



# Pen City Current

Friday, March 3, 2017 | 8 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 63

## Fox Theatre ready for action Friday

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Well...it's been Face-booked....talked about... published, and gawked at, but tomorrow it becomes a reality. The Fox Theater on Avenue G in the Main Street district of downtown Fort Madison is opening for business with its first movie in close to four years.

Hugh Jackman's X-men franchise continues with "Logan" on one side of the Fox Theater while "Lego Batman" will be played on the other. Tickets are \$8 for adults which includes popcorn and a soda and \$6 for children beginning at 7 p.m. Friday.

Jeff Eisentraut, owner and operator of Eisentraut Theatres, the management firm operating the theater for Mark and Matt Hughes of Hillsboro, Illinois said the process



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

### The final touches

Mark Hughes, left, helps get the lobby prepared on Thursday in anticipation of Friday's opening of the Fox Theater. At right, Maddie and Chris Swed, the managers of the new theater check on the progress.

has been long and winding but he's happy to see the theater ready to roll and is looking forward to earning the business of moviegoers in the area.

The Hughes brothers are former MMA competitors and have purchased

and rehabbed five theaters in Iowa and Illinois in partnership with the Eisentraut family.

Mark Hughes, who has owned a construction company, was at the theater on Thursday rolling up his sleeves and helping

get the lobby area ready for patrons on Friday. His first venture into the theater business was in his own hometown.

"We'd always had a theater there, but it was managed poorly. Now this will end up being like a

meeting place or gathering place, when you walk in the door you're always going to see people you know," he said Thursday.

Eisentraut said the digital movie industry kind of pushed the smaller markets out, but now things have evened out and the cost of showing the digital films is more competitive and he's seeing markets like this get back in the game.

"This market can support a theater. It's big enough and things are different in the industry now than they were even five years ago. With the advent of digital projection, movies are now more available to markets like this than they were," he said. "You used to have to strike a 35-millimeter print that cost a lot of money to do. While digital projectors are very expensive and the initial expense is greater the business plan is better. Because movie companies

can now produce for a few hundred dollars what used to cost \$1,500. At \$1,500 you don't make that decision to go into this size market until the larger markets have played it."

Eisentraut said they've put a substantial amount of money into refurbishing the theater, but was very quick to say that former owners Larry and Trudy Wright did a wonderful job maintaining the building.

"Larry did a very very good job of maintaining the basic structure of this building. The foundational things are very good. The roof is in great shape, the basement has been completely cleaned and sealed..the HVAC systems are in great shape," Eisentraut said. "We can take care of the little things, lighting issues, things like that. This theater was

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## Minimum wage group wants clarification on draft

City officials weigh in on proposed increase in county

BY CHUCK  
VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - A proposal to push the county's minimum wage is on hold as a committee gets additional information from the Lee County Attorney's office on a draft ordinance.

Robert Cale, a committee member on a panel

that has been discussing proposing an increase in the Lee County minimum wage, had submitted a draft ordinance to Lee County Attorney Ross Braden for his review. The committee was then to submit the ordinance to the Lee County Board of Supervisors for action.

The committee got hung up on the youth employees and said Ross

indicated the committee needs to include more intent language in the ordinance. Polk County's ordinance provides 85% of the minimum wage for employees between the ages of 14 and 17 which would be \$6.97/hour. Cale suggested that the committee remove the language on youth employees all together.

Supervisor Don Hunold who sits on the committee said he wanted to have Braden take another look at the youth language to



HUNOLD

get further clarification. Hunold said it was his intention to have the ordinance ready for the Supervisors at their regular meeting Tuesday morning. However, he said he didn't know when Braden would be available to discuss the language.

"I guess when we talk to Ross, I'm ok striking (the youth wage) or adjusting

it percentage-wise to what our minimum wage is. My take and I may be wrong is that he's (Braden) not comfortable with the language there because we open ourselves up to a little debate there because of creating a different class of employee," Cale said.

Cale said he would rather see the ordinance expedited because there is a bill in the Iowa House of Representatives that could potentially remove the local government's ability to set their own minimum

wages.

