



# Pen City Current

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## ISL proposed in district 2017-18 budget

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - For the first time in many years, local school district taxpayers may have to help offset a Republican-ushered 1.1% growth allowance for local school districts.

At Monday's Fort Madison Community School District Board of Directors workshop, district Business Manager Sandy Elmore showed board members what the new proposed 1.1 percent growth allowance will do to the current budget, a budget which just last week was set at 2 percent after the governor signed a bill into law that was supposed to protect K-12 funding.

Just to stay at status quo, the district tax levy

“It's been a loooong time since we had one. We passed it before and we got petitioned.”

-Sandy Elmore,  
Business Manager



### Budget time

FMCSO Business Manager Sandy Elmore is shadowed by an overhead chart showing the district's 2016-2017 levy compared to other area districts. The FMCSO Board of Directors is adding an Instructional Support Levy to the budgeting process for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

will be set at 13.94/\$1000 of assessed valuation, a 67-cent increase over the 2016-2017 budget. The increase in levy will amount to slightly more than \$450,000 to a total property tax revenue of roughly \$8.1 million to be coupled with state aid to fund the district in 2017-2018.

“At the status quo, we're gonna have to make some cuts,” Elmore said.

Elmore said even though the district staff works daily to find efficiencies in the budget and makes cuts there regularly, maintaining current funding levels in light of recent measures at the Iowa legislature to push the 1.1 percent growth, will require the increase coupled with another option, an Instructional Support Levy. Update: at 11:10 p.m.

Monday the House passed 55-40 to approve the 1.1% allowable growth after a 5-hour debate.

“It's been a loooong time since we had one,” Elmore told the board. “We passed it before (the resolution) and we got petitioned.”

Board President Timm Lamb asked if any of the board members had objections to going forward with preparing the budget

with the ISL and no one did.

Elmore said she would prepare the resolution for the board to approve adding it to the budget. However she said it would have to be on the board's next regular meeting so she could get it publicized and public hearings could be set. A petition to have the ISL removed would

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## School board continues its own growth

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Community School District Board of Directors is narrowing its focus in goal-setting strategies to bring the entire district in line with future direction.

Harry Heiligenthal, Leadership Development Director with the Iowa Association of School Boards met with board members at Monday's workshop to help the board learn how to identify specific goals and strategies to make the goals achievable as well as measurable.

“What you ultimately want is to be able to make that 30 second sell of your

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## Task force makes felony drug bust in Keokuk

The Lee County Narcotics Task Force reports the arrest of two Keokuk, Iowa residents on felony and misdemeanor drug charges.



Tyran Monroe Jarrell, 38, and Jennifer Marie Lay, 40, both of 1713

Exchange Street, Keokuk, Iowa were arrested on February 2, 2017 at their residence on felony

and misdemeanor drug charges. Jarrell is charged with Delivery Of Methamphetamine In Excess Of Five Grams, a class B felony, two counts of Unlawful Possession Of A Firearm, a class D felony, three counts of Unlawful Possession Of Ammunition, a class D felony, Maintaining A Drug House, an aggravated misdemeanor, two counts of Possession Of A Controlled Substance (methamphetamine and dextroamphetamine), a serious

misdemeanor, two counts of Unlawful Possession Of A Prescription Drug, a serious misdemeanor, and Possession Of Drug Paraphernalia, a simple misdemeanor. If convicted, Jarrell faces up to 56 years and 30 days in a state correctional facility.

Lay is charged with Maintaining A Drug House, an aggravated mis-

demeanor, and Possession Of Drug Paraphernalia, a simple misdemeanor. If convicted, Lay faces up to 2 years and 30 days in a state correctional facility.

The arrests of Jarrell and Lay stems from an investigation by the Lee County Narcotics Task Force into allegations that they were involved in the use of illegal narcotics in the Lee County area. A search warrant was served in connection with this investigation and items that support the charges

were discovered.

The Lee County Attorney's Office, Keokuk Police Department, Lee County Sheriff's Office, Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement, Iowa State Penitentiary K9 Unit, and the Department of Human Services assisted the Lee County Narcotics Task Force in this investigation.

The individuals listed above are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty by a court of law.

## From the Front/Local News

# Board wants district on same page with same goals

**GOALS** - Continued from Page 1

school district," Heiligenthal said. "When you see, say a mom, with a couple kids and she says she's interested in moving to the district...what do you say... how do you sell it before she has to change a diaper or deal with something else."

