



Pen City Current

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Mayor befuddled on sidewalk bid disparity

Randolph not ready to give up on Avenue G sidewalk project

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials revealed Thursday that a bid on a sidewalk improvement project that was supposed to result in new curbs and sidewalks for a good portion of Avenue G came in 146% over engineering estimates.

Fort Madison Mayor Brad Randolph said Wednesday night that one bid came in for the work at \$3.2

million to get three blocks of Avenue G done on both sides. Engineering estimates were about \$1.4 million for the project.

HR Green Inc., of Cedar Rapids has been ushering the project for the city and Randolph said he wants answers on where the disparity in the bids and HR Green's estimates came from.

"I'm really at a loss," Randolph said Wednesday night. "I'm disappointed in the whole process and I'm trying to figure out what went wrong. For them to stand in front of the council and say that and be off by almost \$2 million is unfathomable."



RANDOLPH

He said the city's spent about \$100,000 on the project already and he wants something for that money.

Randolph met with City Manager David Varley Wednesday morning about the project and said at 7:30 a.m. it was a dead project.

But similar to the Amtrak Depot relocation that was almost swiped away by the council during budget talks, Randolph said he's not ready to give up on the project.

"As of this morning, the project was DOA and that's not acceptable. We're going back to the engineer and find out the reason for the disparity be-

See **SIDEWALKS**, page 8

O'Rourke's presidential run kicks off in Lee County



Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Texas Democrat Beto O'Rourke kicked off his 2020 presidential run in Lee County Thursday. Above, O'Rourke gives his stump speech at a rally at Sub-Arena Sandwich Shop in Fort Madison. At right, he speaks with FMHS Media Center Director Roxanne Puga, left, and senior yearbook editor Corrine Keenan.



O'Rourke talks with MSNBC's Garrett Haake after holding his first rally of the campaign in Keokuk's Lost Canvas Thursday morning.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Packed coffee houses and sandwich shops in Lee County were the springboard of a national news cycle introducing Beto O'Rourke to the 2020 Presidential race, as well as to the state of Iowa.

O'Rourke, a Democrat from Texas who garnered national fame by nearly knocking off Ted Cruz for the U.S. Senate last year, stepped out of the shadows of that slim 2.6% defeat back into the national spotlight with a campaign he says is for "all the people".

O'Rourke, in three different Lee County campaign stops Thursday morning, repeated what will assuredly be a stump message going forward that he doesn't care what party you're from, he's running for everyone. He served in the House of Representatives for six years from 2013 – 2019.

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"This setting right now, the very first event of our campaign for president, is an example of not only the way I wish to campaign across this country for every single American, and I could care less your party, per-

See **CAMPAIGN**, page 4

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Obituaries/Scene Around Town



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

All School band night

Fort Madison Middle School band director Lisa Knipe sets up the next movement with the middle school band at All School Band night Monday night at Fort Madison High School.

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OBITUARIES

DACIA NICOLE FRY

Dacia Nicole Fry, 38, of Argyle, IA, died Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at the University of Iowa Hospital in Iowa City, IA.

She was born December 10, 1980 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of Dennis and Karla Lorentzen Leggett.



FRY

Dacia graduated from Revere High School in Revere, MO with the Class of 1999.

She had been employed at Griffin Wheel in Keokuk.

Dacia enjoyed spending time outdoors, riding horses and relaxing in her hot tub. She loved all types of crafts and also enjoyed antiquing and garage sales. Dacia was an avid Big Bang Theory fan and liked to watch her favorite character, Harley Quinn in Suicide Squad.

She is survived by one daughter, Tristan Fry of Kahoka, MO, one son, Braden Fry of Argyle, IA, her significant other, Kevin Garner of Argyle, IA, her mother and step-father, Karla Lorentzen-Wixom and husband Carl of Kahoka, MO, five brothers, Jared Leggett of Kahoka, MO, Joshua Payne, Richard Payne and Justus Berquam all of Keokuk, and Travis Wixom of Kahoka, four sisters, Ashlee McKnight of St. Charles, MO, Jayna LeMaster (Landon) and Nora Birky (Cole) all of Kahoka, MO and Amanda Malone (Justin) of Pensacola, FL, her grandmother, Sharon Lorentzen of Kahoka, MO, several nieces and nephews and aunts and uncles.

She was preceded in death by her father, step-mother, Lesa Leggett Job, grandparents, Ralph Lorentzen and Wayne and Norma Leggett.

A funeral service will be held at 2 p.m., Saturday at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk, IA with Pastor John Simpson officiating. A private graveside service will be held at a later date.