"We're not going to give up on it. Even if they do pass a law lowering the wage, we'll have our foot in the door for some legal grounds. If we don't we'll have nothing. If Branstad makes a decision it will be detrimental to our committee. We know Tom (Marion)'s opinion that he's in favor of it, but the Iowa legislature hasn't introduce a bill to increase the minimum wage, but

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## Local News/Obituaries

### OBITUARIES

# CLOTILDA "TILLIE" STEFFENSMEIER

Clotilda "Tillie" Steffensmeier, 89 years, of Houghton, Iowa died Wednesday morning March 1, 2017 at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa. Tillie was born July 17, 1927 near St. Paul, Iowa, a daughter of Edward and Ida (Holtkamp) Kruse. On November 11, 1950, she married Ernest "Ernie" F. Steffensmeier at St. Paul, Iowa. He preceded her in death July 6, 2007.

Tillie attended St. James School in St. Paul, Iowa. She was a farmer's wife and mother. She was a member of St. John's Catholic Church in Houghton. She enjoyed playing cards, sewing, crafts, painting, and baking with grandchildren. She was proud of her children and grandchildren, and followed them with their sports and education.

She is survived by seven sons: Chris (Mary) Steffensmeier, of Salem, Iowa; Ernest Jr. (Annette) Steffensmeier, of Fort Madison, Iowa; Gordon (Kathy) Steffensmeier, of Corvallis, Oregon; Craig (Jeanine) Steffensmeier, of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa; Glenn (Ann) Steffensmeier, of Hillsboro, Iowa; Douglas (Diane) Steffensmeier, of West Point, Iowa; and Gary (Margaret) Steffensmeier, of Farmington, Iowa; four daughters: Deborah (Ron) Becker, of Wever, Iowa; Michelle (Ted) Wenke, of Douds, Iowa; Brenda (Dave) Meierotto, of West Point, Iowa; and Colleen (Todd) Holder, of Raleigh, North Carolina; one daughter-in-law, Jennifer Steffensmeier, of Fort Madison, Iowa; one brother, Sylvester (Thelma) Kruse, of Hillsboro, Iowa; two sisters, Marcella Moore, of Fort Madison, Iowa and Agnes Stukerjurgan, of St. Paul, Iowa; 43 grandchildren, 28 great grandchildren, numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, one daughter Melanie Steffensmeier, one son Ben Steffensmeier, four brothers: Lawrence, Wilfred, Joseph, and Albert Kruse; four sisters: Helen Schinstock, Gertrude Kruse, Cecelia Klesner, and Edna Kruse; and one great granddaughter, Adrianna Wanat.

A Rosary will be recited at 3:00 pm Monday, March 6, 2017 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Houghton, Iowa. Visitation will be held from 5:30 - 7:30 pm Monday evening at the church with the Christian Vigil Service to be held at 7:00 pm during visitation. Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10:30 am Tuesday, March 7, 2017 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Houghton, Iowa with Reverend Bruce DeRammelaere, as Celebrant. Burial will be at St. John's Cemetery, Houghton, Iowa. A memorial has been established, contributions may be left during the listed services or mailed to the Barr-Holtkamp Funeral Home and Cremation Services, P.O. Box 247, West Point, Iowa 52656. Online condolences to the Steffensmeier Family may be made at the Barr-Holtkamp Funeral Home and Cremation Services website, [www.barrholtkampfuneralhome.com](http://www.barrholtkampfuneralhome.com). Barr-Holtkamp Funeral Home and Cremation Services is in charge of the arrangements.

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Lee Vandenberg, Sales manager  
319-371-4125  
sales@pencitycurrent.com

Charles Vandenberg, Editor  
319-371-1670  
editor@pencitycurrent.com



Pen City Current  
P.O. Box 366  
Fort Madison, IA

## Your local theater is back starting Friday night

### MOVIES - Continued from Page 1

in great shape in most aspects. We were able to walk in and take care of some things and anything we have retained has been cleaned and shampooed. We were able to keep the seats in the east theater."

Other seating was brought in from the old Dallas Cowboys stadium and are in place in the west theater.

He said the company is currently looking at three other communities larger than Fort Madison to expand in.

"People are starting to read and look at markets. We're currently looking at three other towns bigger than Fort Madison and they don't have a theater and we're actually thinking of building in those towns. We don't want to see the industry cannibalized by the mega plexes 20 to 30 miles away from communities like this," he said.

"It's the same quality and in some aspects even better because of the size. What you see here is every bit as good. We use the same equipment..in some cases we're even better because we can do more with the sound. These seats have great acoustics, we've used acoustic fabric on the walls and we think the sound is every bit as good as anything you'll find."

