



# Pen City Current

Wednesday, May 17, 2017 | 8 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 124

## BNSF shuts down majority of city crossovers

*Article on city site tells different story of notifications*

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - BNSF Railway Co., has closed all at-grade railroad crossings in Fort Madison from 6th Street up to 27th Street effective today.

The crossing at 2nd Street which is in front of the BNSF bridge to Illinois will also be closed according to signage in front of the bridge Tuesday morning. The bridge closure will begin Wednesday morning with reopening planned for Friday.

Larry Driscoll, Fort Madison's public works director said the railroad is making improvements to the crossings and has legal right to shut them during the repairs.

"They did notify us, but not of all the closings. Unfortunately its going to be a couple days. They're putting new ties in the middle and making a better approach for everyone," Driscoll said.

Driscoll said BNSF notified the city of all the closings except for 20th Street. He also said the 2nd Street crossing at Hwy 61 would be closed until Friday.

"The agreement was 2nd street is going to be closed 17th and 18th and open up the 19th. We requested they do a detour route with signage and I'm not sure that's been done yet."



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

There seems to be just a touch of confusion over notifications from BNSF Rail Co. as to the amount of time in closures the city will endure while repairs are being made to at-grade crossings from 2nd Street through 23rd Street. 27th Street is open for crossing.

## New utility tariff could change solar front

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A new metering system that's been put in place as part of an Iowa Utilities Board pilot program may have an impact on the future of solar projects.

The new program went into place at the beginning of May and restructures how Alliant Energy reimburses business and residences who produce energy from renewable sources such as solar or metering.

Anyone with energy producing solar cells or tiles was being reimbursed dollar for dollar by Alliant. Alliant would buy the energy at the same rate they were selling it to encourage the solar energy production. However many facilities have designed solar projects that create more energy than the business,



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Jenny Steffensmeier, owner and operator of Steffensmeier Welding & Mfg., speaks with Amy Van Beek, right, of Ideal Energy, about the solar industry as part of a visit by state officials last week.

industry, or residence uses, and that's where the metering is changing.

Justin Foss, a spokesman for Alliant Energy, said the company will continue to reimburse up to 100% of demand at the current rates, but any production over the peak

demand for any particular home or facility will be reimbursed at a rate more comparable to what the utility could buy the renewable energy for on the open market.

"We believe it makes sense to support customers who want to

generate their own energy," Foss said. "We also believe the other 99% want us to pay the lowest possible price for energy and we can buy renewable on the market for a fraction of the cost

See **TARIFFS**, page 8

## County tables new rural animal ordinance

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - Newly appointed Lee County Attorney Clinton Boddicker presented a proposed ordinance to Lee County Supervisors aimed at giving authorities more latitude with vicious animals.

At Tuesday's regular meeting of the board, Boddicker presented an ordinance that would give law enforcement more latitude to deal with vicious animals in unincorporated areas. The ordinance would require all animals to be licensed and tagged, and vaccinated against rabies. Any animals without proper collars and tags running wild in the unincorporated areas could be shot by law enforcement.

"The reason why I proposed an ordinance to you is the situation going on at the Powdertown area. There were two pit bulls out there that were attacking people and other animals in that area. We got some calls from residents out there about what can be done and the sheriff, as well, got some calls."

Boddicker said state code doesn't give counties a lot of guidance when it comes to companion animals wandering neighboring properties.

"It's unfortunate, according to state code, that we don't have a lot of options when it comes to a companion animal like that running free. They are limited, and have to do with whether or not the dog, for example, has rabies. If you have a dog out running around in the county without a collar or tag, a citizen can shoot that animal and the law enforcement has a duty to shoot the

See **ANIMALS**, page 3

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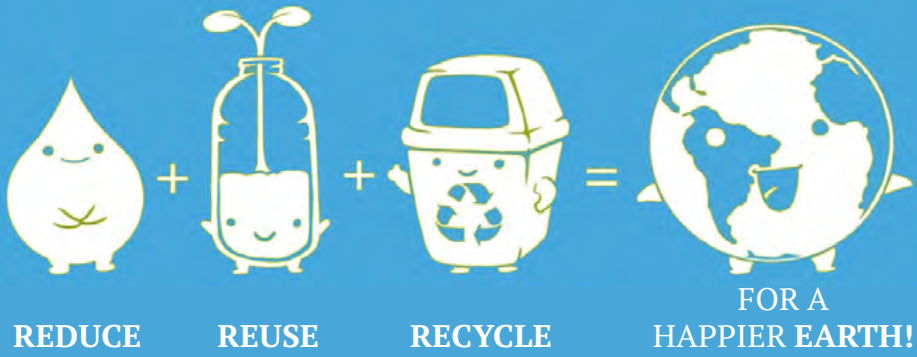
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## Guest Author

