

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Thursday, February 23, 2023 | 8 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 43



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CITY NEWS

City purchases lots for future fire department

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - City officials have approved the purchase of property adjacent to the current public works building for future construction.

At Tuesday's regular City Council meeting, the council unanimously approved a \$200,000 purchase agreement for several lots in the 2200 block of Avenue L.

The acquisition of the property at 2216 to 2220 Avenue L will allow for construction of a new fire station at a cost of about \$9.5

million, according to preliminary estimates.

Fort Madison Fire Chief Joey Herren said obtaining the property allows the design to stay on one floor.

"We had to get those properties under our belt then we could do that design phase," he said. "If I wasn't able to get those, we would have had to go to two stories and when you go up, that jumps the costs up."

He said there are no current timelines on the project. But plans include a 7-bay single story fire station on the property. The city

See COUNCIL, page 8

FORUM

Legislators talk pipelines, mental health and taxes

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

MONTROSE - Area legislators fielded questions Friday in the first Lee County legislative session of the year.

State Sen. Jeff Reichman (R-Montrose) and State Rep. Martin Graber (R-Fort Madison) took on topics of eminent domain, local government funding, property taxes, and mental health.

The forum is put on monthly by economic development officials in and around the county, including Fort Madison Partners, Lee County Economic Development Group, and the Keokuk Chamber of Commerce.

Graber said eminent domain is focused now on pipeline construction and he said if the pipelines are constructed, ethanol plants can get to a zero carbon footprint.

"Fifty-seven percent of Iowa's corn goes to ethanol. That's doing a lot to support the price of corn in Iowa," Graber said. "They want you to get to a zero carbon footprint in 10 years. If this pipeline thing gets done, they can get to a zero footprint and that would make corn even more valuable."

Reichman said the ethanol industry could stand to lose millions if the pipeline doesn't go through, but said everything is still in the hands of the Iowa Utility Board.

"The pipelines are still with the IUB, so we haven't got that and we don't expect to see it," he said of the issue coming to the legislature.

"There will be a decision there and

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HUD looking into FMHA spends

Members of the Fort Madison Housing Authority talk with officials with the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development over some contract issues Wednesday night. HUD is looking into a contract the authority has with Lee County.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/
PCC

CONTRACT: Officials looking into contract with Lee County properties

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison Housing Authority has found itself in a small pickle with the Dept. of Housing and Urban Development.

The FMHA board of directors, which has been in a state of transition until just recently, heard from HUD officials Wednesday night about some issues with a contract that was causing some concern.

The FMHA board recently hired Mike Dear as director, who's coming in on the back side of the issue. They've also almost completely revamped the board with Jamie Carle, Linda Larkin, Jenny Devine, and Carman Salazar, all who've joined Rebecca Bowker in the past year.

Bowker has spent the last 18 years with the Housing Author-



BOWKER

ity, in addition to serving on the Fort Madison City Council, and an unsuccessful run at unseating Martin Graber for State Representative in the general election in November.

The contract in question is a contract with Lee County to manage several properties in Fort Madison.

"Several people in the community set up a contract (through FMHA) to care for county-owned properties that are leased to individuals who need housing," Bowker said.

"I think there's been a misunderstanding about what the housing authority has done and what HUD's expectations were. That's the issue with the contract and we're going to look at that."

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GRABER



REICHMAN

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WEATHER

THU 23 Feb.....Mostly cloudy, 38° F/15° F

FRI 24 Feb.....Mostly cloudy and cold, 30° F/21° F

SAT 25 Feb.....Mostly sunny, 43° F/28° F

OpenWeatherMap

IOWA LOTTERY

- LUCKY FOR LIFE 02/21.....19 22 35 41 48, Lucky Ball: 7
- MEGA MILLIONS 02/21.....215 30 36 63, Mega Ball: 24 Megaplier: 2
- PICK 3 02/21 MIDDAY.....8 3 6
- PICK 3 02/21 EVENING.....9 4 7
- PICK 4 02/21 MIDDAY.....5 8 0 0
- PICK 4 02/21 EVENING.....9 4 7 0

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Obituaries/Lee County News

OBITUARIES

CAROL M. DUNCAN

Carol M. Duncan, 75, of Keokuk, IA died Sunday, February 19, 2023 at Blessing Hospital in Quincy, IL.

