madison are planning on activating their outdoor warning sirens. The sirens will be turned on and confirmed that they are working and then be turned off. Lee County Emergency Management will also send out a test alert via AlertIowa.

Signing up for AlertIowa is easy and free. You can go to <https://www.leecountyema.com/> and click on the AlertIowa logo and follow the instructions.

In the event of severe weather in Iowa on Wednesday, March 25th, the drill will be postponed until Thursday, the 26th of March, according to Cirinna.

“The drill can be postponed by the National Weather Service if severe weather is threatening other parts of the state since this is a state-wide drill,” Cirinna said.

“We do not want to confuse anyone with a test if there is a true threat to life or property and we want citizens to take immediate action to protect themselves.”

All residents are urged to purchase an all-hazards weather radio from a local retailer if they have not done so already. As the siren system is an outdoor warning system and may not necessarily be heard by those who are indoors or are not nearby a siren, the weather radio is designed to work indoors.

Plus, there are many areas in the county such as the rural areas and housing developments outside the city limits that cannot hear the outdoor warning sirens. There are also communities and cities in Lee County that are not covered with an outdoor warning system.

If individuals need assistance programming their radio they can contact Lee County Emergency Management, 319-372-4124, for assistance.

Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management has information on individual and family preparedness at www.beready.iowa.gov. The National Weather Service the National Weather Service (NWS) will promote severe weather safety on their website www.weather.gov/dvn and by issuing informative public information statements.

Additional information about severe weather, emergency preparedness and family safety can be found at www.ready.gov or www.beready.iowa.gov. You can also follow Lee County Iowa Emergency Management on Facebook and Twitter for helpful tips and other information.



2020 To Do List Save Our Planet

Thank you to all our customers who worked to reduce their environmental footprint last year. We look forward to helping you continue your efforts and to educating our communities on more ways to help this year.

Here are just a few ways you can help:

- Don't put plastic bags in recycling bins
- Rinse & clean all food jars & cans before recycling
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- Don't recycle wrapping paper
- Properly dispose of all electronics and household hazardous waste



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