### Great River Regional Waste Authority reminds you to use the 3 R's!



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## REDUCE

#### \*Reduce the amount of waste produced in society

The best way to manage waste is to not produce it. This can be done by shopping carefully and being aware of a few guidelines.

- Buy durable goods & products in bulk
- Avoid over-packaged & disposable goods
- Use cloth napkins/towels instead of paper napkins/towels
- Make 2-sided copies whenever possible
- Maintain central files for multiple individuals
- Use electronic mail/communications or a central bulletin board

## REUSE

#### \* Reuse products for the same purpose or for a different purpose

It makes economic & environmental sense to reuse products. Sometimes it takes a creative mind to do so.

- Sell or Donate old clothes, appliances, toys & furniture
- Use resealable containers rather than plastic wrap
- Reuse grocery bags or bring your own cloth bags to the store

## RECYCLE

#### \* Recycle/convert common waste into reusable material

Recycling is a series of steps that takes a used material and processes, re-manufactures and sells it as a new product. Begin recycling at home and work.

- Recycle all acceptable products at our recycling bins, stations & trailers  
(see [www.grrwa.com](http://www.grrwa.com) for a complete list of locations)
- Check for curbside recycling acceptable items & schedules on your local city websites
- Purchase and use recycled materials for the home & office
- Implement a composting process for your lawn & garden

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## Burdened Souls – Jessica McPherson

*Editor's Note: It's our true pleasure to allow local writers to publish samples of their work on our platform. This is another submission from a local writer. Information on how to read more of the submission is included at the end of the segment. This invitation is open to all writing enthusiasts who are interested in having others read and possibly react to their work.*

BY JESSICA McPHERSON

Submitted article

Overview - Josilyn Michael moved back to New Orleans after a horrific attack at the hands of her husband. She didn't come looking for love, just a fresh start with old friends. Dillon has a past he isn't sure he can overcome and a lifestyle he wasn't ready to give up. When Josilyn was thrust into his arms, everything changed for them both. The attraction was undeniable and they questioned if love was possible. Can Josilyn overcome her fear and release her demons to give love a chance? Can Dillon overcome his past and leave a life behind, or will the past destroy his future? Can love heal their burdened souls?



McPHERSON

*Scene setting - Josilyn is sitting outside with her best friend and on the phone with her fiancé. Her phone had died and she's just getting messages.*

I got a funny feeling in my stomach again but couldn't find the source.

"You got quiet. What's wrong, love?"

"Nothing. Just had a funny feeling today. It's just my mind messing with me since you're not here. I think it's going to be a rough night."

"I'm sorry, love. Maybe Caleb will sleep with you."

"He already said he would. Can I call you before I go to sleep?"

"Of course. I'm going to jump in the shower and will be waiting to hear from you."

"I love you, Dillon."

"I love you, too, Josilyn."

"You two are adorable," Caleb said, standing up. "I'm going to find a movie and pop some popcorn. Sound good?"

"Yep. I'm just going to check my messages then I'll be in."

He nodded and went inside.

I had five voicemails and three text messages. The first two were from Dillon.

"Just landed call when I'm in the hotel."

"Just got your email. So, if your phone comes to life just know I love you so much."

The third was from my lawyer.

"Josilyn I tried calling. I left several messages please contact me as soon as possible it is urgent."

I quickly dialed my voicemail before calling him. The first two were reminders of my doctors' appointments. The next three were from him.

"Josilyn. It is very urgent that I speak with you. Please contact me."

"Josilyn. It's Mr. Collier again. Please call me as soon as you can."

"Josilyn. I can't go into details over a message. There's a chance you're in danger. Please call me."

I quickly dialed his number and he picked up on the first half-ring

"Josilyn thank goodness. I was afraid I was too late."

"Mr. Collier. What's going on?"

"Wade escaped."

