



Pen City Current

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Varley: City budget sunk without changes

Five-year look at city finances could result in franchise tax

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – City officials are looking for ways to bail the city out of what City Manager David Varley is calling a quickly sinking ship.

At a work session Monday at City Hall, Varley painted a bleak picture in the form of a 15-page summary

looking at city finances over the next five budget years. “Without some pretty big changes for the fiscal year 2020-21 budget we are taking on water, and for the 2021-22 budget the ship is pretty much sunk,” he told the council.

Varley said new state laws that require additional hurdles to increase revenue growth, the unknown structure of online sales tax payments and current economic trends make projecting general fund revenues tricky.

“We’re presenting this hopefully in time to give council advanced warning of the condition of the general

fund, and some things will have to change a little bit to keep things going as they are,” he said.

REVENUES

Varley is projecting a 2% increase in property taxes over the five years, which is in line with the state’s new law that puts a soft cap on municipal revenue growth at 2%. That cap, however can be lifted by a 2/3 vote of the elected body at an additional public hearing.

With those calculations, Varley shows property tax revenues of \$2.66 million in 2024-25. With other small-

See **CRISIS**, page 9

Shuckers take down 16 tons to kick off Sweet Corn festival

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT – Sitting in the middle of about 16 tons of corn on a warm, sunny evening Jerry Wiggenjost is taken back to his childhood.

He remembers his father, Burt and his father’s friend Lonnie Freitag, who used to run an implement store in West Point back in the 50s.

He said the two were instrumental in getting the town’s Sweet Corn Festival up and running.

On Wednesday, the festival kicked off with the annual ‘Shuckfest’ behind Merschman Seeds just southeast of the town square.

“They got the farmers who would donate about 50 bushels of sweet corn and we would shuck that up on the corner of the square by the bowling alley,” Wiggenjost recalled



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Hundreds lined a load of about 16 tons of corn Wednesday night at the Sweet Corn Festival’s Shuckfest. The festival kicks off Thursday night on the square in West Point.

as he pulled the light green sinewy husks from the ears and snapped off the heavy end.

He then dropped the corn into a milk crate nestled between him and his wife Barb on a bench, the whole process taking about 30 seconds before he

snatched up another ear and kept talking.

“They had the locker there and had a big pot where they would boil hides after butchering animals and they would fill it with water. They’d use that to boil the corn,” he said.

Wiggenjost and his wife

live in Liberty, Kansas, just north of Kansas City, and drove back to join the masses who make annual trek to the Merschman shipping dock lot where a semi-load of corn was dumped east to west in a

See **CORN**, page 2

Smith named Rodeo parade Grand Marshal

FROM TRI-STATE RODEO

FORT MADISON – The Tri-State Rodeo is pleased to announce the Grand Marshal for the 2019 Rodeo Parade is Larry D. Smith.

Growing up in southwest Iowa near Creston, Larry considers himself an Iowa farmboy. He graduated high school near Creston, at what is now the CAM Community School District. He studied at Iowa State University in a pre-optometry program before finishing his degree at Indiana University.

Prior to moving to Fort Madison, Larry met the love of his life, Carolyn, who was also in the optometry doctoral program. The couple were later married in 1973, and have happily been so for the last 46 years. They chose to set their roots in Fort Madison, where they raised 2 wonderful kids, Christopher and Carrie.

Larry, along with his wife Carolyn, began their careers by opening Smith & Smith Eye Clinic in August, 1975. It was that same year that Larry started hocking food at the Rodeo as a way to get his face out in the Fort Madison community. Then in 2018, forty-three years later, Larry Smith, one of the most respected individuals in Fort Madison, decided to end his career with Tri-State Rodeo. Although Larry has served in just about every capacity available with regards to the rodeo, his service and commitment to the community stretch far beyond the rodeo world.

The list is quite extensive, but for starters, that same

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From the front

Sweet corn festival kicks off tomorrow in West Point

CORN - Continued from Page 1

pile about two feet deep and about 100 yards long.

Part of the tradition of the self-dubbed "Shuck-fest" is plenty of water to stay hydrated and ice cold beer. Pitchers are set up on the benches as milk crates are filled with the shucked corn. ATVs staffed with volunteers come around and swap out the crates filled with corn, for empty ones and then take the crates across the street to another warehouse where they are submerged in an ice bath by youth volunteers.

After the bath, the crates are then stacked in the

warehouse where they await huge thresher-run boilers on the northeast corner of the city park where corn is served all day throughout the festival.

The corn is donated from Merschman Seeds and Lee County Bank donates burgers, hot dogs, chips, water, the beer and just about the entire staff to help feed the mothers of all shuckers.