She was born March 7, 1947 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of Charles Lester and Edith Davis Coovert. Carol graduated from Keokuk High School with the class of 1965. She then furthered her education at Iowa Wesleyan University in Mt. Pleasant, IA and received her BSN.



DUNCAN

Carol was united in marriage to Alvin Eugene Duncan. He preceded her in death in 1976. Carol had been employed by Great River Medical Center until her retirement. She was a member of Church of the Nazarene in Keokuk.

Carol had a crafters heart whose hands were always busy doing needlepoint, sewing and crocheting. She made beautiful gifts for her family to enjoy, including special occasions dresses for her granddaughter, Cheyenne. Carol loved cooking and baking and made delicious fried chicken and had a no fail recipe for her pie crust. She also enjoyed playing her banjo and was an avid Kansas City Chiefs fan.

She is survived by one son, Joseph Duncan (Kristin Young) of Keokuk, a great-nephew who was like a son, Tyrel Michael Gipe of Keokuk and two grandchildren Marcus Alvin Duncan of Nauvoo, IL and Cheyenne Lee Duncan of Fond du Lac, WI. She is also survived by two brothers, Keith Coovert (Sheldia Wrieden) of Keokuk and Robert Coovert (Judy) of Warsaw, MO and eight nieces and nephews. Besides her husband, she was also preceded in death by her parents and one sister, Patty Jo Coovert. A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m., Thursday at the Church of the Nazarene in Keokuk with Pastor Dana Jurgens officiating. Memorials may be made to the family, payable to Joseph Duncan. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.

The Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk is assisting the family with arrangements.

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Federal food and emergency shelter grants available

FEMA/DHS FUNDING: Lee County granted more than \$15K from national board program

LEE COUNTY - Lee County, Iowa has been awarded federal funds made available through the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency under the Emergency Food and Shelter National Board Program. Lee County has been chosen to receive a total of \$15,275 under Phase 40 to supplement emergency food and shelter programs in the county.

The selection was made by a National Board that is chaired by the U. S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and consists of representatives from American Red Cross, Catholic Charities, USA, National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA, The Jewish Federations of North America, The Salvation Army, and United Way Worldwide. The Local Board is charged with distributing funds appropriated by Congress to help expand the capacity of food and shelter programs in high-need areas around the country.

United Way of the Great River Region and Community Development Department, City of Keokuk will convene the local board. The Local Board will determine how the funds awarded to Lee County, Iowa are to be distributed among the emergency food and shelter programs run by local

service agencies in the area.

The Local Board is responsible for recommending agencies to receive these funds and any additional funds made available under this phase of the program. Under the terms of the grant from the National Board, local agencies chosen to receive funds must: 1) be private voluntary nonprofits or units of government, 2) be eligible to receive Federal funds, 3) have an accounting system, 4) practice nondiscrimination, 5) have demonstrated the capability to deliver emergency food and/or shelter programs, and 6) if they are a private voluntary organization, have a voluntary board. Qualifying agencies are urged to apply.

Lee County has distributed Emergency Food and Shelter funds previously to local food pantries, Community Action Agencies, and emergency shelter programs. Public or private voluntary agencies interested in applying for Emergency Food and Shelter Program funds must contact Sue Prochazka at United Way of the Great River Region at vc@unitedwaygr.org for an application.

Agencies currently funded will receive an email regarding continuation; new applicants should send an email to request the one-page application. Deadline to submit applications is March 7, 2023.

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Opinion

A rural school teaches lessons on governing

There is an interesting study in contrasts playing out right now in Iowa.

One example comes from the Davis County School District in Bloomfield. It is the 96th-largest of Iowa's 328 public districts, with an enrollment of 1,150 students.

The other example comes from the Iowa Legislature and Gov. Kim Reynolds.