I couldn't breathe as I sat there and listened to him. My world shattered instantly. I knew Wade was here.

"He faked being sick to get transferred to the hospital. They aren't sure how he got around security, but he did. They didn't contact me til this morning. He is believed to have escaped around midnight last night. I'm not sure if he'll come after you, but I have contacted your local authorities and they should be in contact with you. I'm surprised they haven't been already. We need to set you up with a bodyguard or security of some kind. I'm sorry, Josilyn."

"I'll call the authorities right now and let them know I'm home. Please keep me informed if you hear anything. Thank you for calling me, Mr. Collier."

I sat there trying to find the strength to dial the phone. I needed to call Dillon. He picked up on the first ring.

"Well that was fast," he said through laughter.

"Dillon," I said, panic coated my voice.

"Josilyn, wants wrong?" he said quickly. "Josilyn. Breathe. Tell me what's wrong."

I tried to contain my fear.

"Wade escaped custody. Dillon, I think he's already here. I think that's the funny feeling I've been getting."

"Call the police, love. I am booking the next flight home. Go in the house right now and lock the door. I am so sorry I left you."

"They are on the way. Dillon, I'm scared."

"I know, love, I know, but you need to do what I'm telling you. Set the alarm and don't open the doors for anyone but the police OK?"

"OK," I said, fully crying now.

"Josilyn, I'm gonna to hang up now. I'm going call a friend on the police force.

His name is Xiever Cabe. He will call you."

"Dillon, don't hang up."

"I have to call him. Go in the house with Caleb. Please, Josilyn."

The line went dead. I quickly jumped up from my seat and sprinted for the house. Caleb was at the door as I arrived. The look on my face must have told him everything.

"He's here. I know it," I manage to say.

"Go sit in the living room, I'll lock all the doors."

I sat on the couch shaking. The phone rang and I screamed.

"It's Dillon honey," Caleb said, handing me the phone.

"Josilyn," he said quietly. "Baby, speak to me."

"I'm here."

"I called Xiever. Your lawyer had already contacted

See **BURDENED**, page 3

## From the Front/For the Record

### Powdertown pit bulls spurred action

**ANIMALS** - Continued from Page 1

animal.” Boddicker said those conditions didn’t apply here because the two dogs in the Powdertown area had been vaccinated. The issue was the aggressive behavior. One of the dogs has been shot by a neighbor.

“The law allows someone to shoot the dog in that situation, but we want to do all we can to keep people from having target practice out in those unincorporated areas,” he said.

The ordinance being proposed is based on Story County and Linn County ordinances. Boddicker said he wasn’t leaning either way on the ordinances, but would go at the direction of the board.

Supervisor Ron Fedler said he wanted to have a bit more time to speak with his constituents.

“I would suggest that rather than having the

first reading this week, we table this for a week so we can talk with people,” Fedler said.

Pflug asked what the ordinance would do if he’s on a property and gets bitten by a dog and the landowner doesn’t claim the animal.

Boddicker said the ordinance wouldn’t interfere with any civil remedies that a person would have in that situation.

“That was one of the problems in Powdertown, I have angry residents call me and ask, ‘what can I do, what can I do’, and I’m on the other end of the phone saying you have civil remedies, and that doesn’t go very far with them.”

Supervisor Gary Folluo said the board should make phone calls and get out and speak with people and bring the information back to the board. He said it was his experience if they pass the first reading

people will pack the place after it’s already in the process.

“It’s going to be our obligation to go out and find the public input and then bring that back,” Fedler agreed.

In other action, the board also heard from Boddicker on whether or not to pass a stricter ordinance on the use of fireworks now that the state has passed a law allowing for the use of fireworks at certain times of the year including June through the week after July and around the New Year. Boddicker offered to draw up two resolutions, one in line with the state law and one with more strict language.

the board passed, 5-0, an amendment to the 2016-2017 fiscal year budget due to overages in several departments and some fund balance transfers.

### Local author available on Amazon

**BURDENED** - Continued from Page 2

them. A twenty-four hour security detail is coming over.”

“OK.”

“I’m on a 2 a.m. flight tonight. I’ll be home around 5:30 a.m. Please don’t leave the house.”

“I won’t. Please hurry home, Dillon.”

