



Pen City Current

Wednesday, March 20, 2019 | 8 pages | Volume 3 • Issue 76

Baxter pulls funding over school bond

Founder of Baxter Foundation upset with school board

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR



BAXTER

FORT MADISON – A local foundation that donates thousands of dollars every year to local youth sports activities is pulling its funding in a protest of sorts against the proposed school bond issue. A letter released Monday night from

The Baxter Foundation alerted past and present recipients of funding from the Foundation that it will not be funding any further requests in 2019 due to the Fort Madison Community School District's decision to spend unnecessary amounts with an out-of-town construction firm for a new elementary school.

"Unfortunately, the School District elected to use an out-of-town firm to represent it in this year's bond election with little history of supporting local

youth athletics or the Sports Complex. Furthermore, the taxes imposed upon the payments to the selected firm will not benefit the Fort Madison Community School District, but will benefit another Iowa District... Since the School District has opted to disregard the plans presented by Baxter Construction, unnecessarily spend additional taxpayer money, and implement a program that does not benefit young athletes in the fashion proposed by Baxter Construction, the Foundation cannot continue to supplement the School District's efforts to grow its youth sports programs;

especially, when the District itself chose to ignore the presented plans and waste available financial resources."

The foundation was created more than 10 years ago by Tony and Cindy Baxter to help supplement costs for youth athletic programs in the local economy.

On Tuesday, Tony Baxter said it was time to take a stand.

"Am I upset because they didn't select my company? Yep," Baxter said. "I'm upset because they are wasting money and didn't select a local company."

See YOUTH, page 2

Council to look at NLCHS books

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – An error by North Lee County Historical Society has Fort Madison city officials demanding a look at the group's books.

At Tuesday's regular city council meeting, the council voted 4 to 1 with one abstention, to pay for an audit of the NLCHS books as a result of a \$20,000 filing error regarding the society's Battlefield Park project.

Fort Madison Councilman Rusty Andrews, who's also the NLCHS treasurer, told Pen City Current he forgot to file a non-profit statement with the county, which resulted in the group having to pay increased property taxes on the Battlefield Park just east of Dollar General near 4th Street and Avenue H.

"I failed to file a form



PCC file photo

The War of 1812 Battlefield Park in Fort Madison, shown here in 2017 prior to seeding, is at the center of a city probe into the North Lee County Historical Society's finances.

to the county stating NLCHS was a non-profit organization when they bought the battlefield site in 2015," Andrews said. I didn't file until 2017 when I got notice they owed taxes, therefore causing the NLCHS to pay two years taxes on the property."

Andrews said he at-

tempted to argue the case with the county in 2018 but didn't have success in getting the taxes forgiven. The NLCHS owed close to \$20,000 over the two-year period.

The property went to tax sale and the NLCHS decided to pay the taxes to cover the mistake. Andrews said

Tuesday night that payment had been made.

"There is no excuse for my untimely manner on doing the treasurer job for NLCHS. The Mayor and Chris Greenwald both called me out on my mistake and I admitted fault,"

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Resident wants jake brake signs moved

Azinger says current locations don't solve the problem

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE – A resident of Clearview Heights, just off the west city limits of Fort Madison, is upset with the locations the county used to post notice about its new jake break ordinance.

Mike Azinger told supervisors at Tuesday's regular Board of Supervisors' meeting that the current locations don't do anything to address the issues in their neighborhood.

"I see the signs are going up but they are not where we requested them being put," Azinger said.

"Where we really need one is at the exit of Hwy. 61 south where they are coming off the bypass, and on Hwy. 2."

Azinger said one of the signs is on Bluff Road which he said has no truck traffic.

County Engineer Ben Hull said Iowa Department of Transportation policy states signs for an ordinance like this are placed where traffic enters the jurisdiction.

"We basically followed suit choosing our locations the same way so we have placed them on paved roads on county entries and where traffic enters the county jurisdiction from Fort Madison or Keokuk," Hull said.

Hull said that way notice is served when you enter the county. He said they have not considered every

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From the Front

School board silent on Baxter's move to pull funding

YOUTH - Continued from Page 1

I'm upset because they didn't listen to the public the last time a \$30 million proposal was voted down. That's a big part of it. I know it can be built for a lot less money. There is a better program."

Baxter said he sincerely hopes a new school is built in Fort Madison, but he said he hopes the bond referendum on April 2 does not pass because there are less expensive ways to get the building built without wasting taxpayer money.

Pen City Current contacted Fort Madison School Board President Dr. Tim Wondra for comment on the letter. Wondra said he saw the letter Monday night, but said the district had no official comment on it.

