



Pen City Current

Thursday, Aug. 23, 2018 | 8 pages | Volume 2 • Issue 191

City to take second look at LCEDG funding

Councilman says city could take money from lower priority projects to help fund LCEDG

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A discrepancy in interpretation of the City of Fort Madison's commitment to the county's economic development efforts resulted in a vibrant discussion between city officials and representatives of the Lee County Economic Development



GREENWALD

Group Tuesday. Fort Madison City Manager David Varley put the issue on the agenda of Tuesday's regular City Council meeting and recommended that the city make a contribution to the LCEDG, but left it to the council to determine what amount was appropriate.

In a memo to the city council last week, Varley wrote that the city had a three-year commitment that ended in June. He recommended that the city make a contribution to the LCEDG, but said revenues are about \$800,000 less than when the commitment was made and the city has to be responsible to its citizens

in setting the contribution.

The issue was eventually tabled on a motion by Councilman Chris Greenwald who said he'd like to have conversations with city staff to find where the city might find some money.

"There's some things that we fund that I think aren't as important as this," Greenwald said. "I'd like to table this because I don't want to spring this on David now. I want to give him my thoughts on perhaps things that we're supporting that aren't as important."

Greenwald also encouraged other councilman to look at options the city's funding that are less im-

See **COUNCIL**, page 4

City approves new staff handbook

Sick leave cash out heavily discussed prior to approval

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - City officials have approved a new personnel manual that redefines employee benefits for city employees.

At Tuesday's regular meeting of the Fort Madison City Council, the council voted 6-1 to approve the modified handbook that outlines changes to non-union employee benefits. City staff had been working on the changes since Iowa laws changed stripping bargaining rights from city workers. The Fort Madison Police Department and Fort Madison Fire Departments are still covered by union contracts.

Tracy Leone, a business agent out of the Quad Cities for Teamsters 238, was on hand at the meeting representing the city's library and water department employees.

Leone told the council that 2017's Chapter 20 overhaul amounted to union busting, but said the council and city administration had "a wide berth to direct its bargaining representative to retain many permissible subjects that were in previous contracts".

She said it has been difficult for the employees during the transition to the handbook that was effective July 1.

"Here we are 52 days later, finally voting on the handbook that spells out the working conditions of the people who keep our water safe to drink and our libraries welcoming places for all," Leone said.

See **HANDBOOK**, page 8

FMHS trades students get back to work on new stadium press box

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - With school ready to open, a group of about 14 building trades students will have a "large" task awaiting them.

Inside the workshop of Fort Madison High School building trades instructor Clint Kobelt, is two large sections of the new press box that will go up on visitor's side of Richmond Stadium, hopefully by the Sept. 21 home game against Solon.

"We've got 14 kids in two sessions that have 18 days to get this disassembled, reassembled and in place at the football field," Kobelt said Wednesday morning.

Last year's trade's class framed up the press box in the last four weeks of the school year and the project was used as the



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison building trades instructor Clint Kobelt stands next to the two parts of the new FMHS visitor's side press box. The two pieces were built by FMHS students in the last four weeks of the past school year and now another group of students is trying to get the new facility in place by Sept. 21.

students final exam. In addition to building the press boxes, the students in Kobelt's classes also did the rough construction on the Habitat for Humanity home that will be

dedicated on Thursday. The new press box will be two stories with the first floor dedicated for concessions on the visitors side and a storage area. The second floor will have

three rooms for opposing teams coaches, Bloodhound assistant coaches and a radio booth. The third floor will be an open air crow's nest for record-

See **CLASS**, page 4

Advertiser Index

ClassifiedsPs.6-7	Pen City Current.....Ps.3,6-7
Dr. Mark C. Pothitakis Family Dentistry..... P.5	Professional Services..... P.7
Fort Madison Community Hospital P.2	Quarry Creek Elk & Bison Co..... P.8
Great River Regional Waste Authority P.3	Tony Fullenkamp Edward Jones..... P.8
Hope Associates Real Estate P.6	Trailways Travel..... P.6
Mexican Fiesta P.4	Your Heat & Air guy P.4

News Index

Current-Lee P.3
From the front..... Ps.4,8
Lottery Numbers P.2
Obituaries Ps.2-3
-Elizabeth "Betty" Coffman
-Aurelia "Wally" Martinez
-Patty Lee Thrush
Weather P.8

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Obituaries

ELIZABETH "BETTY" COFFMAN

Elizabeth "Betty" Coffman, 78, passed away on Sunday, August 19, 2018 at 1:50 AM at the West Point Care Center.

