



# Pen City Current

Sunday, January 22, 2017 | 5 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 28

## LCEDG addresses county funding concerns

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

### Addressing the board

Lee County Economic Development Group Operations Director Dennis Fraise, standing, makes a presentation to the Lee County Board of Supervisors on Friday. The supervisors asked the board for the meeting to discuss how taxpayer funds are being allocated by the group.

contributing money, and some people question that if you had that good fundraiser why is taxpayer support still needed," Larkin said.

Steil said the fundraiser Larkin was referring to was Campaign 2018, a five-year capital infusion campaign from the private sector.

"The funding from that 5-year campaign through 2018 is about \$200,000/year and the county is

funding at \$210,000. As far as I'm aware with LCEDG, at least two separate times there was a step back in funding from the county and where we're at today is about half of what that once was. Things are more expensive, so we've replaced those funds with those fundraisers and the county wasn't raising their contributions."

Supervisor Matt Pflug said initially the county was in for close to

\$400,000 when the group was first formed with Lowell Junkins at the helm.

Fraise addressed the steps LCEDG is taking to make sure any RFPs (Request for Proposals) from industries and businesses looking to this part of the state are handled properly.

"Almost all of our major leads come from the state, so we've worked diligently to improve how we handle those RFPs," he said.

"We work very hard to make sure we have all that material ready to go."

He referred to what's called a reciprocal agreement with Henry and Des Moines counties where all the counties work together to make sure the three counties are helping each other market as one entity to try and meet more of the needs of inquiring businesses. One county may have an asset

See **FUNDING**, page 2

## Backfill issue takes agenda at luncheon

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Area state legislators were on hand Monday at The Palms to discuss a wide-range of issues in front of close to 30 residents.

State Rep. Jerry Kearns (D-Keokuk), State Sen. Rich Taylor (D-Mt. Pleasant) and State Rep. Dave Heaton (R-Mt. Pleasant) answered questions ranging from education funding and health benefits to small business assistance and targeted economic development efforts. But the discussion quickly changed to backfills the state told local taxing authorities they would fund to offset various tax credits.

The backfills have become a point of contention in the recent days

See **BACKFILL** page 2

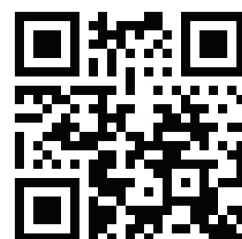
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Photos by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC Editor

### The King, Queen and Court

At left, HTC Homecoming King Ben Tinguely and Queen Ali Randolph are announced to the fans at Shottenkirk Gymnasium Friday night. Above is the court, from left to right, Alex Bentler, Connor Conrad, Connor Hellweg, Josh Pieper, Nick Pothitakis, Ben Tinguely, Ali Randolph, Maggie Walker, Avery Malinski, Danielle Scheetz, Lillian Schierbrock, and Shianne Moeller.

**From the Front/Local News**

*Farewell Gary!*



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

**Bidding farewell**

The Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Club gathered to wish Gary Pilkington and Bonnie (not pictured) the best in their impending retirement. The store will close its doors this month after 25 years in business.

*“Give us senior privileges”*



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

**Senior skit**

Seniors Alex Bentler and Ben Tinguely performed a skit Friday during the Homecoming festivities at Holy Trinity Catholic High School. The pair took the opportunity to petition the administration, in song, for the return of their senior privileges.

**LCEDG: 80% of future growth to come from existing business**

**FUNDING** - Continued from Page 1

a company is looking for when others don't and that communication is made among the representatives of each county.

“I get emails and phone calls from Tim Gobble (Executive Director of Fort Madison Partners) and he funnels a lot of economic development work so I know those calls are being made,” said Matt Morris, a director on the LCEDG board. Morris is also President and CEO at Connection Bank.

Fraise also outlined current expenditures for the first half of the current fiscal year.

“Not including wages right now we're spending 46% on workforce (development), 32% on business attraction, 13% on marketing and 9% on BRE (Business retention and expansion),” Fraise said. “When you figure in wages attraction goes to 48%, workforce is 23%, BRE is 19% and marketing is 10%.”

“I think it's very important that we have skin in the game. I think it's important that we don't interrupt that \$210,000 and I think that is very reasonable,” Pflug said.

Supervisor Ron Fedler asked if the LCEDG staff and board thought at some point the group could be self-sufficient.