Heiligenthal asked the board if they want to set a few rigorous goals or something similar to what they've been doing or a combination of both.

He then put the board members through an exercise of identifying what an 18-year-old graduate should know when he graduates.

The board members took turn putting sticky notes on poster board outlying what board member Dianne Hope called "soft skills" and the anticipated book or hard skills.

She said soft skills are intangibles such as competencies, behaviors, attitudes and personal qualities that help students work well with others.

Superintendent Erin Slater said setting specific goals that enhance the district's student preparation for college and careers is a daunting task,



LAMB

but one that has to be mastered at some point by the board and future boards.

"What does that person look like," Slater said. "The



SLATER

the board chose to participate in as a means of bringing themselves to the level

of those they give direction to.

Board President Timm Lamb has been a huge proponent of the program and believes if the board is going to be able to set high benchmarks for the district and its employees and students, the board itself better have high benchmarks as well.

The board has received honors this year for it's own personal development and Lamb said that should continue even with future boards.

"This work may never be done. We should continue to do this kind of development ourselves so we can better help the teachers and staff and students get better."

Heiligenthal challenged Slater and Director of Curriculum and Student Services Kim Harmon to parse through the suggestions of the board and pull some thoughts together for the next meeting in March.

**“ This work may never be done. We should continue to do this kind of development ourselves so we can better help the teachers, staff and students get better.”**

-Timm Lamb, Board President

real challenge is how do we measure that. You can't create an effective goal if we can't measure it."

The program is part of a Lighthouse program that

## For the Record

### Fort Madison Police Department

02/03/2017 - 9:12 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of larceny/theft on Country Club Road.  
 02/03/2017 - 3:33 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 800 block of Avenue G.  
 02/03/2017 - 8:22 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 1900 block of Avenue L.  
 02/03/2017 - 9:29 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 2800 block of Avenue A.  
 02/04/2017 - 12:53 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 900 block of 29th Street.  
 02/04/2017 - 2:04 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit-and-run in the 2600 block of Avenue I.  
 02/04/2017 - 5:45 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Thomas Presley, Jr., 52, of Montrose in the 5400 block of Avenue O on charge of 2nd-degree criminal mischief. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed.  
 02/04/2017 - 4:20 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Kevin Lee Clair, 58, of Colfax, in the 800 block of Avenue E on a warrant for 5th degree theft and probation violation.  
 02/04/2017 - 9:40 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Justin R. Marshall, 27 of Niota, in the 2600 block of Avenue I, on charges of no driver's license, no insurance and 2

counts of striking unattended vehicle (hit and run). He was cited and released.  
 02/05/2017 - 12:50 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1400 block of Avenue G.  
 02/05/2017 - 3:12 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Mary Jo Rummelhart, 36, of Fort Madison, in the 800 block of Avenue E, on a warrant service. She was posted bond and was released.  
 02/05/2017 - 5:21 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit-and-run in the 600 block of 11th Street.  
 02/05/2017 - 8:48 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Bradley Robert Bohnenkamp, 39, of Fort Madison, in the 600 block of 10th Street on a warrant for probation violation. He was taken to the Lee County Correctional Center and jailed.

### Lee County Sheriff's Department

02/03/2017 - 7:46 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle accident on 340th Street. A vehicle driven by Dusty Lynn Oliver, 34, of Argyle, lost control headed east on 340th Street, spun around and went into the north side ditch striking a small tree and damaging the left side of the vehicle. No injuries or citations were reported at the scene.  
 02/04/2017 - 11:45 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Marrisona Fawn Ash, 33, of Fort Madison, at the Lee County Sheriff's

office on judgement entry. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/05/2017 - 11:31 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jerry Dean Hardman III, 37 of Keokuk, at the Lee County Sheriff's office on a warrant for a judgement entry. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/05/2017 - 1:48 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Chad Everett Mar-mion, 41, of Hamilton, Ill., in the 1600 block of Green Bay Road, on a warrant for 5th degree theft. He was taken the Lee County Jail and held.  
 02/05/2017 - 5:29 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Devin Dwight Fenton, 28, of Burlington, in the 3400 block of 187th Street, on warrants for contempt of court-non payment of fines, judgment entry and a charge of driving while barred. He was taken to the Lee County jail and held.  
 02/05/2017 - 7:09 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Codey Lane Page, 40, of Montrose in the 3200 block of 220th Avenue on a charge of obstructing an emergency call.