"In our Hillsboro

**"It's the same quality and in some aspects better because of the size."**

**-Jeff Eisentraut  
Eisentraut theatres**

location it was a similar situation. A twin theater, old theater, and the town pretty much believed it couldn't work. We plan to earn the customers one at a time. This is our fifth time we've done this. They're going to see the value in it, the quality in the movie, the quality in the popcorn and the snacks. We'll win them over."

Now he says it's time to start competing for business and introduce Fort Madison to its new theater.

"From our perspective our company is very good at operating movie theaters. We can go in and create markets where the market has stopped producing. The advent of digital meant a lot of markets closed, and now it washes out and you can see where the markets can survive. Let's all compete for the business."

The management team of Chris and Maddie

Swed will be living on the property and said they too think the theater will help give a boost to Fort Madison's Main Street.

Hughes said it was Chris that got the ball rolling with the theater.

"He was up here visiting some people and told us it was for sale. He said we should get it," Hughes said.

Eisentraut said Swed

was with him at an auction and made a commitment that, if they bought the Fox, he would come up and manage it.

"I'll have a management team right here on top of it. Literally these two will be living right up stairs."

Maddie said movies will be held Thursday and Friday beginning at 7 p.m. and matinees on Saturday and Sunday.



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From the Front/Classifieds

# House pulls \$9.06 minimum wage from bill

**WAGES** - Continued from Page 1

one that would actually decrease the wage of 65,000 workers in these counties that have raised it," Cale said.

The bill is House File 295, which prevents a city or county government from approving any language that sets a different minimum wage than the state's.

The bill, which started as House Study Bill 92, had a minimum wage set at 25% above the Jan. 1, 2017 federal minimum wage which was \$7.25/hour, which calculates to \$9.06/hour. That specific language was removed when the study bill transitioned to the House File.

The language of the bill reads, "a city or county shall not adopt, enforce or otherwise administer an ordinance, motion, resolution or amendment providing for any terms or conditions of employment that exceed or conflict with the requirements of federal or state law relating to a minimum or living wage rate, any form of employment leave, hiring practices, employment benefits, scheduling practices or other terms or conditions of employment."

Supervisor Matt Pflug who has been part of the committee's work wasn't at the meeting Wednesday night but was in favor of the rate at previous meetings.

State Sen. Rich Taylor (D-Mt. Pleasant) said he believes the bill did make it out of committee and is still in play in the House.

"I think that's just crazy, I believe everyone should have a minimum state wage. If you want to go over that you should be able to. If you want to raise it you should be able to do that because the competition is greater

in some areas than others. We've got that thing called Home Rule, we're supposed to be able to make those decisions."

Taylor said Home Rule will still be intact, but it's certainly jeopardized by the bill.

"Home rule will still be there but what they are doing is picking away at it. For four years anything we did that took anything away from local rule the Republicans would say, "Oh the heavy hand of government." Now they seem to be just fine with it," Taylor said.

If the recommendation were to pass the county, cities and local governments within the county could take action on their own.

Fort Madison City Councilman Kevin Rink said the issue is touchy.

"It's gonna be hard for some employers. We have to ask ourselves if we really understand the need and will we gain jobs and will it do anything to boost the economy."

Rink also pointed to automation reducing the number of employees, as well as possible price hikes to compensate for the increased wages.

"I was at Sam's this weekend and there were self checkouts. Those things take jobs away. What are we gaining...and again do we really understand the need?"

Councilman Rusty Andrews said he supports the idea of raising the minimum wage, but he went back to the "cliff" mentality Hunold had brought up at previous meetings where raising the wage could actually hurt

people who qualify for state aid by eliminating the aid due to the increase in earnings, but resulting in a net loss for the family.

"I support the idea of raising the minimum wage, but I think there are some concerns that go along with it. I know someone first hand who works at a convenience store making minimum wage, and the minute she gets a raise she's not qualified to get state aid insurance. The company offers a plan but that would take half the paycheck.. They can live on that wage if the government's going to subsidize it," Andrews said. "If they force the employer to raise the wage, then they have to force them to provide cheaper health insurance and that's just not going to happen."

Andrews, who works at a local manufacturer said there are other higher paying jobs out there.

"I work for a company that pays a good wage and we're hiring all the time. I think there are other jobs out there. With good wages and benefits. I feel people could advance themselves if they want to, but I don't know sometimes I think people just want to do those jobs."

Fort Madison Partners Executive Director Tim Goble said he thinks the local governments should wait to see how the legislature plays out.