“When we first started, the goal was for it -at some

point- to be self-sustaining and tax payer money wouldn't go in,” Fedler said. “At what point would you say it would be self-sustaining without tax payer dollars? We would still help with places like AmJet, because that brings more money into the county, but when would it be self-sustaining?”

Morris said one of the reasons his bank's board decided to be involved in the capital campaign was because local governments were vested as well.

“You know its one of the reasons we as a bank made a commitment to their capital campaign because they are focused on how they are using those resources. But another thing is that the county is involved. Personally I feel really good about where it is going. I mean let's be transparent, I was pretty vocal 5-7 years ago about the direction it was going, but I've changed my tune and I like the direction it's going.”

Fraise referred to Iowa officials including Gov. Terry Branstad, Lt. Gov. Kim Reynolds and Iowa Economic Development Authority Director Debi Durham who have all indicated in speeches, platforms and programming that 80% of Iowa's future economic growth will come from expanding Iowa industries.

“We think it's very important to pay close attention to

that,” he said.

Supervisor Gary Folluo said the county should be invested in its economic health in one way or another. But he said expansion over attraction comes with a price.

“I think we should always be invested in economic development. To what degree is based on the board's direction,” Gary Folluo said.

“One of the problems we run into is when a new industry comes in they cannibalize current workers. What is going on with the rapid response team and how do you see that working? The LCEDG is growing and I like the way it's going, but I'd like to hear more about the rapid response team.”

Fraise said LCEDG is currently working on a rapid response team from members of the Fort Madison Economic Development Corp. and The Keokuk Economic Development Corp. to react quickly to RFPs because he says inquiries are getting shorter time frames and potential investors want information in a matter of days and not weeks.

“You guys truly have a plan here and that's what I'm really looking at. Everything you have here on the table today makes sense,” Pflug said.

**Rep. Heaton says cities taking advantage of backfill program**

**BACKFILL** - Continued from Page 1

*Legislator says the numbers don't add up on state's backfill program*

since Gov. Terry Branstad outlined his proposed 2017-2018 budget.

“Couple years ago we passed commercial property tax realignment so every business every industry and commercial establishment did realize a tax benefit from that and it was considerable.” Kearns said. “We do have

a backfill on that and the state replaces taxes lost on the taxing authority.



TAYLOR

There's been some indication that they may be part of the cuts this year. I hope that's not the

case. The cities and towns still have to give the break to the commercial owners, but it would come out of their own kitty.”

Heaton said it is true that part of budget reduction talks include possibly taking money away from the backfill authorizations, but he said he doesn't think it will make it into the final appropri-

ations. But he said most towns are at or above the taxing levels they were at



KEARNS

previous to the backfill authorizations.

“There's about \$127 million involved in property tax backfill and there was a discussion to take about \$29 million and apply that to appropriation bills,” Heaton said. “I've seen the run on the city's on how the backfill has effected the cities. I could only find one town that was below 100% in property tax revenue compared to where it was when we applied

the tax relief. Most cities/towns were between 108-110% of valuation to the point from where we provided the relief til today.”



HEATON

“I'm sorry but it looks like cities

through valuations have been raising values, and the state money is used in addition to the increased revenue they're taking it in. When we look at backfills, sometimes we think, ‘Wait a minute, are we just paying money to cities to operate in addition to the money they are taking in?’” Heaton said. “I thought we were help-

ing displace some of the money they were losing. So it gets kind of confusing how we approach it. I don't think it will be in the final appropriation but I just wanted to show you what I've seen and how the cities took advantage of that.”

Taylor said Heaton's numbers were correct with a few exceptions.

“Those numbers are correct, but that doesn't include multi-family or any mechanism for inflation,” he said “The city's are still taking a hit on that and the main reason I signed on was a three-year projection that new business would make up that revenue and if that

was the case we'd be fine, but that didn't happen.”

Kearns said if the state backs out of the backfill program, it would be failing the residents and the taxing authorities of the state.

“We promised we'd do that. The state promised we'd make that up and if we don't, we broke our promise,” Kearns said.

We've been a little lax on that in the past with homestead and military exemptions and we're supposed to replace that too, but we don't. Regardless of how well they may be doing or how the economy may improve we said we would do that and if we don't we've failed.”

**Sports**

# Hopper's 21 paces new-look Crusaders

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Holy Trinity keeps finding ways to win, even without starting point guard Connor Conrad.