She was born on June 17, 1940 in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa to Ralph and Eileen Russell Long. On January 18, 1968 she married Blaine "Bud" Coffman in Ft. Madison and he passed away on May 14, 1992. Betty worked for Sheaffer Pen Company in her early years. She and her husband owned and operated The Super Sub and also H & R Block in Keokuk. She enjoyed genealogy, gardening and baking. She loved spending time with her family, especially her grandkids. She devoted most of her life to her Daddy and took care of him and loved him all of his life.



COFFMAN

Survivors include two daughters, Lynette Carter of Ft. Madison and Lisa (Steve) St. Clair of Ft. Madison; four sons, Rick (Aundrea) Franklin of Highlands Ranch, CO, Norman Coffman of Coralville, Anthony (Tina Newkirk) Franklin of Ft. Madison and Randy (Denise Moeller) Coffman of Mt. Pleasant; seventeen grandchildren; fifteen great grandchildren and one on the way. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, a son Blaine and one brother.

A celebration of life will be held from 5-7 PM on Friday, August 24, 2018 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. Per her wishes, Betty has donated her body to the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics for anatomical research.

A memorial has been established for the ALS Foundation or PAW Animal Shelter and online condolences may be left at www.kinglynk.com.

AURELIA "WALLY" MARTINEZ

Aurelia "Wally" Martinez, 84, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 5:24 p.m. on Friday, August 17, 2018 at Great River Hospice House in West Burlington, IA. She was born on March 18, 1934 in Fort Madison, IA to Manuel & Hesiquia Mendez Salazar. She married Frank C. Martinez on February 2, 1952 in Fort Madison, IA. He preceded her in death on April 28, 2014. She was a homemaker most of her life and also worked for several years as a teachers aid at Richardson School. She was a member of Holy Family Parish, the Altar & Rosary Society, Catholic Ladies Auxiliary and the Guadalupe Society. She was a former member of the Fort Madison Mexican Fiesta Committee.



MARTINEZ

Wally is survived by: 5-sons: Timothy (Kathy) Martinez of Fort Madison, IA, Andrew (Sandy) Martinez of Fort Madison, IA, Jerry Martinez of Fort Madison, IA, Martin Martinez of Mediapolis, IA & Dan (Amy) Martinez of Glendora, CA; 9-daughters: Cindy (Virgil) Krogmeier of Fort Madison, IA, Lucinda (Dave Holmes) Martinez of Mesa, AZ, Carmelita Martinez of Mesa, AZ, Miriam (Daniel) Pix of Rosemead, CA, Martha Traeger of California, Francine (Robert) Buneta of St. Louis, MO, Rita Martinez of St. Louis, MO, Vivian (Jeff Aguilar) Martinez of Arcadia, CA & Camille (Dennis) Lobby of Monrovia, CA; 38-grandchildren; numerous great grandchildren & great great grandchildren; 1-brother: Brijido "Pip" Salazar of Chicago, IL; 3-sisters: Angel Juarez of Chicago, IL, Rachel Martinez & Lucy Prado both of Fort Madison, IA. She was preceded in death by: her parents, husband, 2-sons: Darius & Marcel, 1-daughter: Maria, 1-son in infancy and 2-brothers.

Friends may call after 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 23, 2018 with the family to receive friends from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. and a rosary will be recited at 6:30 p.m. at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. The funeral mass will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, August 24, 2018 at Sacred Heart Church with Rev. Joseph Phung officiating. Burial will be held at Soldiers' Circle in Oakland Cemetery. A memorial has been established for Holy Family Parish. Online condolences to Wally's family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

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Obituaries/Current-Lee

CURRENT-LEE

Fort Madison Depot Farmer's Market

Every Monday local vendors have farmer's market options available at the Old Santa Fe Depot on the Riverfront in Fort Madison. The farmer's market runs every Monday until Oct. 8 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the parking lot west of the depot.

Riverview Games

The annual Riverview Games will be held on Aug. 25 from 10 a.m. to noon in Riverview Park in Fort Madison. The event is free to area families and is sponsored by the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce Ambassador Club, Fort Madison Lions Club, Fort Madison Kiwanis, and Fort Madison Rotary. Volunteers are still needed. Please call the Chamber at 372-5471 for details.