Men, women and children from all over north Lee County, and in some cases from outside the state, make the trip back to start the 67th Annual 4-day Sweet Corn Festival.

Some just for the corn, some for the festival, and some just for the camaraderie of friends of years gone by.

"People come. If they move away they will come back with their kids and grandkids just to be a part of this," Wiggenjost said.

"We know people that used to be our neighbors when we lived here in town, who live in Arizona and came back with their kids and grandkids. There are people from New York here."

Wiggenjost said West Point claims its Sweet Corn festival is the biggest in the world. He said no one's gonna contest it. He said he was on the cook-

ing committee on Sunday nights when his dad was in charge of the BBQ chicken on Friday through Sunday.

He said his memories are of the whole town getting involved with men cooking and women serving and kids helping shuck. He said it's something you really don't see on this level anywhere else.

"If they grow up in the city, they don't know a damn thing about sweet corn or shuckin' it," he said. "Look at that little girl over there. She's barely old enough to walk and here she is."

The corn arrived at about 3:45 p.m. with people showing up at around 4. The start time for shucking was listed at 5 p.m. but about 100 people were already digging into the pile of ears to get the party started.

Most of the veteran shuckers said it would take about about three hours to shuck the whole dump,



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Layla Fraise, 2, of West Point adds an element of style to the proceedings as grandma Rhonda Fraise helps shuck corn at the annual Shuckfest Wednesday.

which amounts to about 175 lbs of corn per minute.

"When it's done they bring in tractor and they just scoop up all the leaves and clean it all up in no time at all. It's all very slick," Wiggenjost said.

The festival starts with the carnival rides at 5 p.m. Thursday and of course all the sweet corn you can eat.

A full list of events appears on page 10 of Thursday morning's Pen City Current E-Edition.

FMCH Women's Center Welcomes Dr. Debra Ravasia



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Obituaries/Lottery Numbers

OBITUARIES

IONA MARIE SIEGRIST

Iona Marie Siegrist, 88, of Niota, Illinois passed away at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, August 6, 2019 at the Great River Klein Center in West Burlington, Iowa.



SIEGRIST

Iona was born on November 30, 1930 in Fort Madison, Iowa the daughter of Joseph and Pauline Hoenig Wiggenjost. On May 10, 1958 she married James L. Siegrist at the St. Mary's Catholic Church in Fort Madison. He preceded her in death on May 20, 2011.

Mrs. Siegrist was a graduate of the Fort Madison High School. She worked in various office positions at Sheaffer Pen Company, Fort Madison, for 19 years. Iona was a member of the Nauvoo Historical Society and the Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Nauvoo, Illinois where she was active in the Catholic Women's Club. She was a woman of strong faith. Iona enjoyed, music, dancing, traveling, playing cards and having dinner with friends. She loved animals and growing up and living on the farm.

Survivors include three daughters, Diana (Phillip) Bell of Overland Park, Kansas, Marlyn (Paul) Anderson of Raymore, Missouri, and Joan (Michael) McAnany of Bucyrus, Kansas; two sons, Gregory Siegrist of Olathe, Kansas and David (Tiffany) Siegrist of Montgomery, Texas. Also surviving are seven grandchildren, Andrew Bell, Joshua (Shayleen) Anderson, Matthew Anderson, Anthony, Grace, Peyton and Parker Siegrist; one great-granddaughter, Kamryn Anderson; one sister, Virginia Bezoenik of California and one niece, Beverly (John) Schneider.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Jim; one sister in infancy, Maria Wiggenjost; brother, Ralph Wiggenjost; a special grandmother, Anna and brother -in-law, Robert (Belva) Siegrist.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, August 10, 2019 at the Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Church in Nauvoo with Fr. Tony Trosley and Fr. Thomas Szydlak as celebrants. Burial will follow in the Sts. Peter & Paul Catholic Cemetery in Nauvoo. A visitation will be from 5:00 until 7:00 p.m. Friday, August 9, 2019 at Schmitz-Banks & Beals Funeral Home in Nauvoo with a Parish Rosary recited at 6:30 p.m. A memorial fund has been established for the Nauvoo Fire & Rescue or Sts. Peter & Paul Church Building Fund. To leave a condolence please visit Iona's obituary at sbbfuneralhome.com.

Pen City Current obituary policy

The Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes.

