

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, September 14, 2022 | 8 pages | Volume 6 • Issue 158



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AMTRAK STOPS CHIEF

TEMPORARY: Pending rail union strike prompts Amtrak to cancel route through FM



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Rail passengers on the Southwest Chief eastbound get a stretch in before heading onto Chicago just before 3 p.m. Tuesday afternoon in Fort Madison.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A looming freight railroad strike is resulting in the cancellation of Amtrak service on its long-distance routes out of Chicago, including the Southwest Chief running through Fort Madison.

Fort Madison Mayor Matt Mohrfeld said he was unaware of the news Tuesday morning but was looking into the situation.

A pending railroad workers strike with freight rail workers would leave lines, which Amtrak uses for passenger service,

unattended.

Starting Tuesday, Amtrak said service would be suspended on the Southwest Chief (Chicago to Los Angeles), the Empire Builder (Chicago to Minneapolis to Spokane to Portland/Seattle), the California Zephyr (Chicago to Denver to San Francisco) and the Los Angeles to San Antonio Train #421 portion of the Texas Eagle routes.

Southwest Chief runs east and west through Fort Madison with a daily stop running in each direction.

See CHIEF, page 7

ELECTION 2022

AG candidate makes stop at Tri-State Rodeo on campaign swing

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Republican candidate for Iowa Attorney General popped in at the Tri-State Rodeo last week and said she's ready

to challenge Tom Miller to be the state's top law enforcement officer.

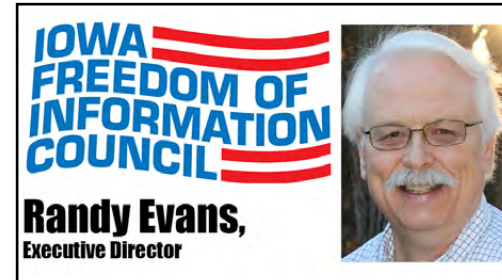
Miller, who has been Iowa's attorney general for close to 40 years, is the longest serving AG in the nation. Iowa is one of only two states in the country whose attorney

general is not a member of the executive branch, but the judicial branch.

The two battled it out in 2010 with Miller winning by about 11 points.

See BIRD, page 2

OPINION



Savvy voters, don't be misled by television ads

Televisions are getting larger, but that does not make it easier to decipher the political ads that are as common these days as gnats at a picnic.

There is one thing we should understand about these ads: Their purpose is not to educate voters or inform them about the finer points of a candidate's views. Instead, their purpose is to scare us, or mislead us, or just confuse us.

One such example tells Iowa TV viewers that U.S. Representative Cindy Axne, a Democrat from West Des Moines, refuses to sign a pledge to support term limits for members of Congress.

It is true Axne has not signed the pledge being circulated by U.S. Term Limits, a Washington, D.C., advocacy group that is working to pass limits on the length of service by state and federal elected officials. The group's goal is to keep so-called career politicians from taking root in our government.

The organization favors a constitutional amendment that would restrict members of the U.S. House to no more than three two-year terms and members of the U.S. Senate to two six-year terms.

It is true that Axne's opponent, Zach Nunn, a Republican from Bondurant, favors term limits for people serving in Congress. But the ad does not give voters a complete picture.

Philip Blumel, the president of U.S. Term Limits, praised Nunn last year. He said, "Zach's strong support of term limits shows that there are individuals who are willing to put self-interest aside to follow the will of the people."

Blumel added: "America is in trouble."

See EVANS, page 4

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WEATHER

OpenWeatherMap
WED 14 Sep.....Sunny and warm, 84° F/ 58° F
THU 15 Sep.....Sunny and warm, 83° F/ 62° F
FRI 16 Sep.....Mostly sunny and warm, 84° F/ 64° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 09/12.....16 9 11 20, Star Ball: 2 All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 09/12.....4 6 16 41 46, Lucky Ball: 11
PICK 3 09/12 MIDDAY.....2 9 3
PICK 3 09/12 EVENING.....7 6 4
PICK 4 09/12 MIDDAY.....6 9 8 8
PICK 4 09/12 EVENING.....10 2 1
POWERBALL 09/12.....6 14 16 34 66, Powerball: 25 Power Play: 3

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From the Front

AG candidate says Miller is disconnected from Iowans

BIRD - Continued from Page 1

In 2018, the Republicans didn't even field a candidate to challenge Miller.

