



Pen City Current

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Keokuk man wants tax relief city received

Supervisors say state code dictated city's abatements

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - A Keokuk resident told Lee County Supervisors he wants his taxes forgiven on dilapidated property he purchased in June.

Dan Winn, a former city councilman and mayoral candidate in Keokuk, told supervisors he purchased a lot next to his home because the structure was in disrepair and had alleged squatters and

drug use taking place inside. Winn said he'd like the taxes forgiven on that property because the board, at its meeting last week, forgave taxes on about 12 properties the city had purchased for the same reason.

"Basically what I'm asking the board for is to give me the same consideration the city received for tax abatement on 12 properties," Winn said.

"I was just wondering if I could have the taxes forgiven on the property since I abated that myself."

Winn said he spent \$9,500 to have the property improved and now it's his tax responsibility, but the city is doing the same thing and having its tax bill forgiven.



FEDLER

Supervisor Ron Fedler said the county had no choice but to approve the abatement under state law.

"The situation we ran into with abating on that property is it was governed under state law, where if the municipality requests the abatement, state code says we "shall" do it, it doesn't say we "may";" Fedler told Winn. "But it only covers municipalities, it doesn't cover business or industry, so we had no choice."

Fedler said he understands the

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Beside The Point

Chuck Vandenberg,
Pen City Current - Editor

Future Ready Iowa in good hands locally

In my generation, a four-year degree was the path often taken. "Get your degree" my mom would say. It took me a while to get my crap together, but I got it done.

I graduated in 1993, and I honestly don't remember how much I paid for my school. I got some grant money and had to take out some loans. I think I finished paying them off about 10 years ago.

I took journalism classes from actual journalists. I think about that a lot. These guys left the field to teach...and get paid probably more than they made in the field.

One such teacher did a stint with the Boston Globe, one had a career at smaller Midwestern newspapers. My photography teacher was an older Asian man who taught me how to roll film in a dark room, and mix Dektol.

I'm not sure that I couldn't or wouldn't have learned the same thing just going into the field. Or interning... or taking an apprenticeship. I did that to some degree. I was a stringer at the Burlington Hawk-Eye for years learning to cover high school sports. I think I could have kept doing that, seriously, and maybe have turned it into something full-time.

The journalism law stuff was learned in school. For sure I've used that many times, but I think a solid editor would have coached me through that.

What's the point of all this garbage? I'm disenfranchised with a college degree. I think that doctors and lawyers need to go to college, biophysicists, oh...and the people that create medicines that save our loved one's lives. They need to go to college, too. We count on them. I count on them. They made insulin and they made Letaris, both drugs that keep my youngest daughter alive.

She's in college today, too. A college that I grew up wanting to go to and hoping some day my children would go to. The same college, that on Tuesday, had a group of guys get in the elevator with my daughter and scare her by jumping up and down in the elevator. And then saying, "Scoot to the back bitch."

See **COLLEGE**, page 6



John Eberhardt, painter from Montrose, took the 1st place booth award at Art-in-Central Park this Sunday, winning a stay at the jacuzzi suite at Quality Inn in Ft. Madison. Robert Decker of Wapello took 2nd place winning a slot for the next show and mums from Matt's Greenhouse. Moonlight Studio from Hannibal took third place booth award.

Courtesy photo

First-ever national text alert test next week

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Just before 1:30 p.m. on Oct. 4, everyone will probably be looking at their cellphones to see a message from the

Federal Emergency Management Agency.

FEMA will be conducting its first-ever nationwide test of the Integrated Public Alert and Warning Systems, Wireless Emergency Alert system and the Emergency Alert

System.

The test is being done to assess the operational readiness of the IPAWS infrastructure that allows a national distribution of emergency messages via text, and to identify any technological improve-

ments that may be needed in the system.

The test will take place in conjunction with the EAS and WEA system tests. The EAS test will work with radio, televi-

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Area News

Municipal abatements will impact county's budget

TAXES - Continued from Page 1

frustration of the property owners.

Winn said the city was going to probably end up with the property one way or another, but said he decided to purchase the property and clean it up himself.

"Well, when I read this, I talked to (Supervisor) Matt (Pflug) about it and I said it looked to me like this is going to open up a can of worms, because people like me are going to say 'What about me?'. There's other people that have done the same thing."

Winn said former City Administrator Aaron Burnett increased the amount of money Ke-

okuk is using to acquire abandoned properties.

The city wants to get them down and the lot cleaned up so private investment can come in and get it back on the tax rolls. But Winn said this precedent is going to cost the county.

