

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Friday, December 8, 2023 | 6 pages | Volume 7 • Issue 208



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Comp. board offers raises



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Several of Lee County's elected officials listen to presentations during Wednesday night's Lee County Compensation Board's annual salary review for supervisors, the auditor, recorder, treasurer, sheriff, and county attorney at the sheriff's office in Montrose.

COST OF LIVING: Raises in line with national cost-of-living rates

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – Elected officials in Lee County will get a cost-of-living increase if the recommendations of the Lee County Compensation Board are followed.

The board met for its annual review Wednesday evening at the sheriff's office in Montrose and recommended a 3% increase in salary for the county's Auditor, Recorder, Treasurer and Supervisors, while advocating for a 2% increase in

the sheriff's salary and an \$8,000 increase in the salary of Lee County Attorney Ross Braden.

The board decided on a dollar amount for the county attorney because Lee County Sheriff Stacy Weber said Braden's salary should be above his, because Braden is the county's top law enforcement officer.

The \$8,000 increase recommendation would put Braden about \$300 over Weber's salary including his 2% increase.

See RAISES, page 3

EDUCATION NEWS

GPAEA is more than just a special education resource

BURLINGTON - From the moment a child is born, the AEA is there - serving children from birth to age 21.

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See GPAEA, page 6

Supervisor says Hospice program may be on block

HEALTH DEPT.: LCHD board makes case for keeping county's hospice running

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY - A move by a Lee County Supervisor that threatened the continuance of the Lee County Health Department's Hospice program was met with a visceral reaction Thursday morning.

The Lee County Health Department Board of Directors met in their regular meeting at the John Bennett Center on the former Iowa State Prison grounds Thursday and were met with a statement from Lee County Supervisor Chuck Holmes regarding the LCHD Hospice program.

Holmes told the health board that he was going to ask Lee County Supervisor Chair Garry Seyb to add an agenda item to an upcoming board meeting that could've pulled tax support from the county's hospice program if approved.

The hospice program has run in the red for the past two years, according to LCHD Administrator Michele Ross. Ross fell on the sword saying dealing with the pandemic over the past two years changed the department's focus.

"In the last two fiscal years, we did operate in the red," Ross said. "When we were in the middle of the pandemic, I will be the first to admit, I wasn't on it. We have a very large operating budget and when one thing's occurring here, we get focused and, with the pandemic, we were largely focused on that. I'll take responsibility, but we want to turn it around."

Ross said they've been asking supervisors for time to show that the pro-

See HOSPICE, page 6

INDEX

Business Directory.....P.4
Century 21 Property Professionals.....P.5
CLASSIFIEDS.....Ps.4-5
Complete Rental.....P.3
Connection Bank.....P.2
EDUCATION NEWS.....P.6
Fort Colony Family Restaurant.....P.7
Fort Madison Family YMCA.....P.7
FROM THE FRONT.....Ps.3,6
Fullenkamp Insurance.....P.3
IOWA NEWS.....P.3

Jim Baier, Inc.....P.5
LOCAL NEWS.....P.6
LCK Roofing.....P.7
Lee County Health Department.....P.7
LEE COUNTY NEWS.....Ps.3,6
LOCAL NEWS.....P.6
Mohrfeld Solar.....P.7
Pothitakis Dentistry.....P.4
OBITUARIES.....P.2
• Janis D. Eckland, 75
• James M. Karaff, 49

Pen City Current.....Ps.2,4-5
Public Notices.....Ps.4-5
Ron Davoo.....P.7
Scotts Miracle-Gro Company.....P.5
Southeast Iowa
Regional Medical Center.....P.3
Tony Wolfe Insurance Services.....P.7

WEATHER

FRI 08 Dec..... Mostly cloudy with chance of rain, 59° F/40° F
SAT 09 Dec..... Clear and chilly, 43° F/23° F
SUN 10 Dec..... Mostly sunny and cold, 35° F/20° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 12/06.....22 24 27 34 43, Star Ball: 8 All Star Bonus: 3
LUCKY FOR LIFE 12/06.....4 9 15 25 40, Lucky Ball: 11
PICK 3 MIDDAY 12/06.....3 0 1
PICK 3 EVENING 12/06.....0 9 9
PICK 4 MIDDAY 12/06.....9 8 4 5
PICK 4 EVENING 12/06.....3 1 9 6
POWERBALL 12/06.....2 12 37 56 65, Powerball: 21 Power Play: 3

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

JAMES M. KARAFF

James M. Karaff, 49, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 10:44 am. Tuesday, December 5, 2023, at the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center in Fort Madison.

He was born on September 26, 1974, in Kirksville, Missouri, the son of Lloyd E. and Marian (Standley) Karaff.

He is survived by his parents: Lloyd and Marian; brother: Bronson M. Karaff of St. Paul, Minnesota; uncle and aunt: Frank and Joyce Protsman.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents; one uncle and one cousin.