Baxter said the foundation usually grants funding requests locally for anywhere from \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year.

The mission statement from the Baxter Foundation reads in part: "Founded in 2010 by Tony and Cindy Baxter, The Baxter Family Foundation was created with the goal of providing financial support to the youth athletic programs for all ages in the local community. The foundation assists local programs in many ways; it contributes monetarily to individual teams to help with costs of entry fees, uniforms, equipment, etc. It also grants funds to use for the creation or permanent betterment of athletic facilities, it can be a source of low/no interest loans for groups looking to raise money, and provide financial support to help further the athletic career of disadvantaged children."

Baxter said he and his wife created the foundation so that no child in the area would be left out due to the

inability to pay.

"You'd see parents every weekend during travel ball seasons talk about how expensive it was and we couldn't get a lot of youth to play," he said. "I wanted to help do something."

He said the foundation created a board, which includes local businessmen / women and school members. When the board was created, applications were taken and funding requests were reviewed and granted.

"I've never done this for glory. Never talked to the media about it. Avoided these editorials. But this is a let down. You try to do what you can for the youth of the community and the school does what they do to you."

He said the letter was to let people know why the funding wasn't available, because the district was going against its own mission statement.

Baxter also said he's upset that the district is still touting a \$30 million bond without the ballparks included. The ballparks were in the last attempt, which was also \$30 million. The difference in this bond is that additional traffic control systems are being included to alleviate past traffic concerns

"I'm just letting people know why we are not funding it. At some point people like me are going to stop donating. It's time to take a stand," he said.

Baxter said he also would have taken profits his company would gain from being the construction manager on the project and donate it to the Baxter Sports Complex to make those fields compatible with Iowa High School Athletic Association and the Iowa High School Girls Athletic Union specifications for high school play.

“

I'm just letting people know why we are not funding it. At some point people like me are going to stop donating. It's time to take a stand."

-Tony Baxter,
Baxter Construction

"I would have donated profits to the sports plex facility and we would have made those fields comply with requirements. They would have had their fields included, but they went a different direction," he said.

The district awarded the construction management contract to Carl A. Nelson in October on a tight 4-3 vote with Wondra and board members Carol Ross, Lois DiPrima, and former board member Gayla Young voting in favor of Nelson. Dianne Hope, Jarod Hotop, and Brian Steffensmeier voted for Baxter's proposal. Young passed away on January 1st and her seat was filled by Josh Wykert.

Baxter said at a minimum, the board needs to take a step back and rethink the program put together to build the new school.

"Keep Carl A Nelson, if you want, but come up with the right plan. This is more about the money and the community. I say take a deep breath and design a proper program. I wanted to delay the vote until later in the year so we didn't rush through something so important," he said.

The bond issue is set for an April 2 vote, but absentee voting is currently ongoing at the Lee County Auditor's office. Satellite voting will also take place on Friday from noon to 6 p.m. at the Fort Madison High School and from 7 a.m. to noon on March 29, at the Fort Madison Community Hospital.

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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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Obituaries/Current-Lee

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.

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.

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..

Murder Mystery Dinner Theater

The Fort Madison High School Music Department will be presenting its annual Dinner Theater on March 22-23. Doors open at 6 p.m with the show beginning at 7 p.m. Tickets available at Dana Bushong's at 805 Avenue G.

Caregivers Connection

The Kensington hosts this monthly gathering to help educate attendees about all dementia types. Held at noon the 4th Tuesday of every month in The Kensington's private dining room, 2210 Avenue H in Fort Madison. Call 319-372-4233 to RSVP or for more information.

Step into Iowa History

A presentation on prisoner of war camps in Iowa during World War 11 will be held on Tuesday, March 26, from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Fort Madison Public Library. Linda McCann will be presenting.

Senior Community BINGO

Each month on the second Wednesday of the month, The Kensington hosts Senior Community BINGO at 2 p.m. in their dining room at 2210 Avenue H in Fort Madison. All seniors are welcome and cash prizes are awarded.

Pen City Current will list your event in this highly visible CURRENT-LEE section in increments of 25 words for \$15. Add a photo for \$5. Non-profit organizations are eligible for the reduced rate of \$10 per 25 words and \$3 per photo. To place your listing, click here or call Lee at (319)371.4125.

OBITUARIES

KAREN LYNN MCCLELLAND

Karen Lynn McClelland, 64, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 9:05 a.m. on Tuesday, March 19, 2019 at Fort Madison Community Hospital. She was born on February 3, 1955 in Chicago, IL to Betty A. Miller. She was a homemaker and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. She loved to do puzzles, color, do crafts and watch horror movies.