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Sports

Summer work gives Hounds a leg up at camp

Monday marks first camp for Doherty as Bloodhounds' newest head coach

BY ETHAN LILLARD
PCC SPORTS

FORT MADISON – It was just the first day of summer camp, but the enthusiasm and excitement could be felt from the Fort Madison players and their coaching staff. Monday marked the first day of football for the Bloodhounds as they practiced in helmets and shorts in the summer heat, something they will do the entirety of this week's camp.

While many coaches use this time to install new offensive and defensive systems, first-year Fort Madison Head Coach Derek Doherty believes all of the off-season work his players put in has them one step ahead of the game in the beginning stages of summer camp.

"I would say this camp is a little bit different from typically camps because we've been putting in that summer work and our kids are ahead of the game," Doherty said. "This isn't learning for most of them,



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

New FMHS football Head Coach Derek Doherty goes over a camp drill with junior Quinton Ross at Monday's first day of Bloodhound varsity football camp.

it's review and building."

Helping with his players familiarity is the fact Doherty was a long-time assistant coach for Fort

Madison and will implement some of the same schemes the Hounds have been known for in the past. He did however let us know that not everything is going to look the same.

"We've got an array of different things we are wanting to do with these guys," Doherty said. "Some of the stuff will look familiar to last year. We've put some new wrinkles in.

"We're ready to bring guys in and pack the box if we need to go old school, just moving forward football, but we also have some special athletes that we can get the ball to on the outside as well."

Some of those names on the offensive side of the ball will be the same as last season, but will also include some fresh faces looking to make a splash this year.

"We have two really good running backs," Doherty said. "We'll have Diego Lozano in the backfield and Kali Maestro is coming back. Both of those dudes are smart running backs and they are a load to bring down.

"We've got some fast guys on the inside, too. Mike Mosena, he did really nice things for us last year. We've got a kid whose developed really well, Brock Califf. He had a really good JV season for us last year and he understands the system ... He could be a very special player."

When it comes to the captain of the ship, the quarterback, Will Larson currently holds that position, but as Doherty made clear, every slot on the depth chart is up for grabs.

"Our quarterback right now if we're playing tonight is Will Larson," Doherty said. "He was our backup quarterback last year and he got in a little bit. He's a really smart football player.

See **CAMP**, page 5

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Dr. Heyland is pictured with her husband, Chad, and their two children.

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Sports

Lozano, Settles could anchor both sides for Hounds

CAMP - Continued from Page 4

“He’s got Landes Williams right there who is a great athlete and he’s put in the time and he’s fully capable. Who wants it? We’ll find out. It’s a fun thing for us to sit back and watch them compete.”

Regardless of who is behind center, they will be throwing to a familiar target.



LOZANO

“Then on the outsides we have Parker Denning, another returner from last year,” Doherty said. “Really good athlete, blocks really well and catches really well. We’re excited about that.”

“In the other receiver spot, we’ve got a bunch of different formations where we’re putting our guys in the best situation possible. The other one is open. Let’s compete and see who wins it.”

Competition is a word that will be referred to often when speaking about Fort Madison football and the culture Doherty is already creating.



DOHERTY

Having already been the school’s strength training program coordinator, Doherty is able to work with the athletes daily and sees the development. He says it’s obvious who wants it the most.

“It can change weekly, we can flip things. I don’t believe in positions being cemented in. If they want it, go and take it from these guys. That’s what we need is competition in this program. We don’t take back seats to people and that’s the mentality we’re trying to instill in these guys.”

When it comes to the defensive side of the ball, there will be a few familiar names from the offensive side playing double duty.

“We return Diego (Lozano),” Doherty said. “He is going to be as good as he wants to be. He’s got a lot of natural ability and some really great instincts. If we can add that with some discipline and not making some of the mistakes that he made last year, he’s going to be special.”

“We’ve got Keaton Poe as a linebacker as well. The kid has really, really good eyes. He reads better than anybody I’ve seen in a long time and has a nose for the football.”

When it comes to the defensive line, things kick off with state wrestlers in senior Danen Settles.

“He really knows how to use his hands,” Doherty said of Settles. “He’s a really, really agile big guy ... We plan on using him. He’s a scrapper and he’s going to compete every play. He has a motor that’s just unreal for a big guy.”

Along with Settles, Doherty has been paying attention to the work of another lineman who would like to carve himself out a position alongside Settles.

“Jaden Fedler had a really great spring” Doherty said. “He dropped some weight, he’s faster now. I got to watch him play some basketball and he’s made some level jumps. It’s been really impressive.”

While the Fort Madison hometown crowd will see and hear old and new names alike on Friday nights this fall, there will be one constant throughout – how

hard the Hounds compete each time they step on the field.