"It all depends on what the state allows the city to do. Really we should wait to see what the state says and go from there."

Calls to other city councilman and the mayor went unreturned.

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**Listing #20160805 • \$460,000**



**2BR • 1.75BA • 2 car garage  
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**Listing #20164161 • \$62,500**



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## Real Estate

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**PENDING**

**3BR • 3BA • 3 car garage  
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Amazing cedar log sided home in a quiet and private setting, a well-appointed guest house, and 26x32 metal building. The main home offers beautiful hardwood flooring with a awesome open floor plan. Enjoy summer evenings on the nice walk-out patio area. This is a dream home!!!

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**3BR • 2.50 BA  
2 car garage • 2,400 sq. ft.  
10,150 sq. ft. lot**

Lovely tri-level home on a quiet cul de sac offering numerous upgrades. There are 3 bedrooms and 2 1/2 baths, a large living room, dining room and open kitchen with newer stainless steel appliances and a breakfast bar. Newer windows, HVAC, new floor coverings on main and lower level and freshly painted throughout. The large backyard is completely fenced and has a 24 x 16 patterned concrete patio. Don't miss out on this wonderful family home.  
**Listing #20163404 • \$167,500**



**3BR • 1.75BA • 1 car garage  
888 sq. ft. • 9,450 sq. ft. lot**  
RARE RANCH with large fenced back yard and attached garage! Updated windows and kitchen, newer HVAC and water heater. Family Room in the basement. Just waiting for your own personal touch!  
**Listing #20163423 • \$74,900**



**REDUCED**

**4 BR • 1.75 BA  
3 car garage • 2,052 sq. ft.  
8,700 sq. ft. lot**

Beautiful 4 bedroom home with large rooms, recently redecorated and ready to move into. This home features stainless steel appliances, main floor laundry, eat in kitchen and formal dining room, main floor office or bedroom, open staircase, large living room and big bedrooms. Newer roof, siding and gutters on house. 24' X 36' insulated garage and workshop, plus carport. Large wrap porch great location near Old Settlers Park.  
**Listing #20163776 • \$129,500**



**PENDING**

**Multi-family Duplex  
2,672 sq. ft.  
7,250 sq. ft. lot**

Income property. Potential for \$875/month income or more. Side-by-side duplex with 2 - 2 bedroom, 1 bath apartments. West side has a long term renter and east side is vacant.  
**Listing #20162154 • \$49,500**



**3 BR • 1 BA • 1 car garage  
1,248 sq. ft. • 0.37 acres**

Well-kept ranch on a beautiful, large corner lot in West Point, IA. New wooden privacy fence surrounding the entire back yard. There is also an attached garage and storage shed. A large wooden deck leads to the front door where you can sit and enjoy those beautiful Iowa summer sunsets! PLUS a covered deck in the back for those rainy days. This house is a rare find.  
**Listing #20164234 • \$119,900**



**2 car garage • 2,527 sq. ft.**  
UNIQUELY beautiful 9.38 river bluff acreage. This home boasts many updates including complete master suite, heat and A/C, Septic system, deck, roof & gutters, flooring, and the list goes on. This private property includes fenced in barn area for animal lovers, mature fruit trees plus trees have been dropped for a beautiful panoramic river view that will last for years! Owner also plans to leave a John Deer mower and new snow blower!!  
**Listing #20162733 • \$269,000**



**NEW**

**4BR • 2.50BA • 1 car garage  
2,056 sq. ft.  
39,640 sq. ft. lot**

Beautiful 2 story home located just off Highway 61 north of Fort Madison. Formal living and dining room, nice kitchen with breakfast room all open to a main floor family room, relaxing, private screened porch that opens onto the large deck that spans the back of the home. Basement boasts recently finished family room and tons of storage.  
**Listing #20164530 • \$175,000**



**Land  
50.82 acres  
2,213,719 sq. ft.**

Ideal 50 acre m/l parcel to develop. Close to new 4-8 Middle School and Baxter Rec Plex. TREMENDOUS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY.  
**Listing #20162779 • \$559,020**



**Land  
14.65 acres • 638,514 sq. ft.**

Just outside city limits, perfect for housing development or small farm for horses or small livestock, over half tillable. City water is available. 30' X 60' building is totally insulated, heated and air conditioned with 200 amp service.  
**Listing #20162574 • \$249,000**



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# We will be closed March 1st-3rd so that our staff can continue their education at the Vision Hi-Tech Training & Expo to better serve you.

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