James was a graduate of Central Lee High School. He worked as a manager for Kentucky Fried Chicken. He enjoyed animals (especially dogs), camping, taking his best friends Henry and Jack (the dogs) camping.

His body has been entrusted to the crematory of Schmitz Funeral Homes for cremation.

Per his wishes, no services will be held.

Memorials have been established in his memory for PAW Animal Shelter or an animal rescue of the donor's choice.

Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

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.

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OBITUARIES

JANIS D. ECKLAND

Janis "Jan" Dianne Eckland, 75, of Keokuk, IA passed away Tuesday, December 5, 2023 at the University of Iowa Hospital in Iowa City, IA.

She was born November 6, 1948 in Keokuk, IA the daughter of James William and Dorothy Louise White Fellows. Jan graduated from Keokuk High School with the class of 1967 and later attended Southeastern Community College.



On September 7, 1968 Jan was united in marriage to Galen Eckland in Keokuk. He survives.

Other survivors include one son, Ty Eckland (Melissa) of Keokuk, one daughter, Dr. Tara Lukkarinen (Ray) of Muscatine, IA, five grandchildren, Makenah Walden (Gabe), Kerrigan Kruse (Trent), Chase Eckland, Ryan Lukkarinen, and Nate Lukkarinen and one great-grandchild, Huxton Walden. She is also survived by two sisters, Delilah Wagner (Larry) of New London, IA, Lynda Fellows of Winfield, IA and one brother, Larry Fellows (Betty) of Mt. Dora, FL, and several nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, and one brother, Robert William Fellows.

Jan alongside Galen, laid the foundation for Eckland Motors in Keokuk. She had an entrepreneurial spirit and strong work ethic that was instrumental in growing the business. She had been employed for thirty-five years until her retirement. Jan worked hard her entire life. She was the manager of Keokuk Park Apartments, worked at an accounting firm, and owned multiple businesses with Galen. These businesses included M&E Arcade (Paddock, Wizard Worlds), tanning salons, Nemo's Restaurant, Keokuk Motors, and finally Eckland Motors since 1992.

As a young girl, Jan was a member of Girl Scouts. She later became a leader for her daughter's class through elementary school and then served as a leader for her granddaughter's class and earned a ten-year pin.

She loved going out to eat at local restaurants with Galen and friends. She enjoyed bargain shopping, hot tubs, and traveling. She enjoyed paper crafts, particularly making greeting cards.

She was a teacher of many things to her family; passing on her financial savvy and rules of living a good life. She was a great listener and gave the best advice. She had mental strength beyond measure.

Jan enjoyed spending time with her family above all else and took great pleasure in making arrangements for special trips with them. One of the highlights was a family cruise in 2016 where Jan and Galen renewed their wedding vows with all their children and grandchildren in attendance.

Jan was known for her tremendous generosity and kind heart. She was always giving of her time and treasures to her family and to others in need. She gave each of her grandchildren money one holiday season and challenged them to use the funds to help the less fortunate. It made her extremely happy to hear from each child how they put their money to work to help someone else.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m., Saturday, December 9, 2023 at Crossview Church in Keokuk, IA with Pastor Kevin Hardcastle officiating. Following the service there will be a time of food and fellowship at the church.

Memorials may be made to American Cancer Society.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.



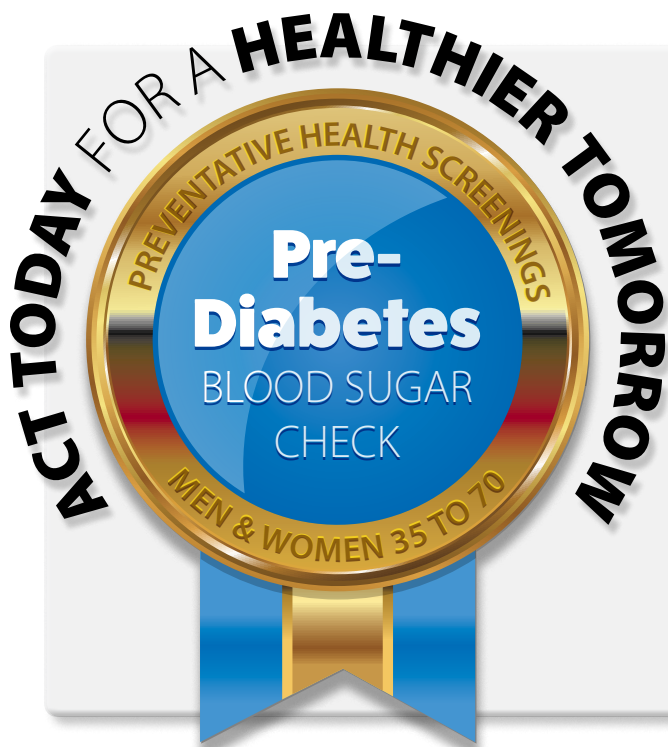
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Iowa News/From the Front

Supervisors to react to comp. board proposals

RAISES - Continued from Page 1

Any increase in Weber's salary also applies to his three administrators including Chief Deputy Will Conlee, Capt. Craig Burch, and Jail Administrator John Canida at varying levels.