“Attitude and effort,” Doherty said are his biggest vocal points and goals for the season. “I’m a firm believer that with attitude and effort, you can do a lot of special things. We’re trying to really instill that into our kids, just bring your best every day and if you do, good things will happen.”

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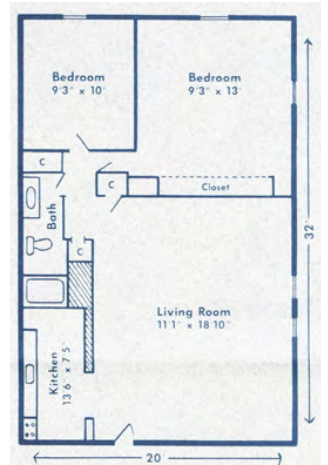
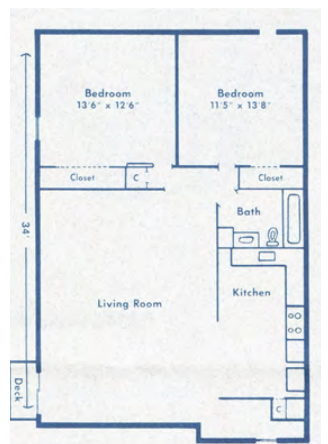


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From the Front/Weather

Expenses shown to outpace revenues annually for next five years

CRISIS - Continued from Page 1

er tax revenue streams such as agriculture land tax, emergency tax levies and insurance liability tax, he's projecting total general fund tax revenue in 2024-25 at \$2.75 million.

That is also the first budget year where city staff has eliminated any state property tax backfill payments as current thoughts are those contributions will be phased out by Iowa legislators. In the 2019-20 adopted budget, that figure was about \$89,000, and Varley phases that out over the next five years.

When combined with other revenues from general fund departments which includes police, fire, airport, library, parks and recreation, cemetery and building rentals, the general fund revenue peaks out at \$3.25 million in 2024-25.

The city also gets transfers of revenue for employee benefits and pensions. Varley shows a 1.8% increase in there over the five-year projection as well as a \$215,000 total annual transfer from funds such as hotel/motel, solid waste, sewer, storm water, water, and docks and marina.

With the transfers combined with the general fund revenue, Varley shows a total revenue in 2024-25 of just over \$6 million, which represents a 1% average growth over the five years. Since 2012, that figure has averaged 2%.

EXPENSES

Varley said salaries and benefits make up about 80% of general fund spending with staff development, maintenance and repairs, contractual obligations and debt making up the rest.

Currently salaries and benefits make up 80.5% of general fund expenses and Varley projects that at 81.2% in 2024-25 at a cost of \$5.49 million. When other expenditures are added in, he shows total general fund expenses at \$6.76 million for 2024-25. That figure represents a five-year average increase of 2.8%. The past seven years that figure was 2.7% with \$5.9 million in expenses in the current budget.

The gap between revenue and expenditures is projected to expand deficit spending over the five-year projections.

"Once the red expenditure line goes above the green

revenue line and stays there, something has to change. We cannot deficit spend every year," Varley said.

"This problem almost always requires additional revenue sources, just to keep the same level of services in the future."

One of those revenue sources being considered is a franchise tax on gas and electrical services provided in the city.

If the city were to institute a franchise tax it could include up to a 5% tax on both utilities. However, the city would not be able to collect the 1% current sales tax charged by those utilities. Any net gain would have to factor out the current 1%. For example a 3% imposed franchise tax would be a net gain of 2%.

City Finance director Peggy Steffensmeier said she put estimates together at the beginning of the year on what revenues would be generated on a 3% franchise tax.

"We took a look at that in January and the gas tax after taking off the 1% currently in place would generate an additional \$220,000 annually," she said. "A 3% on the electrical service in town would be about about \$340,000."

Varley said he believes the City Council could put the franchise tax in place, but wasn't sure if it would take a resolution or an ordinance. The move could be appealed by the public, which would force the issue onto a public ballot.

As it stands now expenditures exceed revenues in the current budget and that deficit will increase to \$750,000 with the 2024-25 budget, with no changes implemented.

Varley said he also likes to have a minimum working capital, or reserves to cover three months of city operations on hand at all times. In 2017 that fund had a balance of \$2.1 million, and it is projected to carry a balance of \$356,940 at the end of 2021. His figures show that fund will be depleted in 2022.

The council agreed to have another discussion on the budget outlook again in October, prior to the next general election.

Smith has long history of volunteerism

MARSHAL - Continued from Page 1

year, he and his wife opened the eye clinic, Larry also joined the Fort Madison Rotary and Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce, and is still an active member in both to this day.