Guthrie County Attorney Brenna Bird said it's time for a new face leading Iowa's judicial efforts. Bird said Miller's lack of action against the federal government's overreach is what concerns her.

"People are very concerned about the Biden Administration and the federal government going too far especially with inflation making it really hard for people," she said while enjoying a pork sandwich dinner at the rodeo Monday night with State Rep. Martin Graber (R-Fort Madison).

"One of the roles of the attorney general is to



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Candidate for Iowa Attorney General Brenna Bird poses with State Rep. Martin Graber at the Tri-State Rodeo last week. Bird is challenging Tom Miller for the second time since 2010.

file a lawsuit and hold the federal government accountable under the Constitution when they overreach and that's something I would do as At-

orney General."

An Iowans for Tax Relief poll has Bird tied with Miller in the race and the Des Moines Register recently reported that Miller could be in for the fiercest election in his 28 years.

She said other states have filed lawsuits against the federal government citing overreach, including the state's attorneys general who recently got the OSHA vaccine mandate stopped.

"I'm a prosecutor and the way I do that is it doesn't matter what the politics are, you follow the law. I'd do the same thing in the Attorney General's office. I'm conservative and I think it's important that the federal government has to follow our constitution, too," she said.

Bird said it's a difficult time to be in the law enforcement business and as Attorney General she would take a more active role in supporting law enforcement as well as victims of crime.

"It's a tough time to be in law enforcement. The AG is the top law enforcement official but ours never talks about it, he's completely silent. I'll advocate for crime victims and support law enforcement as the heroes they are," she said.

Bird has been a prosecutor for six years and the county attorney in Fremont County and Guthrie County and has been an attorney for 21 years.

"We're going to work hard to win, meet Iowans, and listen to Iowans. The most surprising thing we hear on the trail is we don't know who the Attorney General is or what the job is."

The two will face off in the General Election on Nov. 8.

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It's Black & White and Read all over

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Obituaries/Lee County News

OBITUARIES

TIFFANY D. BANGEL

Tiffany Danielle (Mershon) Bangel, 38, of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, formerly of LaHarpe, Illinois, passed away Saturday, September 10, 2022 at her home.

Tiffany was born January 5, 1984 in Macomb, Illinois, the daughter of Mike and Brenda (DeJaynes) Mershon. On October 30, 2009 she married Bill Bangel in Jacksonville, North Carolina.



BANGEL

Tiffany was a 2002 graduate of LaHarpe High School. Following high school she attended cosmetology school. She worked as a beautician for almost 20 years. She also did vinyl wraps for signs and vehicles.

Tiffany was a lover of animals, especially her dogs, owls and numerous chickens. She was a fan of the Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bears and became a fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers when the Bears were losing.

She enjoyed kayaking, crocheting, flowers and spending time on the river with her friends and family. She will be remembered as the family support system and go-to friend when in need. Most importantly she was a believer in Jesus Christ.

Survivors include her husband: Bill; two children: Maximus and Scarlett both at home; her parents: Mike (Kim Perry) Mershon of LaHarpe and Brenda (David) Covert of Dallas City; two siblings: Kevin (Madison) Mershon of Terre Haute, Illinois and Kelsey Mershon of Dallas City; her grandparents: Charles and Leota DeJaynes of Dallas City and Vicki Mershon of Macomb; two step-brothers: Brian Covert of LaHarpe and Matt (Amber) Covert of Ft. Riley, Kansas; two aunts: Monica Mershon and Cindy Nelson and two uncles: Russell (Anitra) DeJaynes and Sam (Lisa) DeJaynes and many nephews, nieces and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her grandmother: Deanna Mershon; grandfather: Larry Mershon and one uncle: Murray Mershon.

The family will receive friends from 4:00 until 7:00 p.m. Thursday, September 15, 2022 at the LaHarpe Christian Church.