The Davis County school board is wrestling with an incredibly difficult decision — whether to hold classes four days a week instead of the traditional five-day-a-week schedule.

The decision-making process has been marked by ongoing public information over the past five months. There has been lots of opportunity for people to ask questions about what is best for the Davis County schools and Davis County kids.

The process is geared both for learning what people in the district want and for helping the community become comfortable with the decision the school board eventually makes.

On the other hand, the solid Republican majorities in the Iowa House and Iowa Senate, with a Republican in the governor's office, seem more interested in gaining legislative victories and less interested in following a process that builds confidence and acceptance among Iowans whose opinions differ from the Republicans.

See what you think:

There are several reasons the Davis County School District has been thinking about switching to a four-day schedule. Money is not the prime motivation, but eliminating one day of classes would cut fuel costs for school buses by 20 percent. That is not insignificant. Davis County has one of the biggest bus fleets in rural Iowa because the district covers the entire county. And every dollar spent on transportation is a dollar not available for classroom learning.

The bigger reason for the possible schedule change would be to make it easier to recruit and retain quality teachers in a rural county where the closest Walmart is a half-hour drive.

The decision-making process being used in Davis County has been refreshing. Last October, Superintendent Dan Maeder created a team to formally study the pros and cons of a four-day school week.

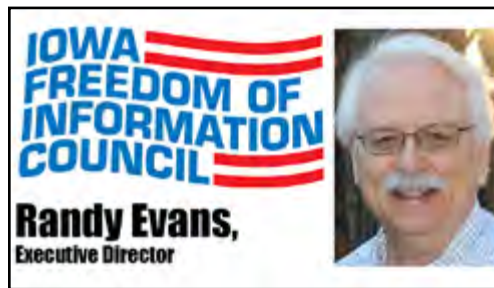
Business owners, parents of students and other residents have been looped in. School employees were surveyed. Informational meetings were held via Zoom so people could hear what was being learned and ask questions. Representatives from Waco of Wayland and Moulton-Udell, two rural districts that have already switched to a four-day week, shared the pluses and the minuses. And more community forums are planned in the coming weeks.

Through all of this, Maeder has been available to the public, the people for whom he works — at his office, at school board meetings, at school activities, and at the Casey's or Brothers Market — if local folks have questions to ask or comments to offer.

The process Maeder and the board are following certainly contrasts with the process we see at the Iowa Capitol.

Parents whose opinions are in line with the governor's on LGBTQ issues, controversial school books or other hot-button topics can get meetings with her or have their calls returned by her aides. Parents of LGBTQ kids or people who oppose banning certain books are frustrated by the governor's refusal to meet with them.

In the Legislature, it is not unusual for the public to get less than one day's notice before a controversial bill is debated. Sometimes an important proposal is introduced in the Legislature, voted on by both the House and Senate, and then signed into law by the governor, all in



just a handful of days.

Three weeks ago, the governor unveiled a huge bill to reorganize the Executive Branch of state government. Unlike Dan Maeder, Reynolds and her staff have not been available to answer reporters' questions, or the public's, about the far-reaching bill. That there are questions should surprise no one, because the document authorizing the

reorganization, Senate Study Bill 1123, is 1,570 pages long.

One worrisome section would change the longstanding practice of when Iowa's attorney general, rather than the locally elected county attorney, prosecutes an accused criminal. For nearly 50 years, the attorney general has stepped in only when the county attorney asks for help.

Reynolds' government reorganization makes clear the attorney general could choose to prosecute any criminal case, even without an invitation from the local county attorney.

That change raises concerns political considerations could be injected into the decision whether someone is, or is not, prosecuted on criminal charges. While campaigning last year for Brenna Bird, Iowa's new attorney general, Reynolds often told voters, "I want my own attorney general."

But giving the governor her own attorney general gives many Iowans the hives.

That is especially true with some lawmakers pushing for teachers and librarians to be prosecuted for the books they make available or for transgender people to be prosecuted for using bathrooms not matching their gender at birth.