Visitation for family and friends will be held on Saturday from 12 noon – 2 p.m. at the funeral home.

Memorials may be made to the Lee County Domestic Violence Intervention Program.

Online condolences may be left for the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison Middle School seventh grader Jamarkus Kline plays the chimes, or tubular bells, during Monday night's All-School band concert. Bands from 5th grade through high school performed for a packed Hound-Dome.

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Pen City Current

Founded in 2016



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Education News/Lottery Numbers

State graduation rate edges up to all-time high

DES MOINES – Iowa’s high school graduation rate edged up in 2018 to an all-time high of 91.4 percent, underscoring long-term progress, according to figures released today by the Iowa Department of Education.

“This latest success is directly tied to our strong K-12 education system and Iowa’s innovative, engaging approach to education, which shapes the lives of our young people as well as the economic vitality of our state,” said Gov. Reynolds. “We’re transforming how students learn by connecting what they’re taught in the classroom to the career opportunities that a 21st century economy demands.”

“High school graduation is a critical step for all students because it opens the door to postsecondary education and training opportunities,” Iowa Department of Education Director Ryan Wise said. “I’m pleased to see our graduation rates are up, reinforcing that our long-term trend is on the rise. This is a testament to

the state’s committed educators and the roadmap we have in place for education.”

State data show 91.4 percent of students in Iowa’s Class of 2018 graduated within four years, up from 91 percent for the Class of 2017. Since 2011, Iowa’s four-year graduation rate has climbed 3.1 percentage points overall, with significant long-term gains in nearly every student demographic subgroup (see chart below). For example, graduation rates for Hispanic students have increased 8.7 percentage points and African American students have increased 8.1 percentage points since 2011.

The State Board of Education has set a 95 percent goal for the statewide graduation rate.

Today’s graduation rate data should not be confused with data released in January by the National Center for Education Statistics, which showed that Iowa leads the nation in graduation rates for the 2016-17 school year.

Iowa graduation rates are calculated with a formula established by the U.S. Department of Education. Unique student identification numbers allow school districts to account for all ninth-grade students as they move through high school. At the state level, the method helps determine when a student graduates, even if the student has switched districts in Iowa during high school.

Iowa’s five-year graduation rate – which reflects students who were part of a graduating class but took an extra year to finish high school – was 93.3 percent for the Class of 2017, down slightly from 93.4 percent for the Class of 2016.

Iowa’s annual dropout rate reflects the percentage of students in grades 9-12 who drop out of school during a single year. The annual dropout rate edged down to 2.67 percent during the 2017-18 school year from 2.83 percent for the previous school year.



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Pick 3 - Evening	Daily	9:40 pm	10:00 pm
Pick 4 - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:20 pm
Pick 4 - Evening	Daily	9:40 pm	10:00 pm



3/13
18 36 45 47 69
Powerball: 14
Power Play: 3



3/13
18 42 44 48 52
Star Ball: 8
All Star Bonus: 3



3/13 MID-DAY
6 3 4
3/13 EVENING
9 0 1



3/13 MID-DAY
8 2 9 3
3/13 EVENING
7 3 9 7

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From the front

O'Rourke makes stop at FMHS

CAMPAIGN - Continued from Page 1

suasion, your religion, anything other than the fact that we are all Americans and human beings and we do everything within our power for one another, for this great country, and for every generation that follows us. This is democracy," O'Rourke said to applause from the packed house at Lost Canvas in Keokuk Tuesday morning.

O'Rourke hit all the heavy Democratic issues including abortion, universal health care, gun control, and alternative energy with the crowd in Keokuk and at a later lunch gathering with a packed Sub-Arena Sandwich Shop in Fort Madison.

With national media outlets in tow in Keokuk and Fort Madison, O'Rourke was able to peel away for a 90-minute visit to Fort Madison High School.

O'Rourke took a quick tour of the school and chatted with trades instructor Clint Kobelt, Spanish teacher Ryan Smith, Science teacher Mike Rieck, and welding instructor Jim King. He also randomly popped into a few classrooms to wave to students.

He questioned Kobelt and King about how the school's vocational programs are having an impact on jobs and careers for the students and whether programs are in place for certification.

O'Rourke said partnerships between high schools and community colleges around the country is just one way to help reduce the staggering \$1.3 trillion in student loan debt in America.

"I would like to see more high schools partner with community colleges to offer certification tracks. And this goes right to what Mr. King said in their welding class. He kept saying over and over, "Debt Free". These programs lead to careers where jobs are available and there is no debt."