The funeral service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Friday, September 16, 2022 at the LaHarpe Christian Church with Pastor Nate McCarter officiating. Burial will follow in the LaHarpe Cemetery.

A memorial fund has been established for her children's education. To leave a condolence for the family, please visit Tiffany's obituary at banksandbeals.com. Banks & Beals Funeral Home of LaHarpe is assisting the family.

Pen City Current obituary policy

Pen City Current runs obituaries one time at no charge to funeral homes and they run the day they are submitted in most cases. They are also run as submitted by the funeral homes. Reposting of obituaries due to changes can only be requested by the submitting funeral home and will be assessed a \$15 reposting fee.



Lunch Specials
Sept 12-16
11am - 1pm

Monday, September 12
Roast Beef, Cheese Potatoes

Tuesday, September 13
Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes, Corn

Wednesday, September 14
Beef Stroganoff, Green Beans

Thursday, September 15
Fried Chicken Dinners

Friday, September 16
Grilling on the Sidewalk

WP library shows usage uptick

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

WEST POINT - The West Point Library usage was up 47% compared to 2021 numbers, according to Library Director Dara Sanders.

Sanders said the pandemic was still have an impact on usage in 2021 and that could be part of the reason for the large numbers. Sanders was presenting her annual report to the West Point City Council at its regular meeting Monday night.

According to the Sander's statistics, the library had 12,519 visits in during the last fiscal year, which runs through June 30.

The library had 860 residents use computers on site and had more than 11,600 checkouts, 1,862 of those were through the Bridges program, which was an increase of 16%.

The library also held 293 programs for users, which is up about 100 from the previous year with 2,952 people attending the programs.

Sanders said the library has mobile hot spots for check out.

"We had two, but now we have four because they've become very popular. The people are learning they are here and have been checking them out. They are very easy to use and we've had no

See LIBRARY, page 7

Term limit pledge non-partisan

EVANS - Continued from Page 1

Our career politicians have let the people down."

Unsaid in the ad targeting Axne is an uncomfortable fact of life for Iowa Republicans: Axne is not the only Iowan serving in the Congress who has not signed the U.S. Term Limits pledge, according to the group's website.

Two of Iowa's most prominent Republicans — Senators Chuck Grassley, a New Hartford Republican, and Joni Ernst, a Republican from Red Oak — are absent from the signers list. Two other Iowa Republicans in the U.S. House also have not signed the same pledge that potential Axne voters are being warned about. Ashley Hinson of Marion and Mariannette Miller-Meeks of Ottumwa are not on U.S. Term Limits' list of Iowa signers.

Only U.S. Representative Randy Feenstra, a Republican from Hull, has signed the pledge.

Irony overflows from the term limits ad:

You do not see similar television ads filling the airwaves about Grassley being one of those dreaded career politicians. And he has been elected to the Iowa House, the U.S. House and the U.S. Senate since 1959 — six years before career politician Cindy Axne was born.

In fact, the only current member of Iowa's congressional delegation who was alive when Grassley was first elected was Miller-Meeks. And she was only 3 years old.

Grassley has a birthday coming up soon. There will be 89 candles on Grassley's cake on Sept. 17. He was 25 years old when he was first sworn into the Iowa House.

There were only 49 states in the Union when he first took office. Alaska had become a state only the week before, and Hawaii would not be admitted to the Union until August 1959.

The U.S. Term Limits initiative is trying to rid Congress of politicians that many voters would prefer to keep. You don't need to be a Harvard University debater to make a case that the easiest way for citizens to express "the will of the people" about the longevity of their elected officials is when voters cast their ballots in each election.

Whether everyone agrees with Iowa voters or not, they have made their feelings known by returning Grassley to office each time he has appeared on the ballot. The same occurred with Gov. Terry Branstad and U.S. Senator Tom Harkin.

Grassley told reporters in January, "You have to realize the ballot box is term limits if people don't want you in there. That's kind of the way I look at it."

And that's the way I look at it, too.

Randy Evans can be reached at DMRevs2810@gmail.com.