Calhoun County Attorney Tina Meth-Farrington, the president of the Iowa County Attorneys Association, is a Republican like Reynolds and Bird. She told the Cedar Rapids Gazette she believes the governor's proposal is intended to allow the attorney general to prosecute local cases if a county attorney chooses not to file charges.

"It's there because there's a concern there have been county attorneys who campaigned on spending time and resources on more important things instead of low-level crimes," Meth-Farrington said, apparently a reference to new Polk County Attorney Kimberly Graham, a Democrat.

Graham has pledged not to prosecute low-level drug crimes like marijuana possession. She also has vowed to not ask for bail for people not considered to be a threat, although a judge, not the prosecutor, makes that decision.

Meth-Farrington told the Gazette, "I don't want this office politicized, and this is kind of throwing politics into the game. I just don't like that."

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



Lunch Specials
Feb 20-24
11am - 1pm

Monday, February 20

Roast Beef Sandwich, Cheese Potatoes

Tuesday, February 21

Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes, Corn

Wednesday, February 22

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Thursday, February 23

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Lee County News/From the Front

O'Donnell asks for more local government stability

FORUM - Continued from Page 1

we'll see what happens after that."

Keokuk City Administrator Cole O'Donnell asked the legislators to look harder at what can be done to create some consistency for local governments when it comes to funding streams.

He said since 2014, Keokuk has only seen a half percent increase in taxable valuations each year.

"That doesn't even keep up with inflation," O'Donnell said.

"We've worked to try and remove as much as we can from the general fund to use the tax dollars better and not have to cut."

He said there isn't enough attention being paid to local governments in rural parts of the state. And state rollbacks on property tax valuations will reach 30% at some point on residential properties and that's where the majority of funds are being spent.

"Do things to help rural governments. At some point, we'll be taxing at 30% on residential property and those are the ones that are using the majority of the services. Industries aren't using police and fire and parks. I don't want to put further

burden on our industries," he said.

"Try to do something to give local governments some predictability."

O'Donnell also said Senate Study File 1125 which reconfigures the state's sales tax will also burden local governments as the state will take part of those funds, as well.

"With 1125, you are taking the 'local' out of the local option sales tax. You'll take that control away from us."

One question asked why the two voted in favor of education savings accounts.

Reichman said public funds have been used on private schools for a long time and the state did bump the school funding formula by 3% this year.

"The important thing for us is to fund the student, not the institution," Reichman said.

Graber kept with his regular take on school funding saying under Republican control, education has outpaced inflation and continues to be the largest expenditure in the state budget.

The MPowerU group that recently visited legislators in Des Moines posed a question about the continued lack of mental health services in rural Iowa.

Reichman said the state spent an additional \$60 million on mental health care when it took over the services from counties in 2022.

"We recognize that was an issue, and it's still an issue," Reichman said. "But one of the biggest issues is providing providers. It's finding psychiatrists, psychologists, and getting them to come to southeast Iowa."

He said when people don't get diagnosed properly with proper medication, then self-medication takes place which then turns to drug use, and homelessness.

"This all goes back to not being properly treated," he said.

Graber said anyone with an interest in mental health issues should talk to the county sheriffs.

"They have stories to tell. But the biggest issue is even if we built a facility right here and right now, we wouldn't have the people to staff it," Graber said.

"It's a long-term problem and it will take a long-term solution. I think we do a good job in identification, we just don't have the resources as a state. And this isn't just an Iowa problem, it's other places, too."

Task force arrests FM man on felony drug charges

LEE COUNTY - The Lee County Narcotics Task Force reports the arrest of a Fort Madison man on Felony drug charges.

John Charles Arthur age 58, of Fort Madison, was arrested in the 2100 block of 303rd Ave in Fort Madison by Fort Madison Police Department on a warrant issued by the Lee County Narcotics Task Force on Felony drug charges. Arthur is charged with DELIVERY OF LESS THAN 5 GRAMS OF METHAMPHETAMINE, a class C Felony.