Larry has also been a member of the Fort Madison United Methodist Church for 35 years, having served on various committees, such as finance, stewardship, administrative council, and pastor/parish/staff committees.

Other organizations and committees Larry was also a member of include the Fort Madison Jaycees for 10 years, Self-Supported Municipal Improvement District for 13 years from 1986-2009, Fort Madison Economic Development for 29 years from 1990-present, the Southeast Iowa Regional Riverboat Commission for 15 years from 1995-2010, both the Community Foundation of North Lee County and the SCC Foundation Board for 6 years from 2011-2017, the Baxter Sports Complex Board for 7 years from 2012-present, and the PORT Trails Committee for 5 years from 2014-present, just to name a few!

But the list goes on. Larry has volunteered his time for various other organizations as well, all while running a successful practice for 36 years. His commitment and love for the community knows no bounds. We congratulate Larry on this distinction, and wish him continued success in his future endeavors!

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Partly Cloudy
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FRI 09 Aug



Partly Cloudy
High – 75.6° F | Low – 60.8° F

SAT 10 Aug



Partly Cloudy
High – 78.1° F | Low – 64.7° F

SUN 11 Aug



Light Rain
High – 75.0° F | Low – 68.9° F

MON 12 Aug



Light Rain
High – 83.9° F | Low – 74.6° F

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THURSDAY, AUGUST 8TH

Carnival 5-10p.m.
 Arts & Crafts in the Park 5-10p.m.
 Free Sweet Corn Served 5-10p.m.
 BBQ Pork Loin Dinners Served 5-10p.m.

- Carry outs available
- Pork BBQed by the Lee County Pork Producers
- Serving pork until 10 or until we run out

Free Entertainment on the Stage

Stage Sponsored by Pilot Grove Savings Bank

- Princess & Queen candidates
- Interviews & Coronations 6-7p.m.
- Holy Trinity Dance Team performance following

FRIDAY, AUGUST 9TH

Carnival 5-10p.m.
 Arts & Crafts in the Park 5-10p.m.
 Free Sweet Corn Served 5-10p.m.
 BBQ Chicken Dinners Served 5-10p.m.

- Carry outs available
- Serving chicken until 10 or until we run out

Free Entertainment on the Stage

Stage Sponsored by Pilot Grove Savings Bank

- 101.7 "The Bull" Sweet Corn Eating Contest, Open to All Ages 5-5:30p.m.
- Raeanne's School of Dance 5:30-6p.m.
- Paulette's Dance Studio 6-6:30p.m.

STAGE PERFORMANCE – Free Entertainment

Stage Sponsored by Pilot Grove Savings Bank

- Double Play 7-10p.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10TH

5K & 10K Run

Sponsored by FMCH

- Registration (Entry Fee) 6:45-7:30a.m.
- Run Begins in Front of the Main Stage 8-9a.m.
- Awards Ceremony 9:15a.m.

Horseshoe Doubles Tournament – Ages 16 & Over

Cash Prizes Awarded. Northeast Side of the Square

- Registration 9a.m.
- Tournament 10a.m.

Arts & Crafts in the Park 11a.m.-10p.m.

Free Sweet Corn Served 11a.m.-10p.m.

BBQ Chicken Dinners Served 11a.m.-10p.m.

- Carry outs available
- Serving chicken until 10 or until we run out

Pee Wee Drags in Front of the Stage – Ages 3-6

No Entry Fee. Trophies to 1st-3rd Places
 Candy & Ribbons to All Participants

- Registration 10:30a.m.-11a.m.
- Races 11a.m.-1p.m.

Carnival Noon to Midnight

Junior Water Fights – Ages 7-12

No Entry Fee. In Front of the Stage. Ride Tickets to All Winners

- Registration 12:30p.m.-1p.m.
- Water Fights 1p.m.-2:30p.m.

Bath Tub Races – Must Be 18 to Enter

\$30 Entry Fee. Teams of 3. In Front of the Stage

- Registration 2p.m.-2:30p.m.
- Races Begin at 2:30p.m.

STAGE PERFORMANCE – Free Entertainment

Stage Sponsored by Pilot Grove Savings Bank

- Andy & The Decades 7p.m.-10p.m.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11TH

Free Sweet Corn Served 11a.m.-?

BBQ Chicken Dinners Served 11a.m.-?

- Carry outs available
- Serving chicken until we run out

Carnival 11:30a.m.-6p.m.

Arts & Crafts in the Park Noon-7p.m.

Sweet Corn Festival Parade Noon

Mini Garden Tractor Pull

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- Weigh In 1-2p.m.
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