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Classifieds/Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE MEETING NOTICE

The Mount Pleasant City Council will meet in Regular Session Wednesday, September 14, at City Hall, 307 E. Monroe Street, second-floor meeting room at 5:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Roll Call.
2. Consent Agenda: To the Public - All items with an asterisk (*) are routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion and a roll call of the Councilmembers. There will be no separate discussion of items unless the Mayor, a Councilmember or citizen so request, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered in its normal sequence on the Agenda.
3. Receive & file communications.
4. Approve agenda.
- *5. Approve minutes of previous meetings.
- *6. Approve payment of bills.
- *7. Receive reports of Officers including Transfer Resolution No. 2022-75 for August.
8. Old Business-
 - a) Approve Change Order# 1 for Harvey Drive

Part-Time Office Help

We are looking for a new team member to enhance the patient experience at our clinic. High energy, motivated, self-starter with great communication skills is a must.

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 - Patient relations

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 Applications available onsite



Street Project.

b) Resolution accepting Harvey Drive Street Project.

c) Approve Change Order #2 for Madison Street Project.

d) Resolution accepting Madison Street Project.

e) Approve Change Order #1 for Oakbrook Place Street Project.

f) Resolution accepting Oakbrook Place Street Project.

g) Resolution authorizing a form of Loan and Disbursement Agreement by and between the City of Mount Pleasant and the Iowa Finance Authority for issuance of \$4,020,000 Sewer Revenue Capital Loan Notes, Series 2022.

*h) Renewal of a Class C Beer Permit, Class B Wine Permit, and Sunday Sales for Aldi Inc, at 1309 E. Washington Street.

*i) Renewal of a Class C Beer Permit and Sunday Sales for Pilot Travel Center LLC at 1300 N. Grand Avenue.

9. New Business-

a) 1st reading or proposed ordinance amending code of ordinances to include Fire Service and Emergency Response Fees.

b) Approve site plan for 1206 N. Grand A venue commercial and retail development.

10. Public Forum.

11. Adjourn to meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC NOTICE NOTICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

Interstate Power & Light (IPL), a subsidiary of Alliant Energy, with a principal place of business of 200 First Street SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406, is proposing to build a new utility scale solar and storage project in Lee County, Iowa (the "Project"). IPL serves nearly 500,000 electric customers in Iowa and has a long-standing partnership with the Lee County community. The Project would generate low-cost clean solar energy for Lee County and neighboring communities in Iowa for decades. The project is part of our plan to advance clean energy and enhance the economic and environmental health of the communities we serve. The Project will be built on privately owned land where landowners voluntarily participate and allow for the construction of the Project. No eminent domain will be used for this project.

A public informational meeting regarding the Project will be held with the Iowa Utilities Board. At the meeting, additional details about the Project will be presented and time will be allotted for answering attendees' questions. You have the right to be present at the meeting and to file comments with the Iowa Utilities Board, if you so choose.

Details of the public informational meeting are as follows:
 When: September 27, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.
 Where: Cobblestone Inn and Suites, 4901 Avenue O, Fort Madison