On 1/7/23, Arthur was observed driving in the 2100 block of 303rd Avenue and was stopped by for a traffic infraction. Arthur was arrested on his warrant at the time of the stop. The charges stem from an investigation conducted by the Lee County Narcotics Task Force where the defendant, John Arthur, had been distributing methamphetamine in the Fort Madison area.

The Lee County Narcotics Task Force was assisted by the Fort Madison Police Department, and the Lee County Attorney's Office.

The defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty. The Lee County Narcotics Task Force is funded in part by the U.S. Department of Justice and the funds administered by the Iowa Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy.

BACK PAIN?

Do You Have Hip Pain? Are You As Stiff As a Board When You Try to Get Up From a Chair? Have You Run Out of Hope?

How 5 Lies About Low BACK PAIN May Keep You Hurting, Frustrated & Exhausted...Forever!

NEW Scientific Breakthroughs Often Make Short Work of Low Back Pain...Just What Big Medical Centers and High Priced Clinics Are PRAYING You Never Figure Out On Your Own!

Hi, I'm Dr. Jason James, and if you've got any kind of back, hip or leg pain, your worries may be over in just a few minutes. Why? Because I'm the owner of James Healthcare & Assoc. clinic, and I've discovered what may be the best healing secrets for "bad backs" — EVER!



Dr. Jason James, D.C.

I'd be stupid to make such a claim if I couldn't back it up. But I am so confident we can help your back, I insist on giving you a 100% SATISFACTION PLEDGE at James Healthcare. I hate empty promises, and I also hate the lies most folks have been told about their backs. That's why it's important I expose these MYTHS about back pain.

MYTH #1: Sciatica (pain down your leg) is always caused by a herniated disc!

No way...even though most doctors will sell you a \$3,000 MRI at the first sign of leg pain. But they don't tell you about a 5-inch muscle in the hip that can squeeze the sciatic nerve. And it feels EXACTLY like you've got the worst slipped disc on earth. It's a major discovery and...

The good news is that it can be easy and inexpensive to correct! How? Just keep reading! But first, here's a picture to show you where the pain comes from:



MYTH #2: Stiffness from Arthritis means you're getting old...and it must be the reason for all your pain and stiffness!

Not true, because thousands of folks with arthritis in their backs have absolutely NO PAIN! Then why do YOU feel like your back will snap if you bend forward or twist too fast? Because the truth is:

Your stiffness may be caused by a hidden, even more dangerous problem than arthritis, and it can lead to a hip replacement!

You see, most folks believe that something mysterious (like maybe an "arthritis fairy?") waved a wand over them, and they're cursed... doomed to suffer forever.

But did you know that many arthritis problems are CAUSED by a combination of unseen imbalances in the spine and surrounding muscles? It's the most common cause of hip replacements but not that hard to correct if we catch it in time. It's like the tires on your car...

If the alignment is off just a teeny-weeny bit, at first you don't notice, but over a few thousand miles you start to see signs of wear...that is, if you're lucky enough to catch it before a flat on the freeway ruins your day. In your spine, you're lucky if you catch untreated imbalances before they ruin your spine! How to fix them? Just look at Myth #3.

MYTH #3: Your Back is "Out"!

Sure, that's exactly how it feels. But guess what, we found that's usually not the case. It sounds good, but we now know better. You see, there are 7 different reasons for that painful, locked-up and stuck feeling that causes so much misery:

- low-grade spasm
- pelvis torque and tension
- imbalance of hips

- fallen or dropped arches
- stiff vertebra joint
- adhesions in leg muscle
- pinched nerve

It's NOT just your spine, and it's NOT just your muscles. As a matter of fact, if one of the major muscles that stabilize the spine is partly spasmed, a "2nd stringer" will have to carry the load. But this is a serious problem...

It's like having your plumber doing all the dangerous electrical work!

Sure, he may get it done, and it may work at first, but how long until there's a fire? Or your back locks up? Which leads me to our next myth:

MYTH #4: "It's Only a Muscle!"

Boy, it's scary how many people think muscle problems are no big deal. Unfortunately, tight, bound-up, and spasmed or tight muscles can wear out joints faster than you can say, "Charley Horse!"