The HTC Crusaders have found a chemistry with a bigger lineup as they won their second game in a row and four of their last five as they downed visiting Southeast Iowa Superconference foe

Cardinal of Eldon 63-30 Friday during Homecoming at Shottenkirk Gymnasium. The Crusaders dropped, then 11-1, West Burlington on Tuesday.

It's also the fifth game HTC hasn't had a point from Conrad who was leading the conference in scoring when he injured his knee in the first minute of the team's Jan. 10 game at Van Buren.

"I just don't want to take a chance and do further damage," Conrad said before the game.

"We've got some big games coming up and I want to be ready for those."

But the Crusaders have stitched the gap by moving senior Cory Hopper to the point guard, or 1 position and have been running with a bigger lineup, which has been paying dividends for Head Coach John Hellige. Hopper scored 20 points or more in the past two games and is second in the conference in scoring

at 17.2 points per game.

"We went with our bigger lineup again. Having two 6'7" guys in there kind of helps with the scoring and rebounding," he said.

Hellige is referring to seniors Bailey Merschman and Jack Stinson who take up a lot of room in the middle and keep balls alive and in play.

"I gotta give a big shout out to Jack Stinson. He comes and plays with a lot of energy and really keeps the team energized."

HTC rushed out to a 21-9 first quarter playing an up tempo game that has led to many early leads for the Crusaders. They then held Cardinal to just five second half points playing a stingy matchup zone for most of the half and getting a lot of turnover points off a full court press that Hellige engaged for most of the half.

Holy Trinity pushed the lead to 29 points by the end of the third period and Hellige was freely



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

## Uh-oh

HTC senior Cory Hopper goes in with the left hand but gets a right hand from a Cardinal defender in the process. Hopper scored 21 to lead the Crusaders to a 63-30 win Friday.

substituting and had emptied the bench three minutes into the fourth quarter sprinkling fresh-

men and sophomores in with the veteran players.

See HTC, page 2

## Lady Crusaders blow out Cardinal

**BY CHUCK VANDENBERG**  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Most head coaches will utilize a box-and-one defense to help stop a prolific scorer. The box plays zone and the one chases the scorer all over the place.



JOHNSON

But Holy Trinity girls Head Coach Tony Johnson benefitted in Friday's lopsided 72-18 win over Cardinal of Eldon from a different type of Box and 1.

The Box, being sophomore Emily Box, and the "1" being senior Ali Randolph. The two combined for 33 of HTC's points, 26 in the first half when the Lady Crusaders had the Southeast Iowa Superconference game well in hand.

Randolph is the team's leading scorer averaging about 15 points a game and even connected on a rare 3-pointer in Friday's game. She finished with 19 points, 16 in the first half. The senior gets most of her points off turnovers in transition and is pesky in the full-court

See BLOWOUT, page 4

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**Sports**

**Lady Crusaders throw 72 on Cardinal**

**BLOWOUT** - Continued from Page 3

press.

Box, who struggled at the beginning of the season getting her bearings in the lane is quickly becoming one of the conference's top post players and is averaging double figures over the past four games. She finished with 14 on the night, 10 in the first half.

"The last four or five she's had double figures and improved rebounding. We really worked hard with her over Christmas and that's helping," Johnson said.

HTC almost held Cardinal scoreless in the first quarter until Jamie White



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

**Freshman power**

HTC's Avery Hopper (4) takes the ball inside in Friday's game vs. Cardinal. The 72-point output was the highest by Holy Trinity this year, beating the previous best by 10 points.

connected on a couple free throws with 20 seconds left in the quarter with HTC up 22-2. The second quarter was much of the same as Cardinal only managed eight points in the 2nd quarter while the Lady Crusaders pushed their lead to 48-10, by far the highest first half production of the season.

The second half was a much more balanced

scoring attack as Johnson emptied the bench often as everyone on the team scored in the game.

But Johnson said despite the lopsided win, the girls still have things to work on.

"We only made 9 of 26 free throws and we have to do better than that," Johnson said.

"We did foul too much, but part of that was a new press we put in and the

girls we're just too aggressive with it."

Rounding out the scoring for HTC was Ashlyn Haas with 8, Avery Hopper with 7, Taylor Boeding with 6 (yep... two 3-pointers), Samantha Hoenig and Madison Mohrfeld each had 4, Brett Schneider had 3 and Mya Lawlor and Maggie Walker each had two.