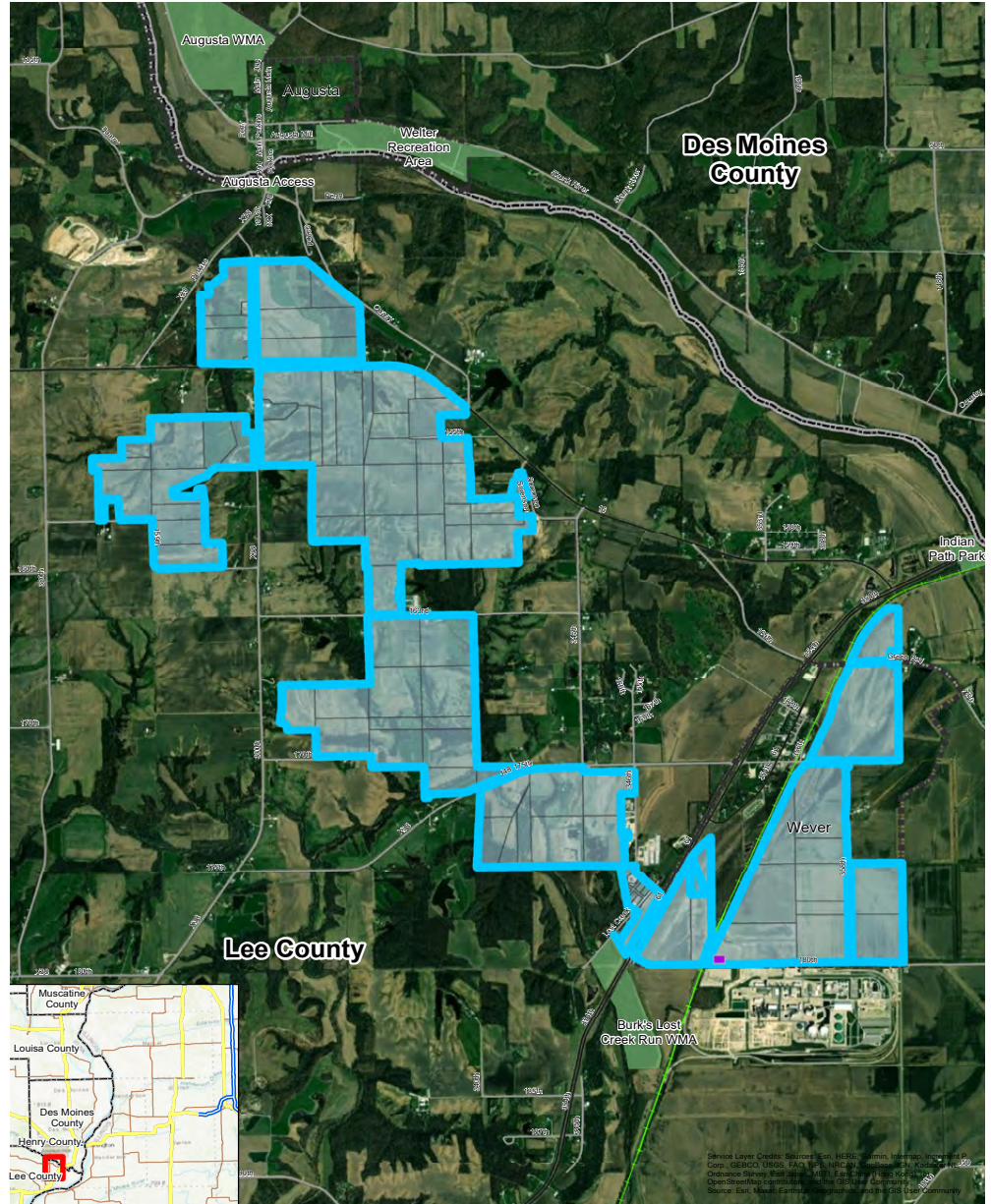
IA 52627

In the event of inclement weather, the informational meeting will be rescheduled for October 4, 2022, at the same time and place.

Below is a map showing the proposed location of the project boundaries.

Persons with disabilities requiring assistive services or devices to observe or participate should contact the Iowa Utilities Board at (515) 725-7300 in advance of the scheduled date to request that appropriate arrangements be made.

If you are unable to attend the meeting and have a question about the project, please email Alliant Energy by using the "Contact Us" form at www.alliantenergy.com/solar.



Legend

	Project Area		Public Lands
	Project Collector Substation		Railroad
	Parcels in Project		City Boundary
			County Boundary