Karen is survived by: 1-daughter: Penny Flores of Fort Madison, IA; 2-sons: Michael (Rosa) McClelland of Schereville, IN & Theodore Marks of Fort Madison, IA & 3-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her mother.

Cremation has been entrusted to the care of King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory and no services are planned. Online condolences to Karen's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report
03/18/19 – 9:15 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 5800 block of Avenue O.
03/18/19 – 11:15 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1800 block of Avenue L.
03/18/19 – 1:05 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a shoplifter in the 4800 block of Avenue O.
03/18/19 – 1:56 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the

2200 block of Avenue H.
03/18/19 – 3:22 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 900 block of 29th Street.
03/19/19 – 7:52 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a personal injury accident in the 3400 block of Avenue L.

Lee County Sheriff's report
03/19/19 – 2:00 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Joshua Lee Stark, 34, of Hamilton, Ill., at the Lee County Jail on a warrant

for theft in the 3rd degree. He was held in custody. Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

03/16/19 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to three medical calls and one burn permit.
03/17/19 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to two medical calls, one burn complaint, and one small oil spill.
03/18/19 – Fort Madison Firefighters responded to two medical calls.

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3 1 9
3/18 EVENING
9 3 9



3/18 MID-DAY
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3/18 EVENING
8 0 7 1

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From the Front/Weather

Back taxes paid on battlefield park

CITY - Continued from Page 1

he said. At Tuesday's meeting, Greenwald said Andrews is involved in a lot of projects for the betterment of the city and if he had to take blame, Greenwald wanted people aware of the good things Andrews does.

He said the money to pay the back taxes came from Federal Emergency Management Agency funds that were in a savings account from the

2008 flood. Andrews said because flood fighting and rebuilding efforts in 2008 were done by volunteers, those hours were able to be counted at a volunteer rate set by the state and reimbursed.

City Councilman Matt Mohrfeld said it's good practice for governmental bodies to ask for audits or audited financials from groups that it shares revenues with.

He made the motion for the audit, but included language that would allow the city to request audits for any entity receiving city funds. Greenwald seconded the motion. Councilman Bob Morawitz, who's a member of the NLCHS voted against the audit because he wanted other entities like Fort Madison Area Arts Association to be audited as part of the process.

Andrews abstained from the vote. Greenwald, Kevin Rink, Mohrfeld, and Mark

Lair all voted in favor of having the audit conducted.

Mayor Brad Randolph said the audit could cost the city between four and five thousand dollars.

Andrews said the city should be allowing private organizations to conduct their own business. Randolph said he disagreed that the society was a private business, considering the city has given the group almost \$200,000 since 2001 and \$70,000 in the past two years.

County took cues from IDOT

BRAKES - Continued from Page 1

location where there is an intersection or truck traffic.

Azinger said truck drivers in the county may not ever see the signs because they go from the fertilizer plant to other places in the county.

"It hasn't been terrible yet, but the liquid fertilizer has not started yet. That's when we get a lot of trucks. But these drivers will go from the fertilizer plant to Merschman's or Agrineed and won't ever see the signs," he said.

Azinger said the current posting locations won't help solve the problems the Clearview Heights neighborhood is experiencing. Those residents brought the issue to the board last fall.

Hull said it would be the state DOT that would make the determination of putting additional signs up. Hull said the DOT did not indicate they would be willing to put additional signage up.

He said he would request the signage to the state, but he wasn't sure if they would add signs.

Hull said it was reasonable to note that Fort Madison and Keokuk are entrance points to other states and maybe signage there would help. He said maybe something from the cities on roads where people are leaving their jurisdiction would be a better way to go.

"I would take that route rather than asking for a sign wherever we feel there is a problem," Hull said.

Azinger said they were looking for two signs.

"One coming off of Hwy. 61 and one coming down Hwy 2. That's what we're looking for," Azinger said.

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FRI 22 Mar



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High- 44.2° F | Low - 34.1° F

SAT 23 Mar



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High- 54.8° F | Low - 42.3° F