“I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

About the Author

Jessi McPherson is an author with Smoke and Mirrors Ink and lives in Fort Madison, a small town in southeast Iowa, but grew up a military brat, traveling all around with her family. She found writing at a young age and never stopped. She is the mother of two amazing teenagers and the wife of a very loving and supportive husband. She enjoys being outdoors when she isn’t working as a manager of a local bar and night club.

You can Pre-order Burdened Souls on Amazon to be release May 27th 2017 and follow her on any one of her pages for updates on her work at any of these links;

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jessi.mcpherson.79>

Author page: <https://www.facebook.com/Jessimcp/#>

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/Jessi\\_Mcp](https://twitter.com/Jessi_Mcp)

Website: <http://jessimcp10.wixsite.com/mysite>

Publisher: <http://www.smokeandmirrorsink.com/>



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Hot Lotto®	Wed & Sat	8:18 pm	9:40 pm
All or Nothing™ - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:45 pm
All or Nothing™ - Evening	Daily	8:00 pm	8:45 pm
Pick 3 - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:50 pm
Pick 3 - Evening	Daily	8:00 pm	8:50 pm
Pick 4 - Midday	Daily	Noon	12:50 pm
Pick 4 - Evening	Daily	8:00 pm	8:50 pm



5/16  
4 35 39 56 72  
Lucky Ball: 11  
Megaplier: 5



5/16 MID-DAY  
1 2 6 7 11 15  
16 17 18 19 22 23  
5/16 EVENING  
1 2 4 5 7 10  
11 12 14 18 21 23



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6 4 6  
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1 2 2



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5:25 p.m. – Girls 4x800 Meter Relay – Fort Madison – Section 1, Lane 10

## FRIDAY EVENTS

2:00 p.m. – Girls Shot Put – Brittiney Harris – Flight 2, 1st Throw  
3:00 p.m. – Girls Distance Medley – Section 2, Lane 2  
4:30 p.m. – Boys Shot Put – Elijah Barnes – Flight 1, 2nd Throw  
5:30 p.m. – Girls 400 Meter Hurdles – Brett Schneider – Section 2, Lane 2  
6:00 p.m. – Boys Distance Medley – Fort Madison – Section 1, Lane 3

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### WHEELCHAIR EVENTS

Saturday 10:00 a.m. – Boys Shot Put – Caleb Gehle – Flight 1, 3rd Throw  
Saturday 12:43 p.m. – Boys 100 Meter Run – Caleb Gehle – Section 1, Lane 7  
Saturday 1:50 p.m. – Boys 200 Meter Run – Caleb Gehle – Section 1, Lane 7

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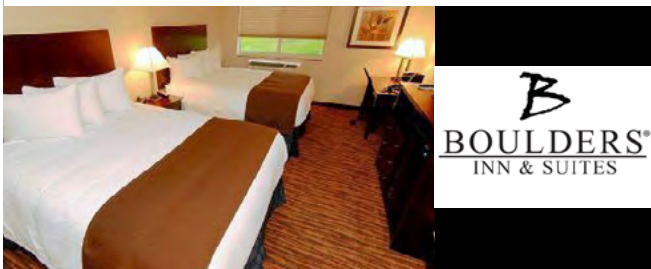


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## From the Front/Weather

# Providers say solar still a great option

**TARIFFS** - Continued from Page 1

of buying from a customer who installed the solar panels. We want to strike that balance of supporting those who want to generate energy, but not add extra costs on for all of our other customers.”

Foss said Alliant doesn't see the new program having a chilling effect on the renewable energy front. The process started four years ago when the Iowa Utilities Board wanted a study to look at what the

future of customer-owned electrical generation was going to look like. The study was aimed at how net-metering could be done in a way that balances the needs of customers, utilities, and renewable energy demands.

According to Foss, net metering is the process by which utilities purchase solar energy or renewable energy back from the customer when they generate it.

“When solar energy was just starting out, it was a simple and easy way to help support those who wanted to generate their own energy. For every unit of energy you produce, we would compensate you for a full unit of energy,” Foss said. “What's lost in the unit of energy that we sell it for, let's say 15 cents/kilowatt...the actual energy in that is around 3 cents, everything else, the other 12 cents, is cost of poles, wires, generation stations, crews that come out and fix it, their truck...all the other costs of doing business.”

“As the cost of solar energy has come down, it has made sense to reduce the amount of that subsidy as well. The IUB wanted to do a study and see how all that would work.”