But O'Rourke also told students in Mike Ehlers'



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke gives a scratch behind the ear to FMHS Bloodhound "Roxie" on Thursday before meeting with staff and students at the Fort Madison High School. O'Rourke announced his candidacy nationally that morning.

government class that the country needs to take steps to make college debt easier to manage so people can move forward in productive lives.

The Texas native, who was visiting Iowa for the first time, told about 100 people at SubArena that guaranteed health care, including health care for veterans and those "other than honorably discharged" will be a topic of his campaign as well.

"Whatever that expense, I guarantee you it is a hell of a lot less than what we pay to lose the people in our lives... to lose the productivity of Americans who are now well enough to go to work," he said "Let's make sure we spread those costs out more equitably. The dividends we receive on the investment we make in the health care of one another will more than pay for the cost up front."

The 46-year-old father of three from El Paso, said he hopes the campaign can be run without the personal attacks of the past and said any candidate in the pool of 13 that have announced candidacies would be a better

choice than President Trump.

"It is critically important that we not denigrate or demean any other candidate. Don't talk about their personal issues," he said. "Every single Democrat running today, and I may not be able to enumerate every single one of them, will be far better than the current occupants of the White House."

Janice Sportsman, of Fort Madison, said she was impressed with O'Rourke.

"I think he did a very good job and engaged with the people here. He's young with good thoughts on things. We need someone young with good ideas and not being afraid to share them," Sportsman said.

Owen Gach, a Republican from Burlington who attends the University of Northern Iowa, said he travels around to listen to candidates from different parties so he can get a feel for the issues and learn more about the direction of the country.

"I think it was a good conversation," Gach said. "I'm a Republican, but I like listening to other people's view on bipartisan issues. That way I have a better idea on who I will support."

Russell Townes of Fort Madison said he was happy to have a national candidate come to Fort Madison, especially the day he announced he was running for president.

See RALLY, page 5

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O'Rourke habla un poco de español a los alumnos en la clase de Introducción a español de Ryan Smith el jueves por la mañana.

Local News

Candidate hits all democrat talking points on swing

RALLY - Continued from Page 4

“It’s nice really, to be recognized by a bigger name candidate. It shows we’re important in the election process,” he said. “Fort Madison is fairly older population and we have concerns that need to be heard.”

Just before leaving for Burlington, when asked why he chose to announce in Lee County, in a state he’d never visited before, O’Rourke said it didn’t make sense to announce in a red state like Texas.

“The people of south-east Iowa are the type of people we need to start this campaign with. They have a history of influence in presidential campaigns and we were thrilled to be able to start here today,” he said.

When pressed on the issue of trade, specifically China, O’Rourke said Trump’s goal with China is sound, but his methods are not the way of a world leader.

He said Trump has alienated every single trading partner the U.S. has, and then confronted one of the largest economies in the world.

“It’s the largest market for soybeans, for corn, for what we produce in Iowa and Texas. I want us to be successful in holding China accountable. I want to make sure we are as

competitive as possible for what we grow and produce in the United States. In order to do that, we have to bring to bear every ally we have.”

In Fort Madison, O’Rourke answered a question about public school teachers and where the country should step in. He said more needs to be done to make sure teachers have just one job – educating our children, not two or even three jobs that some teachers in Texas are holding down to just to make ends meet.

“Our educators need a true living wage so they can focus on one job, as well as a providing a health care system they can depend on, and our retired teachers can afford a life of dignity,” he said.

At all the events, O’Rourke pushed the issue of climate change and said the world has about 12 years to take “incredibly bold action” to save the planet.

“It’s only a matter of degrees,” he said. “Along this trajectory, there will be people who can no longer live in the cities they call home today. There is food grown in this country that will no longer prosper in these soils. We’ll have mass migrations of 100s of millions of people from lands that are inhabitable