HTC improve to .500 on the season at 8-8 and



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

**From behind**

HTC's Samantha Hoenig (10) plays straight up defense while Maggie Walker (15) sneaks in from behind and snuffs Cardinal of Eldon's Maddie Cloke. The Lady Crusaders downed Cardinal 72-18.

travels to Central Lee, who stands atop the loop at 12-2, on Tuesday. The Lady Hawks sophomore MacKenzie Northrup is second in the conference in scoring at just under 18 points per game.

"We gotta to keep the

Northrup girl out of the lane. Last time we were close," Johnson said. "We were down close to 30 and we got it back to nine. So we know what we're doing we just gotta play it smart."

**“**  
*We did foul too much, but part of that was a new press we put in and the girls were just too aggressive with it.*

-Tony Johnson,  
HTC Head Coach

*Weakley inducted*



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

**Hall of famer**

Fort Madison wrestling standout Russell Weakley was inducted in the FMHS Hall of Fame Thursday. Pictured with Weakley is Jenny Steffensmeier and Duane Sherwood, members of the Hall of Fame selection committee. Congratulations, Rusty!

*HTC frosh getting time*

**HTC** - Continued from Page 3

"We need to continue to get those guys minutes, we are a very senior-heavy team this year.

HTC moves to 8-6 on the season and has a busy three-game week coming up with non-conference home games Monday vs. Mediapolis and Friday vs. perennial powerhouse Danville, who shut the Crusaders down 46-68 on Jan. 16. The Crusaders, who stand in fourth place in the conference also travel to Central Lee for a conference game on Tuesday night.

The word is still out on when Conrad will return, but Hellige said last week he'd take a 75% Conrad over most players at 100%. And with Hopper playing well at the point, Hellige said he may look at some changes there.

Hopper said he just plays where he's told and tries to help the team win anyway he can.

"I get a little nervous

running point, because I hadn't done it before," Hopper said after the game.

"When Connor's in he'll get that rebound and then we can get it to the wings and we can run, but Cory has been playing very well at one so that's something to think about."

With Stinson and Merschman seeing steady action and helping control the inside game, Hellige has plenty of options in the back court. A circumstance he'll welcome with just six games remaining in regular season play.

Rounding out the scoring for the Crusaders, Hopper led the team with 21 points followed by Merschman with 11, including two first-half 3-pointers, Nick Pothitakis with 8, Stinson with 7, Connor Hellweg with 5, Milo Orton had four, and Homecoming King Ben Tinguely added 3.

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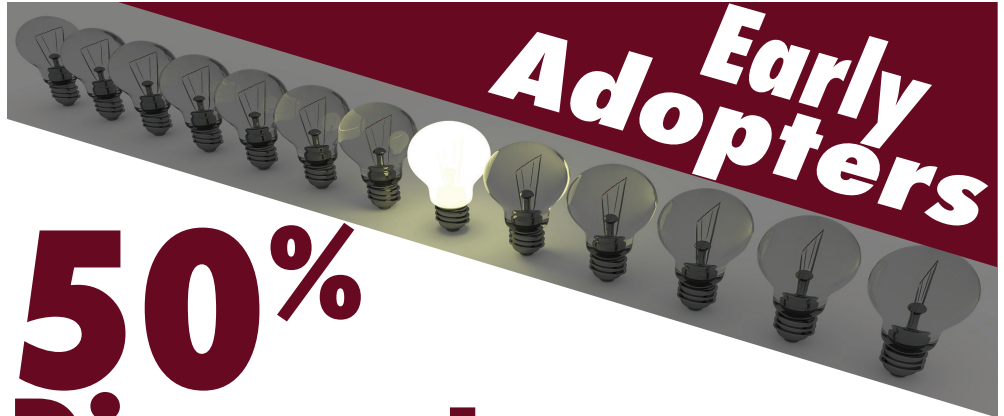
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Agenda  
Tuesday, January 24,  
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Convening Time:  
9:00 a.m.  
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AGENDA  
Pledge of Allegiance  
Approve Agenda  
Approve Tuesday,

January 17, 2016 Board Minutes  
Consider Approval of Claims  
Public Input  
Consider Approval of Resolution Approving Credit Card Limits for Sheriffs Office Employees  
Canvass the Green Bay Drainage District Election  
Consider Approval of Tax Abatement Resolutions (10)  
Consider Approval of Personnel Actions

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