YMCA Youth Soccer Clinic

The free "Just for Kicks" clinic will be held at the Baxter Sports Complex in Fort Madison on Thursday, Aug. 23. 1st and 2nd grade will be from 5-5:45 p.m. 3rd and 4th grade from 6-6:45 p.m., and 5th and 6th graders from 7-7:45 p.m.

Veteran's Breakfast at Sunnybrook

Each month on the third Tuesday of the month, Sunnybrook Assisted Living hosts a Veteran's Breakfast from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. at 5025 River Valley Road in Fort Madison. The next breakfast will be Aug. 21 in the dining room. Call 372-8611 for additional details.

RevFitness Birthday Open House

From 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on August 24, RevFitness will hold an open house with wine, snacks and membership deals. First five visitors get a free gift.

North Lee County Relay for Life

Please note the date change from Sept. 29 to Sept. 14. The event will begin at 5 p.m. at the Fort Madison High School track and will conclude with closing ceremonies at 10:30 p.m. Visit the Relay Facebook page here at <https://www.facebook.com/RelayforLifeofNorthLeeCounty/?ref=bookmarks>

YMCA Rodeo Stampede 5K Run/Walk

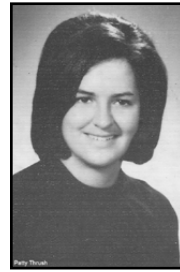
The annual 5K Run/Walk will take place on Sept. 8. Contact the YMCA for detail at 372-2403

OBITUARIES

PATTY LEE THRUSH

Patty Lee Thrush, 67 of Keokuk, IA died Wednesday, August, 15, 2018 at her home.

She was born March 25, 1951 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of Earnest Franklin and Lila Patricia Snyder Steele. On August 24, 1974 she was united in marriage to Ronald "Reggie" Earl Thrush in Keokuk. He survives.



THRUSH

Other survivors include three daughters, Lisa Jeffers (Daniel) of Keokuk, Danielle Thrush of Fairview Heights, IL and Jennifer Thrush of Keokuk, three grandchildren, Alysha Hymes, Trinity Jeffers and Dylan Jeffers, two sisters, Lynda Pugh Carswell of Carson City, NV and Dawn Coulter of Quincy, IL, and two brothers, Randy Andrew (JoAnn) of San Diego, CA and Kevin Andrew of Keokuk.

She was preceded in death by her parents and one brother-in-law, Daniel Coulter.

Patty graduated from Keokuk High School with the Class of 1969.

She had been employed in her younger years at the Knotty Pine in Keokuk and then at K-Mart in Keokuk for fifteen years until their closure. She later worked at Methode Electronics in Carthage, IL.

She was a member of the VFW Post #3508 in Keokuk, several bowling teams and belonged to a Canasta Card club with her friends, where she always played to win.

Patty enjoyed shopping, sewing and taking trips with her family. She loved to play board games and Bingo. She was a very enthusiastic fan of all her grandchildren's school and sport activities. Patty's heart was in her home where she made a lifetime of treasured memories for her family.

A Gathering of Remembrance will be held from 1-3 p.m., Saturday at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk with family meeting with friends at that time.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Lee County Hospice or Great River Cancer Center.

The family would like to thank Lee County Hospice, Dr. Schulte and his staff, Great River Cancer Center and a special thank you to Jessica Wessel.

Online condolences may be left for the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com

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From the front

City to dig for LCEDG funds

COUNCIL - Continued from Page 1

portant than economic development.

LCEDG CEO Joe Steil said it was his understanding that the city's commitment to LCEDG was a five-year commitment that began in 2014-15, which would leave one more year on the commitment. The city committed to \$50,000 per year, but when the revenues from the riverboat casinos dried up at the end of the 2017 fiscal year, the city decided to cut their contributions back to \$25,000 the following year.

Steil said he would like the city to eventually return to its original commitment of the \$50,000, but understood that budgets can be confining and governmental agencies have to look at things annually.

Varley said his records indicated the city's commitment was for three years and the city's revenue picture is not as robust as it was when the original commitment was made.

The LCEDG is also finalizing plans on its next five-year public-private partnership campaign to extend funding through fiscal year 2023. That campaign kicks off in September.

"After hearing you

speak, I almost feel like you're on the attack here," Greenwald said. "When you say 'We're doing a great job' - well if you're doing such a great job then my tax base is growing and I've got no problem. But when you do a good job what you do is you hook 'em, and then you get them to us and we have to incentive the heck out of it," Greenwald said.

Greenwald said the city's gone through \$2 million over the past two years in expansion incentives and maybe the city should be looking closer at those investments.