Scale: 0.6, 0.3, 0, 0.6 Miles
 Data Source: geodata.iowa.gov, JCG Land Services

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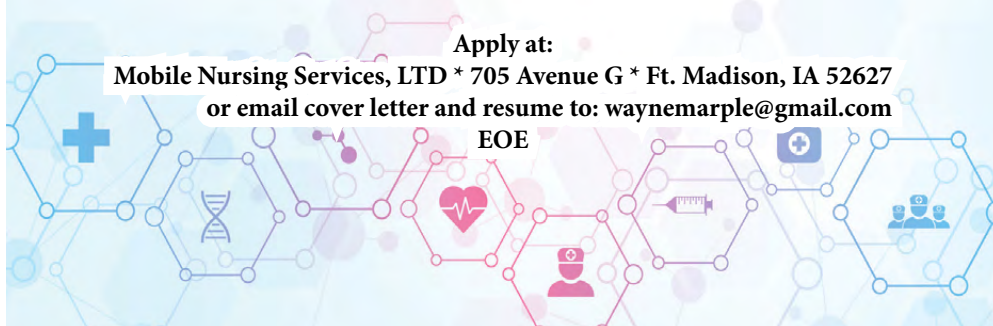
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Strike could further disrupt national supply chains

CHIEF - Continued from Page 1

The Zephyr runs through Burlington and Ottumwa on its way to L.A. Both those locations are going through multi-million dollar depot renovations.

Mohrfeld said he was surprised by the news, but said it made sense with the news that the freight line workers with BNSF are threatening a strike.

“Two weeks ago when they were in town and we went out to supper they were talking about routes that could be added,” Mohrfeld said.

Amtrak said in its statement that the moves were necessary to make sure passengers didn't get stuck midroute.

“These initial adjustments include the cancellation of three Long Distance routes on Tuesday, Sept. 13, 2022, and could be followed by impacts to all Long Distance and most State-Supported routes. These adjustments are necessary to ensure trains can reach their terminals prior to freight railroad service interruption if a resolution in negotiations is not reached,” the statement indicated.

The strike could effect tens of thousands of rail workers across the country. The rail freight industry failed to reach a contract agreement with union workers and a federally mandated 30-day “cooling period” ends Friday.

President Joe Biden and his administration are working to resolve the issue prior to Friday to avoid straining rail commerce and supply chain movement.

Amtrak operates most of the tracks in its Northeast Corridor, which runs from Boston to Washington, so operations in that sector would be generally go unaffected. But the cancellation of the three long-distance routes starting on Tuesday, in preparation for a freight rail disruption, could “significantly impact intercity passenger rail service.”

Additionally, the Amtrak statement released Monday indicated...“Amtrak is closely monitoring the ongoing freight rail – rail labor contract negotiations. The negotiations do not involve Amtrak or the Amtrak workforce. While we are hopeful that parties will reach a resolution, Amtrak has now begun phased adjustments to our service in preparation for a possible freight rail service interruption later this week. Such an interruption could significantly impact intercity passenger rail service, as Amtrak operates almost all of our 21,000 route miles outside the Northeast Corridor (NEC) on track owned, maintained, and dispatched by freight railroads. These initial adjustments include canceling some Long Distance routes starting on Tuesday, September 13, 2022, and could be followed by impacts to all Long Distance and most State-Supported routes. These adjustments are necessary to ensure trains can reach their terminals before freight railroad service interruption if a resolution in negotiations is not reached.

Amtrak will reach out to impacted and potentially impacted customers, informing them of the potential situation, offering to change their reservation to another travel date, waiving any difference in fare for departures through October 31, or receiving a full refund without cancellation fees.

ARPA grant adds digital services

LIBRARY - Continued from Page 4

issues with that,” Sanders said.

She said usage is about 58% from inside the city and 35% from rural areas. About 7% of usage is from people who do not live in West Point, St. Paul, Houghton or rural Lee County and includes cardholders from other towns in the county.

The library is now fine free and Sanders said West Point was the last library to move to fine free resource lending.

The libraries Summer Reading Program was held outdoors this year and included Butterfly Tents, Bubble Stations and the ISU Insect Zoo.

The popular Story Walk was also held on the square this summer.

The library received an America Rescue Plan Act grant for \$2,700 which was spent on increasing digital services to children including TumbleBooks, an online collection of e-books for children as well.

In other action, the council also discussed the donation of another park bench for the park in the square that would be donated by the family who owns the carnival that sets up at the Sweet Corn Festival each year.

City Administrator Randy Welding proposed a resolution to pay Lee County for a portion of trail grant that will connect with the county's trail improvements near 8th Street to connect South Park and the Pollmiller Park Trail. That would be at a cost of about \$62,000.



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