That's why it's important to examine the spine AT THE SAME TIME as the muscles that control it. It's also why we've had such outrageous success with even the worst backs at James Healthcare. Because we deal with BOTH the spine and muscles at the same time. We have spine doctors (chiropractors), pain doctors (nurse practitioners) and muscle professionals (therapists) and together they deliver an outstanding way to help "bad backs". This ties in to Myth #5 and the diagram:



MYTH #5: "Muscle Relaxants" will help your muscles heal! Good grief, NO!

Your muscles tighten up for a reason, and muscle relaxants are like turning back the clock on a time bomb...you know it's still going to blow up! Sure, you may feel better now, but you'll pay later...and pay "in spades"! So don't fall for these lies about your low back. They'll keep you hurting, frustrated and exhausted forever!

WOULDN'T YOU RATHER:

Turn over in bed without pain waking you up?

Get up in the morning without being as stiff as a board?

Be able to stand for as long as you want without sitting down for relief?

Lean forward over the sink without that "stabbing" in your back or leg?

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A hidden muscle may be causing your SCIATICA! Does Your Back Seem "Too Old" for Your Own Body? Not everyone qualifies for treatment, so help us see if you do. If you check off even one box, drop what you're doing and call James Healthcare NOW. And bring this coupon when you come in for your 39-Point "Back-Pain Track-Down Exam". Now check off what describes you:

- Tension...always tight across the beltline
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- Trigger Point...zinging pain to butt-cheek
- Stiff as a board...creak and groan when you first get out of bed in the morning
- Traitor...can't trust your back and what it's going to do—or when!
- Vice-like...constantly locked down tight!
- Shooting...vicious but short-lived
- Lumbago...hard to pin it down—just seems to hurt all the time, but it's hard to say where
- One-sided...right at that "bone" on one side
- Jack hammer...pounding off and on like a heartbeat or a toothache in your back
- Aching from 1-5 years
- Chronic pain for over 5 years

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"I broke my back when I was 41 years old and have had problems from then on, until June 2017. Dr. James gave me my life back! I have very few back problems now. It is great to be able to do my everyday duties without back problems."—Roger Kirchner

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Dr. Mack Kohnke, DC
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Business News/Education News

BUSINESS NEWS

Denning gets Forbes management designation

FORT MADISON – Joshua Denning & Associates, a private wealth advisory practice with Ameriprise Financial in Fort Madison, IA, was named to the list of “Best-in-State Wealth Management Teams” published by Forbes. The list recognizes financial advisors and their teams who have demonstrated high levels of ethical standards, professionalism, and success in the business.

The rankings are based on data provided by thousands of the nation’s most productive advisors and their teams. Joshua Denning & Associates was chosen based on assets under management, industry experience, compliance record and best practices in their practice and approach to working with clients.



DENNING

Joshua Denning & Associates is led by Joshua Denning, CRPC®, CLTC®. The team also includes associate financial advisors, Sara J. Hennigar, APMA®, Bronson Helt, APMA®, CLTC®, Randy Kartawich, CFP® and Walter Stephens as well as support staff, Anna Robbins, Peg Mohrfeld, Shawna Hutson and Rachel Conrad. They have collectively served the Fort Madison community since 1998.

Joshua Denning & Associates provides financial advice that is anchored in a solid understanding of client needs and expectations and provided in one-on-one relationships with their clients. For more information, please contact Joshua Denning and Associates at 319-372-8923 or visit the Ameriprise office at 701 Avenue G, Fort Madison or their website at ameripriseadvisors.com/joshua.r.denning.

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EDUCATION NEWS

Weirather tapped to serve on national science group

DONNELLSON — Nadine Weirather, head of the Extended Learning and Talent and Gifted programs for the Central Lee Community School District, will serve as a council member of the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA).

NSTA leaders work to transform science education to benefit all through professional learning, partnerships, and advocacy. Each NSTA board and council member brings critical knowledge, experience, and a unique perspective to enrich the organization and help advance its mission to transform science education.