"I feel like I haven't been listening to David Varley like I should have been listening to David Varley," he said.

Steil said it was not his intention to make the council feel attacked.

"In no way shape or form is this to be an attack and I'm sorry if you misinterpreted that," Steil said. "We're all about expansion and those companies are here and we want to make sure we are there for them when they are talking about expansion. We do need to take care of those businesses because they are committed. When we get somebody new that's the glitzy stuff."

Mayor Brad Randolph said economic development has value and the city doesn't have the capabilities that the LCEDG has in order to sustain and improve the workforce.

"The question is at what value is that, No. 1. And the question before that is can we afford it," Randolph said.

Varley told Steil that the city is down about \$834,000 less than when riverboat revenues were coming in.

"We were getting about \$300,000 a year from the riverboat and when that floated away 100% of that money floated away with it. We were giving you \$50,000 but we're \$834,000 lower in revenues now then we were then," Varley said. "You say you'd like to go back to that same level - well we've got city departments that would like to go back to that level as well."

Varley told Steil he couldn't see telling city departments to cut their budgets back so the city could increase their commitment to LCEDG.

"I'm a little offended that you want \$50,000 a year over five years and we're down \$800,000. We don't have that ability. That doesn't seem to

effect you," Varley said.

Dennis Fraise, LCEDG COO said LCEDG officials would be willing to sit with city officials on a more regular basis and let them see the group's budgets in order to increase transparency between the two groups. Fraise also spoke about the group's efforts to create a better workforce saying that many industries in the county are poised for growth, but are concerned about a sustainable workforce. He cited state and national awards the LCEDG has received in the past two years because of their focus on programming for workforce development.

LCEDG gets 51% of its funding from the county, which according to Steil is approximately \$210,000 per year. The rest of its revenue comes from contributions from private industry and contributions from the cities of Fort Madison and Keokuk. Fort Madison makes its contribution directly, however, Keokuk's contribution comes via the Keokuk Economic Development Corp. as a pass through from a check from the city.

Varley said he would put the issue back on the agenda for the next city council meeting.

Press box may be in place for Solon game

CLASS - Continued from Page 1

ing games. A wooden staircase will provide access to the second and third floors.

Kobelt said the buildings have been framed up and constructed inside the school, but will be taken apart in 10 foot seams and relocated on the pad where the old press box was torn down earlier this year. Seither and Cherry did the concrete and foundation work over the summer and Huffman Welding & Machine cut the bleachers on both sides and reconfigured the stands to allow for the larger press box.

The new box will have corrugated steel siding in a crimson and white color scheme.

"The concession stand footprint itself is bigger than the previous press box. It's basically 12'x30' and it's a two-story structure, but on top of the second story will have a wall on the front and people can do film and video there."

The press box will have two concession service windows on the football field side of the facility. The second story will have slide windows.

"The biggest challenge is that the students are coming in and taking over where the other students left off. So it comes down to how well did the students communicate the message to this year. The disassembly print... the reassembly print... how things are all labeled, numbered and coded," Kobelt said

He said he has a morning and an afternoon trades class so he'll get 2.5 hours in the morning and again in the afternoon. He said the coordination between the two will be critical in taking the box apart and re-assembling it.

"To address that, I've brought in a senior, Elton Kruse, who's entered the program early and is just a standout guy and we created a position where he comes in as the site manager for the project," Kruse said. "To make the hill just a little steeper, the goal is to have this functional by Sept. 21, so they've got 18 school days to get this out there. It won't be finished, but it will be functional. Concessions won't be operational, but it needed to be functional space in 18 working days in 2.5 hours a day in each class."

Kobelt said the deadline is absolutely doable, but he said that's why all the students working on the project had to be in advanced classes to get the job done.

"That would have been a bridge too far to travel," Kobelt said.

Mohrfeld Electric will be putting in the electrical work, but the students will install the windows and continue working on finishing the project in the fall.