"There's a whole lot more properties now that the city is going to eventually acquire, and every one of those is going to get the taxes forgiven, and the county's going to take a hit over the next few years," Winn said.

Pflug said his concern was now the city isn't being aggressive enough going after the property owners to get properties

cleaned up.

"My concern is that is the city being aggressive in going after the property owners to get these cleaned up, or are they just rolling over and assuming the properties," Pflug said. "It just seems like this thing could become an epidemic going forward."

Ron Fedler said residents could talk to the city about abating the city tax as an incentive to buy and clean up properties.

"Another thing is to talk to the city about abating the city tax, and help residents to do the same thing the city's doing and give an incentive

to do it," he said. "We have no control over the city tax, but that might be something you might want to approach the mayor and city council about."

Supervisors approved the abatement of 12 properties at its Sept. 18 meeting. That abatement took \$21,500 away from potential county revenues.

"We and the board really had no choice," Fedler said. "The statute (Lee County Attorney) Ross Braden outlined showed that we had to abate those properties."

After the meeting, Wynn said he wasn't really expecting the board to abate the taxes on the property, but brought it

up to prove a point.

"I knew the city might get the property eventually, but it could've sat there for another five years and who knows what could happen in there in five years. So we took it upon ourselves. But now, other people might wait, or check with the city to see if it's on their radar, and if the city says 'yeah we're gonna tear it down,' they're not going to buy that. Once you buy it you assume all the responsibility for it."

In other action, the board:

- voted 5-0 to appoint Tammy Hudson to the Lee County Board of Health through Jan. 1, 2020.

- voted 5-0 to continue

to give a \$10,000 annual contribution to the Great River Housing Trust Fund.

- voted 5-0 to approve building a dividing wall at the South Lee County Courthouse to provide additional office space to the Lee County Attorney's staff.

- voted 5-0 to proclaim October as National Voter Registration Month.

- discussed issuing a budget amendment to help with additional maintenance costs at both courthouses, but took no action.



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Sports/Classifieds

Mepo hands FMHS spikers four-set road loss

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MEDIAPOLIS - The FMHS Lady Bloodhounds lost Tuesday night at Mediapolis and are an even 3 and 3 in their last six volleyball matches after winning seven straight.

The Hounds got a quick start with a 25-21 win, but they lost momentum after falling 25-27 in the second set, after holding an eight-point lead. The Lady Bulldogs ran away with the third and fourth sets 18-25 and 12-25 to take the match.

Head Coach Kent Bailey said a lull in serving efficiency in the second set was the Lady Hounds unraveling.

"The match turned in the second game when Fort Madison was up 14-6 and proceeded to miss two of our next 3 serves. Mediapolis made a run and ended up winning the game and the momentum. At that point Mediapolis played great defense the last two games and didn't let many of our hits find the

floor," Bailey said.

"We've got some things we can take back to our gym and work on. It's a busy week with Homecoming activities, but Fairfield comes to our gym next Tuesday and we'll need to be fired up and ready to go."

Senior Kaeli Hutson led the Hounds with a perfect night serving at 14 of 14. She was also 22-24 hitting with four kills, and 20 digs.

Sophomore Lauren Bailey had 30 assists to set up the hitters and had 11 digs on the night.

Junior Jillian Wiseman had 12 kills to lead FMHS at the net with 27-30 hitting. Jassmine Bass was 29-33 hitting with nine kills and lead Fort Madison with four blocks.

The Hounds fall to 14-7 on the season, but are still a perfect 5-0 in the Southeast Conference and host Fairfield on Tuesday.

In the junior varsity contest, the Hounds won 25-21, 19-21 and 15-4. The freshman team also won 21-18, 21-11.

Test will alert cellphone users via test

TEST - Continued from Page 1

sion and cable operators in all U.S. territories and tribal lands.

Lee County Emergency Management coordinator Steve Cirinna said the system is actually been in place for some time but they are doing a national test of the system.

"This is the same system they use for the Amber Alerts, that's the system their testing. They've used it quite a bit for Amber Alerts and some of the bigger disasters, but this is the first time they've done a national test of the system," Cirinna said. "People will get that alarm and then they'll get a text that will go off and show up on their phones."

"I haven't seen what the exact wording is, but it will test only where you have text capability and strictly on your cellphones."

The test was originally set for Sept. 20, but FEMA and the other agencies decided to push the event back a couple weeks while they dealt with the impact of Hurricane Florence on the nation's southeast coastal region.