### Fort Madison Fire Department

02/05/2017 - Fort Madison Firefighters responded to 3 medical calls.

*It should be noted that a criminal charge is merely an accusation and those listed above are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.*

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### MEETINGS

Post 82 The American Legion will meet Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2017, 7PM at the Eagles Club in Fort Madison, Iowa. All members and those interested in The American Legion are encouraged to attend. George Shields, Adjutant



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# ISL proposal would generate \$442K for district

**LEVY** - Continued from Page 1

## Cash Reserve Levy would bump tax asking another 17 cents/\$1,000 assessed

require 148 signatures, which reflects 30% of the voters at the last regular school board election. After the public hearing, 28 days is allowed to petition.

According to Elmore, a proposed ISL of 3 percent would generate \$442,000 additional for the district and would bring the rate to \$14.44/\$1,000 assessed. The maximum ISL can be 10% of the current levy and is capped at five years.

She also suggested a Cash Reserve Levy addition of \$100,000 would increase the levy 0.17/1,000 assessed. The CRL can be done in increments of \$100,000 with each increment bumping the levy by 17 cents per \$1,000.

Lamb said an effort to implement an ISL in a year where the school district will be asking the community to vote on building a new elementary school again in September and where the Holy Trinity Catholic system is looking for \$6M to build a new elementary school, is a scary proposition.

"I think it's a fear just because general perception in the public is that 'you're gonna do this and you're gonna do that' because they remember we didn't pass the bond for the junior high and then we used the sales tax to build it and they just said we did what we wanted," Lamb said.

Board member Tim Wondra said it's an ugly scenario of passing the buck.

"Federal legislators make cuts and they pass it down to the state, and the state passes it down to the local boards and then your commissioners, supervisors and board members are the ones that have to raise the property taxes."

Lamb reiterated that even with the ISL the district will still have one of the lowest tax rates in the state and most of the schools already have an ISL in place.

"Even if we do this we're still gonna be one of the lowest, and all these districts are going to be in the same boat so theirs will go up too," Lamb said.

"That's what people don't understand. You look at what we've been doing with the money, we've done a pretty good job handling our money and still maintaining programming."

Board member Dianne Hope said she had real concerns about misconceptions and proper communication with the district.

"I'm very concerned about a misconception that could be out there, that the school bond didn't pass and the school board raises taxes. That 'they're-gonna-do-what-they-want' mentality even though we're talking about apples and oranges and apricots. We have to be