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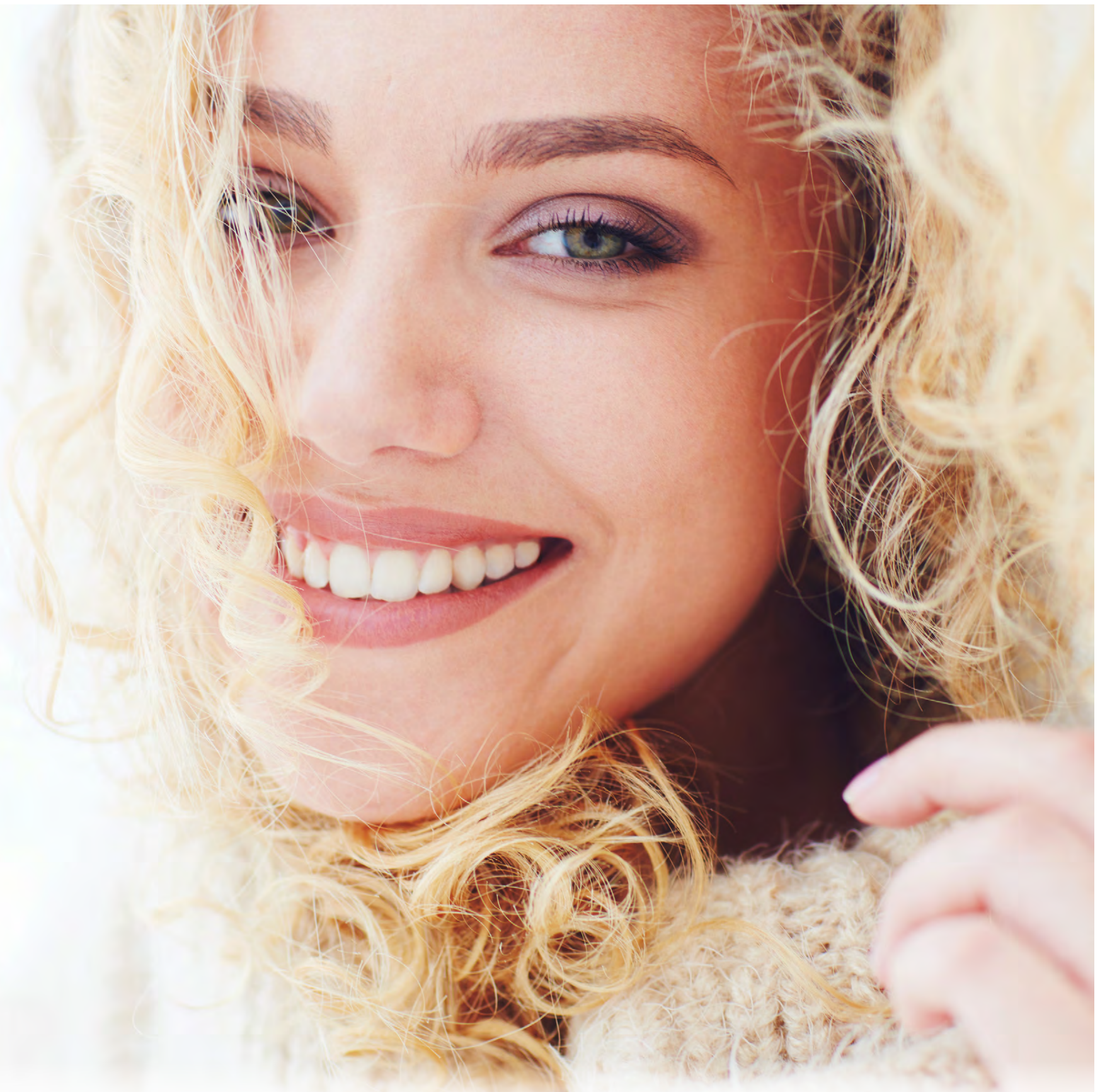
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Celebrations/Classifieds

Celebrations

MAX ROSE CULBERTSON

KEOKUK - Jennie Rose and Adam Culberson are pleased to announce the birth of their son, Max Rose Culberson, on Thursday, 8/9/2018, at the Fort Madison Community Hospital.

He is joined at home by siblings Izzie, Easton, and Ashton. Grandparents are Joe and Kari Rose, of Keokuk, Don Culberson, of Mobile, Al., and Nicole Culberson, of Mobile, Al. Great-grandparents are John and Carol Rose, of Keokuk, Joyce Sparrow and the late Kenneth Sparrow, of Warsaw, Ill., Virginia Culberson and the late P.D. Culberson, of Mobile, Al., and Joan Faget and the late Guy Faget, of Mobile, Al.

The Pen City Current congratulates the family on this wonderful news.

MATILYN MARIE WENKE

MONTROSE - Jessica and Cody Wenke are pleased to announce the birth of their daughter, Matilyn Marie Wenke, on Tuesday, 8/7/2018, at the Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Grandparents are Chrissy and Ryan Ball, of Donnellson, Jason and Heather Beam, of Cambridge, Ill., Jim and Jenny Briggs, of Stratford, Wi., and Marty and Traci Wenke, of Argyle.