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*Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition
Sunday, March 24 & Monday, March 25, 2019
so our #PCCFamily can take a small spring break.
Breaking news will continue to be published
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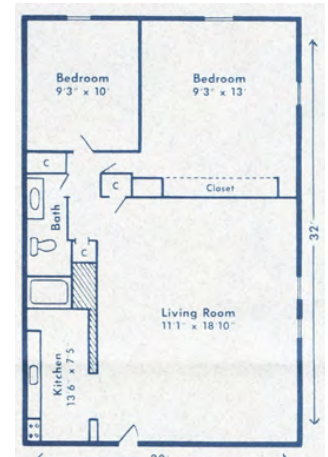
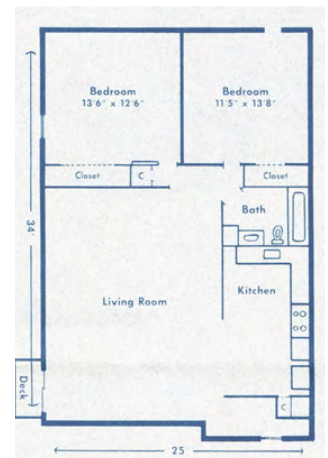
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Pen City current

Education Association gets behind school bond referendum

Dear Editor

On behalf of the Fort Madison Education Association I would like to encourage you to vote YES for a unified elementary school. There are many factors to take into consideration when voting. I would like to encourage you to educate yourself on the facts surrounding this issue. You can find updated, factual information on the FMCSO website (fmcsd.org).

Education is the most important gift that you can give to your child as it can help in developing character and enhance his or her academic abilities. By having the right kind of education, a child of today can achieve great mastery over a variety of areas in life that in turn can work towards personal and career success in the years to come. Quality education can impact the way your child works on his or her personal development while at the same time enhance mental and emotional skills.

The learning environment can impact students in

either a positive or negative way. A positive learning environment encourages: student confidence. high academic achievement. good social skills. positive relationships. ability to solve problems. willingness for trial and error and risk taking.

Student success is at the forefront of who our organization is and what our organization does. Obtaining a unified elementary will help meet the diverse needs of all of our learners. Students will gain instruction to help ensure success in the 21st century and help make the goals of college and career readiness a reality through their public education.

The Fort Madison Education Association – FMEA works to ensure our schools provide students with ample opportunities to succeed. Gaining a unified elementary school will ensure that the conditions in which students are learning is positive and leads to successes beyond the classroom. The learning environment would be designed to build opportunities for cooperative learning, group learning, and better meet the needs of every learner. Please watch a short video that highlights the direction of how learning will take place. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khzkNR-jsPBE>.

As you can see from the video, learning is no longer sitting in desks in rows with one teacher in the front of the classroom. Students travel between teachers with other students who are working on similar skills. Some students direct their own learning, while others

receive intensive support. The future of learning is not conducive to 100 year old buildings, students are limited by the facilities. As community members it is our job to provide the best education possible for the students of our community no matter if they are a son/daughter, grandchild, relative or neighbor.

A unified elementary school will help attract and retain high quality teachers. Quality teachers, beginning in preschool, can help to develop intellectual strength while at the same time work on emotional intelligence. This in turn can create a confident child who is capable of attaining success in anything that he or she does.

Please consider saying YES for our students. They deserve nothing less!

Please review the 5 ways you can vote and find the best time for you to exercise your right!

Go to the Auditor's office prior to April 2nd. You must request an absentee ballot form when you go.

Request an absentee ballot form and mail it to the Auditor's office. It must be postmarked by March 22nd.

March 22nd you may vote at the Fort Madison High School Media Center from 12:30 PM- 6:30 PM. You must request an absentee ballot form when you go.

March 29th you may vote at the Fort Madison Community Hospital Foggy Room from 7:00 AM – 2:30 PM. You must request an absentee ballot form when you go.

April 2nd – go to your voting site: Grace Bible Church in Wever, West Point Public Library or Fort Madison Public Library.

Sincerely,

Dawn Johnson,
FMEA President

Lee County Health Department Hospice Volunteer Training

April 2 - April 23, 2019
4 Tuesday Evenings
6:00pm-9:00pm
at LCHD office

No fee, Open to the public
To register call (319)372-5225 or
visit www.leecountyhd.org

You can make a difference!

LEE #3 John Bennett Drive, PO Box 1426, Fort Madison
CHD

You can't beat FREE!
Subscribe to #PCC today
Paid options also available.



Clean Home. Clean Planet.

*Do your part during this year's Spring Cleaning activities
by making sure you're choosing products safe for our planet.*

Here are just a few of the ways you can help:

- Properly dispose of your household hazardous waste materials, construction debris, & electronic waste
- Use environmentally-safe cleaning products
- Reduce • Reuse • Recycle
- Check our website for proper disposal methods, acceptable materials, & more

This year, do your part to keep our environment clean, too!



Ft. Madison Main Office:
2092 303rd Ave
Fort Madison, IA
1-319-372-6140

Keokuk Transfer Station:
111 Carbide Lane
Keokuk, IA
1-319-524-6175

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