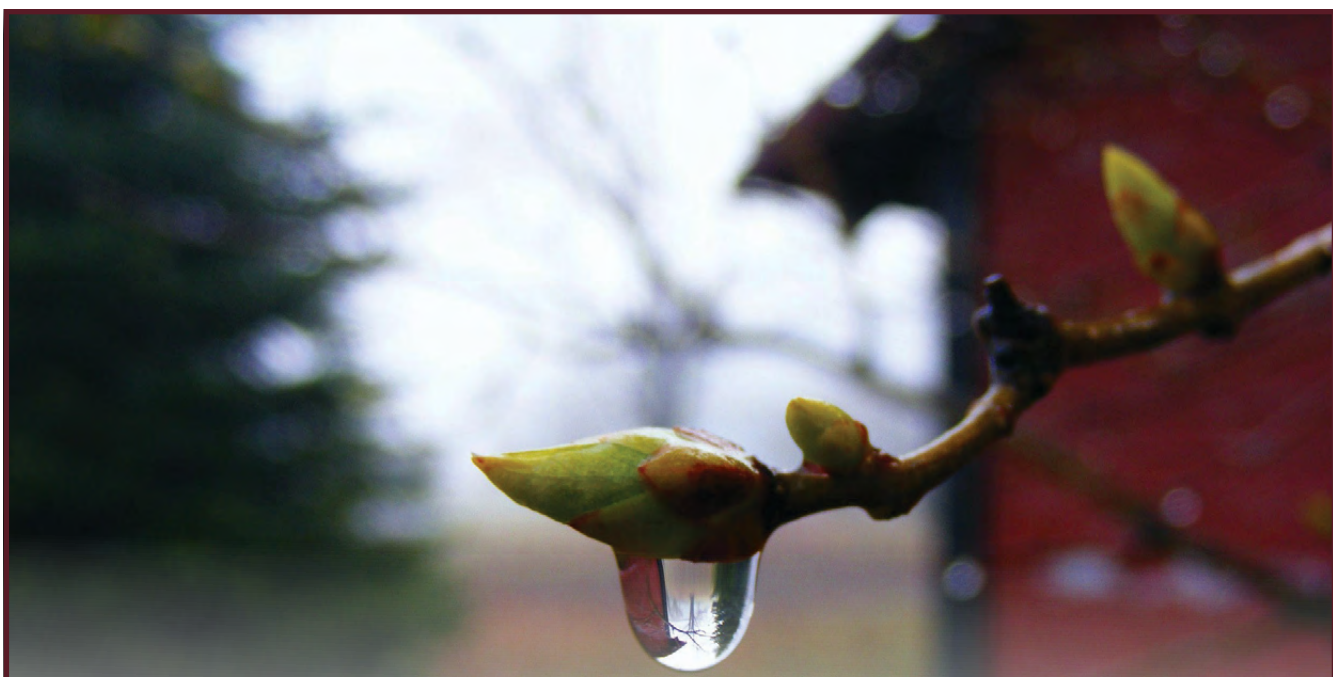
today, that will be under water.”

“This is our final chance. Scientists are absolutely unanimous on this. We have no more than 12 years to take incredibly bold action on this crisis.”

After leaving Fort Madison’s Sub-Arena, O’Rourke headed to Burlington for another opening day rally at a coffee shop downtown.



O’Rourke holds a conversation with Sub-Arena owner Jacqueline Beimer Lumsden on Thursday after a rally packed the popular Fort Madison sandwich shop.



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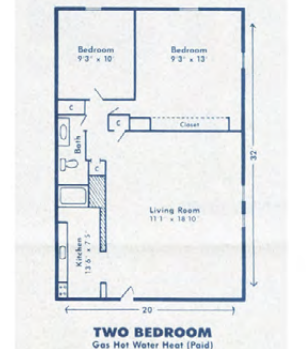
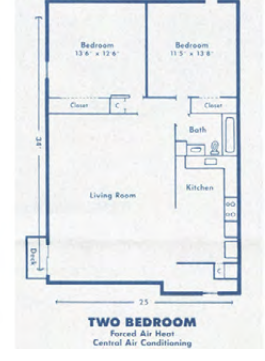
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Will perform manual work in the grounds and building maintenance within the park and cemetery department, under direct supervision.

DESIRED MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Some experience in building and grounds maintenance.
- Must have a current Iowa driver's license.
- Skill in operating some of the listed tools and equipment; power and tractor mowers, backhoe, carpentry and plumbing tools, etc.

Applications can be picked up and submitted at Fort Madison City Hall 811 Ave. E Fort Madison, Iowa

Lee County Conservation Part-Time Beach Concessionaire (Temporary)

Pollmiller Park Beach, West Point

Hourly Starting Pay: \$10.00

Visit www.leecounty.org for a job description and qualifications.

All applications should be directed to Lee County Conservation, 2652 HWY 61 Montrose, IA 52639. Deadline to apply is 4:30 p.m. Friday, March 29, 2019. Applications are available online at www.leecounty.org.

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Lee County Conservation Center, Montrose, IA

Hourly Starting Pay: \$10.00

Visit www.leecounty.org for a job description and qualifications.

Applications: All applications should be directed to Lee County Conservation, 2652 HWY 61, Montrose, IA 52639. Deadline to apply is 4:30 p.m. Friday, March 29, 2019. Applications are available online at www.leecounty.org.

Lee County is an equal opportunity employer.

COMMUNITY GARDEN COORDINATOR NEEDED

RSVP/United Way of the Great River Region is seeking a Community Garden Coordinator

- Do you like to garden and work outdoors?
- Do you like to plan, plant and harvest food?