The Pen City Current congratulates the family on this wonderful news.

ZAHRA FLORENCE SIEFKEN

FORT MADISON - Brittany Giles and Jared Siefken II are proud to announce the birth of their daughter Zahra Florence Siefken, on Wednesday, 8/8/2018, at the Fort Madison Community Hospital.

Grandparents are Richard and Crystal (deceased) Ahlen, of Burlington, Jared and Tiffany Siefken, of Burlington, and Deb and Charlie Newman, of Dallas City, Ill. Great-grandparents are Barb and Norm Siefken, of Danville, Judy and Mike Sammons, of Fort Madison, and Marion and Judy (deceased) Stephenson, of Montrose.

The Pen City Current congratulates the family on this wonderful news.



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From the Front/Weather

New handbook has benefit gains, reductions

HANDBOOK - Continued from Page 1

She recognized the city had kept some of the benefits from the contract in the new handbooks, but pointed out several reductions in benefits including sick leave accrual, sick leave compensation, shift differential pay, funeral leave, and health insurance. The plan also provides for \$10/month in increased longevity pay, increases in certification pay, increases in winter wear and safety shoe reimbursement, CDL pay and a base wage increase of 2.5% for distribution and plant employees, according to Leone.

The sick leave accrual cash out language changes the amount of sick leave allowed to be accrued from 600 to 250 hours. Leone pointed out there are current city employees who are close to retirement who were banking those hours for a payout and that money would be used to help pay for the cost of retirement until they are eligible for Medicaid. She said that change will impact employees retirement plans and could impact their health coverage.

An employee making \$20/hour lost \$7,000 if they had at least 600 hours of sick leave accrued on their retirement date with the changes in the handbook.

City Councilman Chad Cangas said he had a problem with making that change.

"I feel like that a stroke of a pen we're taking that away from people that might be counting on it. I'd like to see anyone eligible for retirement in two years still take advantage of it," Cangas said.

There are several employees with over 20 years in water and two in library who do have over 20 years.," said city finance director Peggy Steffensmeier.

"That really isn't meant to pay for health insurance. Although I think that was the intention when it was put in there, but it was never spelled out."

City Manager David Varley said people shouldn't rely on buyouts and payouts as revenue for retirement. He said people need to better utilize their retirement funds and keep an eye on costs to make adjustments as they move closer toward retirement age.

"Every year when there was bargaining, employees get more pay, more benefits. To pick one item out and say I was banking on this when I got hired, ok, then look at all the other benefits you got every single year that you weren't banking on when you got hired because you didn't have them when you were hired. If you use buy out of vacation and sick leave, and things like that, it can put you in a world of financial trouble."

Cangas said if he were in the situation of a retiring city employee, he would be upset with the change.

"If I got to 55 or 56 years old and I was counting on 600 hours and the day before my retirement date someone said we're changing it to 250, boy, I'd be mad."

Larry Driscoll, director of public works said employees were offered retirement prior to making the changes



VARLEY



CANGAS



MORAWITZ

“

If I got to 55 or 56 years old and I was counting on 600 hours and the day before my retirement date somebody said we're changing to 250, boy, I'd be mad"

-Chad Cangas,
FM City Council

and those employees didn't retire. But councilman Bob Morawitz said the issue isn't about early retirement options.

"This isn't about early retirement, it's about regular retirement. If someone was banking on that money being there and you say, 'No, it's not' - that's not right," Morawitz said.

Morawitz motioned to amend the section on sick leave hours to exempt any employee that was hired before July 31, 2008 and restore the 600 hours to those employees, however the motion failed for lack of a second.

Randolph then called for the vote on the handbook. Cangas abstained from voting on the issue and Morawitz voted against the handbook changes.

In other action, the council: voted 8-0 to approve Ashley Balmer and Hugh Vandegriff to the City Parks board with terms expiring March 31, 2018.

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FRI 24 Aug ☁️
Moderate Rain
High– 78.8° F | Low – 75.7° F

SAT 25 Aug ☀️
Clear Skies
High– 87.7° F | Low – 75.3° F

SUN 26 Aug ☀️
Clear Skies
High – 86.4° F | Low – 71.9° F

MON 27 Aug ☁️
Heavy Rain
High– 81.9° F | Low – 79.0° F

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