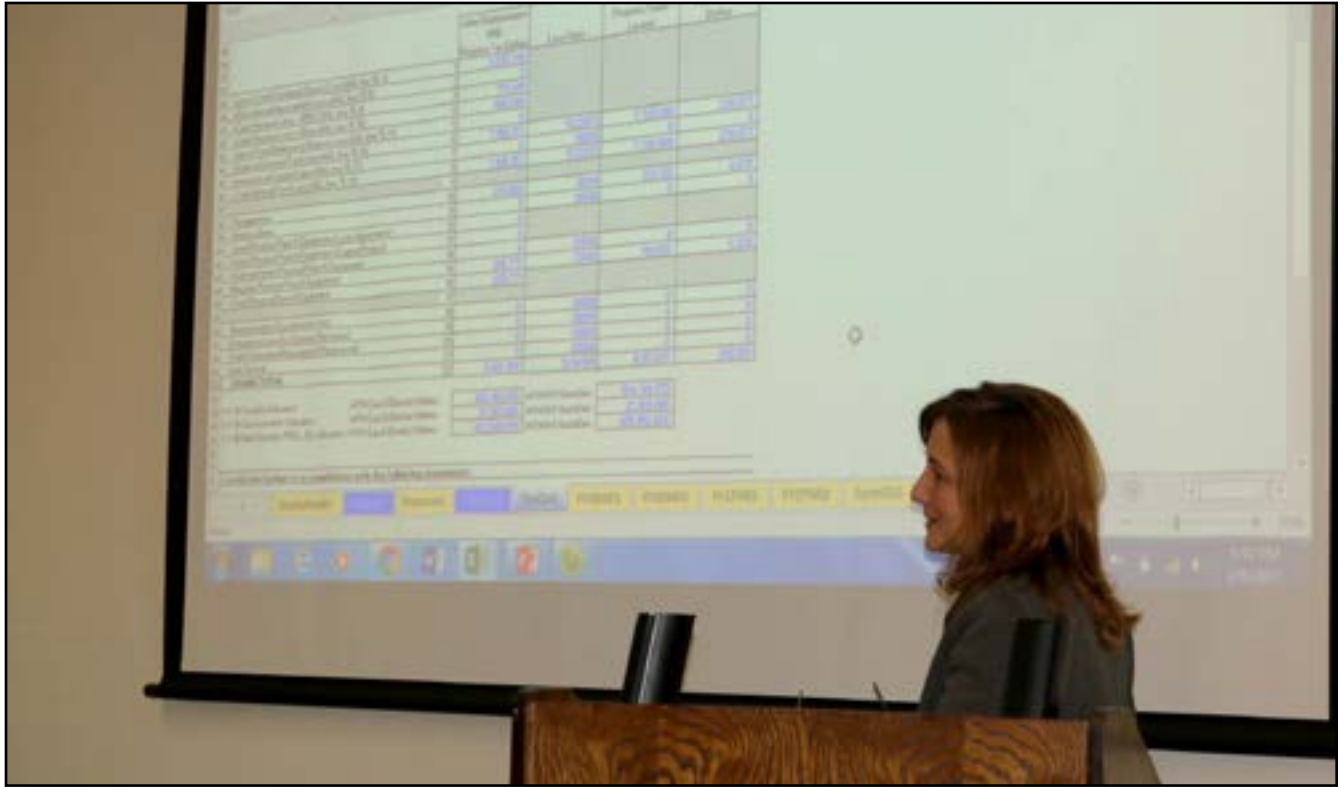


Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

### Proposed budget

FMCS D Business Manager Sandy Elmore stands in front of a chart of the proposed annual levy for the 2017-2018 fiscal year showing a levy of \$13.94/\$1,000 assessed valuation. The proposed additional Instructional Support Levy would bump the rate to \$14.44/\$1,000 assessed.



SLATER

very clear what we're doing," Hope said. "We're asking to increase our taxes to our constituents and then we're going to come back and ask for more. We're going to have to partner with the media and make sure we have a very accurate message."

Elmore said no money generated by the ISL or the CRL can be used for construction.

"1.1% is not enough. It's not enough and it pushes the burden onto the taxpayer," Elmore said.

Lamb said even with the ISL and potentially the CRL, the district will still be lower than almost all the other school districts in the area.

"Our gloves are basically going to have to come off and we're gonna have to go out there and tell people this is happening. We can't just take status quo."

Superintendent Erin Slater said the district was planning on 2 percent after the Governor signed into law a budget that held K-12 funding, but now Republicans are moving toward the 1.1%.

"It's a lower growth than we were hoping for. It puts an additional burden and makes us be creative with the budget. It's definitely a challenge," she said.

"Looking globally, we find our students have greater needs than ever before - increasing poverty and mental health needs, but expectations keep in-

creasing. So more mandates come down but they don't have the funding to implement those mandates."

She said in conversations on the state capitol last week, there was some talk about extending the sunset on the 1-cent sales tax program for another 20 years. Slater said that could create opportunities, but those are just in the conversation stage, whereas the allowable growth is in front of legislators now.

In a newsletter released last week by State Rep. Jerry Kearns (D-Keokuk), Kearns said this is the lowest rate in the past six years.

"Republican leaders in the House and Senate are fast tracking their plan for another historic low increase in basic funding for public schools next year. The level of funding proposed at 1.1% next year is the lowest amount in six years. In fact, seven of the last eight years have been the lowest funding levels in the history of the school aid formula," Kearns wrote.

"Last week, Iowa superintendents said there are severe consequences of inadequate public school funding again next year. The school leaders said they will be forced to raise class sizes, cut teachers, and reduce opportunities for students. They also said underfunding schools again next year would force them to delay purchases for books or classroom materials (65%); delay new technology (24%); and cut back on literacy programs (27%)."



WONDRA

**“** Federal legislators make cuts and they pass it down to the state, and the state passes it down to the local boards, and then your commissioners, supervisors and board members are the ones that have to raise property taxes.”

-Tim Wondra, Board member



HOPE

**“** I'm very concerned about a misconception that could be out there, that the school bond didn't pass and the school board raises taxes. That 'they're-gonna-do-what-they-want' mentality even though we're talking about apples and oranges and apricots.”

-Dianne Hope, Board member



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**“** That's what people don't understand. You look at what we've been doing with the money, we've done a pretty good job handling our money and still maintaining programming.”

-Timm Lamb, Board President

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