Channing Congdon, director of design for Ideal Energy of Fairfield, said solar is still a pretty darned good deal even under the new metering tariffs, but the new program makes the program not quite as good as it was.

“It's disingenous to say it's not going to have a chilling effect,” he said.

“This is our frustration. We were at a point where the IUB was looking at ways to encourage renewable energy. They want us to see the value of that. A change that looks to make it a better deal to go to solar and this was the result,” Congdon said. Now you have a cap and you'll install less solar. It's being talked about one way and comes out on the other.”

He said the new program has a five-year horizon which he said was a long time on a growing industry.

“The main takeaway is the returns are reduced and the array of sizes we would do have been reduced,” said Amy Van Beek, who with husband Troy, founded Ideal Energy.

“For those looking to go for 100% offset, this program does make it difficult to do that. It's a much more complex system. Going off demand for homeowners, those are a lot more complex calculations in that formula and the demand may be in a pool with a load class from the utility.”

But Foss said Alliant went through and looked at their records as part of the IUB's request for new metering tariffs, and said most commercial projects are built to offset demand and not to create additional energy.

The plan will pay energy created over demand at about 2.5 cents per kilowatt hour compared to the full rate of about 15 cents. Foss said the additional 12 cents of the cost they normally charge is for trucks, poles, repairmen and other peripheral costs.



courtesy photo

Todd Schneider, owner of School House Apartments, talks with Lee County Economic Development Group CEO Joe Steil and Marketing manager Dana Millard, about the impact of solar energy on his property.

The pilot program is for 3-5 years and for the customers who've already made that investment we're gonna honor that program. We recognize those who made that investment under those terms, of course we are. He said the new program also offers a cash out option. Some customers who've sized their projects large enough to create more energy than they can use can opt to cash out of the program on a yearly basis.

### OTHER OPTIONS

“No matter how much they use, they never cash out of that bank. If you never can use enough energy to cash out the bank, that is of no value. Under the new tariffs we'll cash that out once a year,” Foss said.

But Congdon said it's more beneficial to customers to keep energy banked because energy needs can fluctuate from year to year depending on environmental and structural factors.

Van Beek said the new tariffs are, in fact, much better than the original proposals issues in February.

“When Alliant first released the first comments of the IUB in February, we would have had a very significant impact, but now they've released the second set, it looks like something we could work with,” she said.

Most residential projects don't go 100%. Typically they don't have enough roof space. It's definitely a case-by-case

net metering. Bottom line is, it's become much more complicated to understand. We're finding a way to make it work.”

Van Beek's husband is a former Navy SEAL and she said he believes that everyone should have the choice to do solar if they want.

“Alliant, obviously is not stopping them, just making it less viable,” she said.

Mike Mohrfeld of Mohrfeld Electric in Fort Madison said he doesn't see the new changes having that big of an impact.

“Under the new proposal, what we're seeing for a typical customer is it not having any negative impact,” said Mohrfeld. “Non-traditional buildings spike at different months., those are the customers it will have a greater impact on. Your traditional gas heat uses more electricity in the summer and your electric heat spikes in the winter and that's when solar isn't performing as well. These new tariffs follow a standard customer pretty well.”

Mohrfeld said at the end of the day, Alliant still probably has the best net metering system.

“We get stuck in the conversation way more than we should,” Mohrfeld said. “At the end of the day, we're trying to wipe out the energy bill and that can still happen. We're dwelling on a fractional thing. We think it's still a good net metering system, better than a lot of rurals.”

## 5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

Wed 17 May



Moderate Rain  
Low – 70.4° F | High – 71.1° F

Thur 18 May



Light Rain  
Low – 66.0° F | High – 82.3° F

Fri 19 May



Heavy Intensity Rain  
Low – 66.9° F | High – 77.9° F

Sat 20 May



Heavy Intensity Rain  
Low – 53.2° F | High – 62.8° F

Sun 21 May



Light Rain  
Low – 54.9° F | High – 62.4° F

[OpenWeatherMap](#)

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Lee Vandenberg, Sales manager  
319-371-4125  
[sales@pencitycurrent.com](mailto:sales@pencitycurrent.com)

Charles Vandenberg, Editor  
319-371-1670  
[editor@pencitycurrent.com](mailto:editor@pencitycurrent.com)



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