WEIRATHER

Weirather was selected to serve on the council based on several criteria, including her professional experience as a science coordinator and educator and a member of the NSTA since 1984. In addition, she has served as president of the Iowa Academy of Science (IAS) from 2014-2016, and has been a member of the planning committee for the Iowa Science Teaching Section’s IAS fall conference since 1986.

“I am super excited to represent Central Lee and Iowa in my role as District XII NSTA Director,” said Weirather. “NSTA represents leadership toward science education excellence, and my goal is to continue this work and always strive for improvement. Together, we can work to move science education forward for all!”

As a District XII council member, Weirather will represent Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin through the NSTA.

“Nadine has been a valued member of our educational community for decades, and we could not be more delighted for her to receive this leadership opportunity,” said Dr. Andy Crozier, Central Lee Superintendent. “I am confident that she will make a great impact on the future of science education through the NSTA, and I extend my sincere congratulations to her on this achievement.”

For more information about the NSTA, please visit <https://www.nsta.org>.

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From the Front

Contract for county property management under review

HOUSING - Continued from Page 1

Bowker said the Housing Authority has to make sure it's billing the county for miscellaneous costs associated with managing the properties, and that hasn't been being done according to HUD's requirements.

HUD officials on a Zoom call at the meeting said they had "serious" concerns with how the contract on HUD funding had been used. They said a formal letter would be coming, but the county needed to not use HUD funding inappropriately.

Bowker said some in-depth conversations need to take place with the county and look at the contract to make sure the expenses are being accounted for appropriately.

HUD officials said the staff work has been excellent, and Dear said they recently scored a 90 on a performance metric.

However, during the transition after Patti Toops left as director and several board members resigned, several other contracts, including waste management and some water billing issues, cropped up that had to be navigated.

Larkin, who was the director of the authority when Hillview was built and was a director at the Kensington, was tapped to take over the chairmanship of the board after a future vote of the board.

Fire Dept. and Public Works buildings could cost \$20M

COUNCIL - Continued from Page 1

would tear down the current public works space to make room for the new fire department. One property owner wasn't interested in selling, but said having the fire station nearby wasn't an issue.

"The way the town's laid out - elongated, we want to be centrally located and this keeps us there," Herren said.

"The neighborhood is used to us and the noise we make. So what it boils down to is if we tried to go anywhere else, you would probably have to go out to the west side where there are some lots, but then with the way the city's laid out, you're talking four or five minutes to get to the east side of town."

The city is also working on moving all public works space out near Rodeo Park.

The cost of that construction could hover around \$11 million according to preliminary estimates.

"We did those back a ways and those are the orig-

inal estimates," he said.

The public works department will house the water department, the sewer department, and the parks department.

Herren said consolidating all those departments under one roof will help save on building maintenance costs with the consolidations.

Herren said the city will likely have to bond for the cost of the two buildings. They are looking for grants and other ways to offset some of the costs, but he said it's hard to find money for this type of construction.

"We'll have to take it to a bond," he said. "We've looked at programs like USDA, but even that would pay for only about 25% if we could qualify for a grant."

The county was just notified they were awarded a \$974,000 grant from the USDA under the Emergency Rural Health Care grant, but funds in that grant program have been exhausted and it is unknown whether

any of those funds that were created with federal stimulus money will be replenished for 2023.

In other action, the council also approved the maximum total dollar levy for the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The total maximum tax dollars for the upcoming fiscal year is \$4,135,325.

That includes taxes for Regular General \$2,495,356; Liability, Property & Self Insurance Cost \$68,980; Emergency \$83,179;

Police & Fire Retirement \$474,410; FICA & IPERS \$230,530 & Other Employee Benefits \$782,870. This amount does not include the Ag Tax of \$2,572 or the Debt Service Tax of \$1,064,790.

The Maximum Property Tax dollars requested in the total maximum levy does not represent greater than 102% of the Maximum Property Tax dollars requested for the current FY 2023. Most of the increase, per city officials, is due to employee benefits.

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