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

09/25/18 - 10:57 - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a vandalism in the 100 block of Storms Court.

09/25/18 - 10:57 - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the Fort Madison area.

09/25/18 - 10:57 - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 400 block of Avenue E.

09/25/18 - 10:57 - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1200 block of Avenue D.

Lee County Sheriff's Report

09/25/18 - 11:09 a.m. - Lee

County Sheriff's deputies arrested Ron Lloyd Lawson, II, 41, of Keokuk, at the sheriff's office, on a court-ordered hold. He

was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

09/25/18 - 1:38 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested William Eugene Watkins, 51, of Keokuk,

at the sheriff's office on charges of 5th-degree theft and criminal trespass. He was taken to the Lee

County Jail and held.

09/25/18 - 7:53 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies responded to a one-vehicle

accident on Hwy 218 where a vehicle driven by Scott Lee Fox, 43 of Canton, Mo., lost control in a wind

gust and struck a guard rail near the overpass at Exit 19. No injuries or citations were reported at the scene.

09/26/18 - 12:28 a.m.

- Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jarrod Ray Hagmeier, 37, of Keokuk, at the Lee County Jail and on a charge of disorderly conduct. He remained in custody.

Those listed above are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Fort Madison Fire & Rescue Report

09/25/18 - Fort Madison Firefighters responded to two medical calls and one burnt complaint, one car accident.

the classifieds

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Pick 4 - Evening	Daily	9:40 pm	10:00 pm

9/25
8 16 32 48 61
Mega Ball: 12
Megaplier: 2

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6 1 1
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FRI 28 Sep



Light Rain
High – 59.0° F | Low – 39.4° F

SAT 29 Sep



Clear Skies
High – 51.1° F | Low – 44.0° F

SUN 30 Sep



Clear Skies
High – 51.8° F | Low – 50.9° F

MON 01 Oct



Clear Skies
High – 69.4° F | Low – 65.7° F

[OpenWeatherMap](#)

Universities should take notice of Future Ready

COLLEGE - Continued from Page 1

Seriously.... I just want to patrol the elevator for Monster-drinking egomaniacs with my 3-wood. I hit that better.

So yeah, I'm a little disenfranchised with colleges. Short of parents being in a position to squirrel away savings and pay out of pocket for college (which now exceeds more than \$100,000 for a four-year degree all in) or scholarships. Parents through the Federal Parent Plus loan buy a new home every time a child goes to college. That's what it costs.

But local and state officials are putting together programming that reaches out to high school students at a younger age to showcase the value of a two-year degree, certificate program, or vocational program. Trisha Hopper teaches a great program at SCC that awards Associates of Applied Sciences degrees in just two years. Those

folks are in the workforce with those degrees making money. The junior college is stepping up with other programs for vocations like welding, maintenance, etc. At a fraction of the cost of four-year schools.

I spent a couple hours Tuesday listening to area economic development officials wrack their brains on how to fill skilled labor positions in southeast Iowa as part of Governor Kim Reynolds' Future Ready Iowa initiative. In a nutshell, Reynolds wants to add 130,000 Iowans to the list of those with some form of post-secondary certificate or degree by 2025. That's in six years. The state started the initiative at 58.3% so as Reynolds said, "We were in a pretty place to start."

I don't know how many high school or junior high students for that matter, read Beside the Point, but I know some

parents do. Have that conversation with your child. There are great jobs right here in southeast Iowa...good paying jobs, and how great would it be to have no college debt, or at least a greatly reduced amount of debt, and then go into the workforce and earn money rather than spending it.

FMHS Principal Greg Smith has been building and rebuilding vocational programs at the high school since he took over as principal. He spoke Tuesday at the Future Ready summit in Burlington. Huffman Welding & Manufacturing's Jason Huffman and Brian Langerud of Pinnacle also spoke.

Clearly these folks are way smarter than I am at looking at those synergies and how we help employers and students at the same time. They are expending energy and time trying to work

together with industries who, right now, have good paying jobs they can't fill. Educators are working with industry leaders to create programs, and industries are helping educators create curriculums.

They're the smart and effective players here. I'm just the one that gets to write to our readership and inform them of the good things going on. And encourage you to have those conversations with your children.

And wasn't it great to see area artists sitting around our town on Sunday drawing and painting...and chalking, our buildings and landscapes as part of the Art-in-Central Park's Plein Air art competition. I had a chance to talk to a few of them and they were really excited about the competition being added in Lee County.

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