We are seeking an individual this Spring who will plan, plant, cultivate, harvest and lead other volunteers in our Community Garden (garden is located at 2606 Avenue L, Fort Madison, Iowa behind Hy-Vee).

Must enjoy working outside, gardening and harvesting. Will direct garden activities with other volunteers and may require some bending, stooping and lifting of 10 lbs. or less...Times: 1 hour, 2 times per week.

If interested and for more information, please call – Tammy at 319-372-8043.

United Way of the Great River Region supports non-profit organizations and agencies that provide programs addressing needs in health, education and financial stability to residents in Clark, Hancock, and Lee Counties.

United Way of the Great River Region serves all of Lee, Hancock, and Clark Counties. All donations are tax-deductible.



United Way of the Great River Region

CURRENT-LEE

FORT MADISON – The following is a list of events and happenings going on in Fort Madison as submitted to the Pen City Current.

Legislative Luncheon

The monthly legislative luncheon with State Sen. Rich Taylor, Rep. Jeff Kurtz and State Rep. Joe Mitchell scheduled to attend will be held at noon Friday, March 15, at the Palms Restaurant. The public is invited.

Community Blood Drives

A blood drive will be held at Lincoln Elementary on Thursday, March 21, from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the gymnasium. Call the blood center at 800-747-5401 ext. 1281 to donate.

YMCA Little Tykes Spring Soccer

Registration is currently underway for the 2019 season, which runs March 26 – May 2. Registration deadline is March 10 for regular fees of \$20 for members, \$40 for non-members. From March 11-17th participants can register but fees are \$10 higher. Volunteer coaches are needed. Call the YMCA at 319-372-2403 for more information.

St. Patrick's Day celebration

The Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce will be holding a St. Patrick's Day celebration on March 16 including a parade, games, music and fun. Parade entry forms are available by contact the Chamber at 319-372-5471.

YMCA's Shamrocked 2019

The 2nd annual Shamrocked will be held on March 16 starting at 8 a.m. with a free-will donation pancake breakfast, followed by a Bike & Brew after the St. Patrick's Holiday Parade. For more information, contact the YMCA at 372-2403.

ISU Extension Estate Planning

Iowa State University Outreach and Extension will hold an estate planning session on March 19th at 6 p.m. at the extension office in Donnellson. The session is \$20 per person and registration can be done by contact Whitney Weisinger at 319-835-5116. Deadline is March 15.

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From the Front/Weather

City could expand reach for contractors for better bid

SIDEWALKS - Continued from Page 1

tween what they say we can do it for, and what can be done with that project.”

According to the bid submitted, there were too many unknowns in what would be found under the surface of the current sidewalks.

Randolph said it’s his understanding that there were a lot of unknowns in the design in terms of the membrane, building foundations, and basements. Those unknowns made it difficult for the contractors to bid it.

But the mayor said, similar to the depot project he wasn’t ready yet to give up on the project and would like to get something done downtown.

“That sidewalk project was a good seed. It wasn’t taking anything from the general fund. It was saved

interest that we had to pay and we could put it back into the community,” he said.

Funds for the project were a reimbursement of interest paid on the city’s waste water treatment plant rehab and the funds can only be used on projects that further mitigate storm water drainage.

Because the project is overseen by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources there are restrictions on how the project is handled.

“There’s limits to where you can use it (funding). In my opinion, when you’re trying to maximize on what the community would get back, that sidewalk project is the best possible scenario,” Randolph said. “It gives us the biggest impact. I think we should not give up on it until we have to and I’m not convinced

we do that yet.”

He said the city wanted to use area contractors if possible, but bidding may have to be opened to larger cities to see if another firm can come in with a better price point on the project.

“Let’s say the local contractors are not comfortable – should we open it up, I think we should to get the job done and try to find someone with that expertise that’s willing to take on the project,” he said.

He said other projects have been discussed that would fit the parameters of the funding stream, but he isn’t willing to take that step.

“There’s been some talk about other projects it could be used for,” he said. “But I don’t think we should approach those until I’m absolutely convinced that the sidewalk project is not going to happen.”

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FRI 15 Mar



Light Snow

High- 35.9° F | Low - 30.5° F

SAT 16 Mar



Clear

High- 35.6° F | Low - 26.3° F

SUN 17 Mar



Light Snow

High- 36.3° F | Low - 22.5° F

MON 18 Mar



Light Snow

High- 41.1° F | Low - 28.4° F

TUE 19 Mar



Clear

High- 41.4° F | Low - 26.0° F

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