The same dynamic applies to deputies of the other elected officials who are tied to the elected officials' salary.

The Compensation board recommended 7% increases in 2022 a year after they recommended a 42% increase for Weber following code of the newly implemented Back the Blue law.

However, this year, the compensation board didn't follow that code, which is still in effect, and required Weber to provide a 3-page document outlining where other law enforcement administrators in similarly populated communities around the state are at with respect to salary.

Weber's current salary is \$135,489 annually after an adjustment made in 2021 per Iowa an Iowa code signed into law by Governor Kim Reynolds. Weber compared salaries of police chiefs in Marion, Cedar Falls, Bettendorf, Marshalltown, and Mason City resulting in a mean average of \$151,735. The mean average of the state administrators was \$151,910. That would create a increase of \$16,334 which would be more than 12%.

"That would be well over a 10% increase which I know is ridiculous to expect, especially considering our budget's not the best, but I'm still required by code to present this to you," Weber said.

Braden made a case to the board for a 5% increase saying his office handles as many cases as Des Moines County but runs with two full time attorneys less that that county. He said four full-

time attorneys work hard, but they can handle the county's case load when fully staffed.

However, they are currently working with three attorneys and haven't had much luck attracting a fourth. That salary isn't currently being paid and the other attorneys, Justin Stonerook and Amy Beavers, have picked up the slack. Braden said he'd like to reward that effort along with making the position more attractive to attorneys.

"Most attorneys coming out of college now don't want to work in public service, they want to go to larger law firms and the bigger paychecks," he said.

The other elected officials said their deputies are attached to their salaries as well, and they don't want to leave their deputies without a pay increase. But they understand the condition of the county's budget.

Last year the county had to borrow two million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act funding to meet obligations and they won't be able to do that next year. The state has also mandated that county's set their general levy rate at \$3.50 by the year 2029 which has many counties now working in that direction.

The recommendations now will go in front of the Lee County Board of Supervisors for approval. If the board reduces any of the rates by a percentage, they must reduce all of the recommendations at the same rate, with the exception of the Supervisors themselves. The board cannot increase the recommendations of the Comp. board, but they can lower them, and supervisors can forego their raise without impacting the other elected officials.

Grassley, Miller-Meeks advocate for Quad Cities' federal workers

WASHINGTON - The bi-state congressional delegation representing the Quad Cities is aiming to improve access to workers' compensation for federal employees in the region, including those at Rock Island Arsenal. Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks (R-Iowa) joined Sens. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) and Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), along with Rep. Eric Sorensen (D-Ill.), in urging the Department of Labor (DOL) to address challenges employees face when seeking treatment for injuries covered by workers' compensation.

"The inability to get appointments with local providers has forced some federal employees to travel far away to seek treatment," the lawmakers wrote to Acting Labor Secretary Julie Su. "Employees unable to travel are left to manage their injuries, which can deteriorate without timely treatment. Other employees are left paying medi-



MILLER-MEEKS



GRASSLEY

cal bills out of their own pocket. Federal employees across the country are facing similar issues to those in the Quad Cities."

Currently, care providers can choose whether to accept federal workers' compensation cases. Many providers in eastern Iowa and western Illinois choose not to accept these patients, citing difficulties in coordinating with and receiving payment from DOL. Grassley and his colleagues are demanding DOL swiftly improve its processes to encourage provider participation in the workers' compensation program and help ensure federal employees who sustain injuries on the job can readily access the treatments they need.

Youth Straw Poll set for Jan. 9 in Iowa

DES MOINES - Iowa Secretary of State Paul Pate today announced the Iowa Youth Straw Poll will take place across the state on Tuesday, January 9. Less than one week before Iowans participate in the Iowa presidential caucuses, thousands of Iowa students will make their voices heard in the Iowa Youth Straw Poll and vote for their preferred candidates for U.S. President.

The Iowa Youth Straw Poll is a hands-on educational experience designed to inspire civic engagement. Every public school, private school, homeschool student, and youth group in the state is invited to participate.

"We've seen Iowa's young people become more and more civically en-

gaged and excited about the elections process," said Secretary Pate. "Programs like the Iowa Youth Straw Poll not only give these students an opportunity to make their voices heard, but they get a firsthand understanding of how elections work, so they are better prepared to vote in elections once they are eligible."

Students, teachers, and organizations can register for the Iowa Youth Straw Poll by clicking here. A full list of schools that have already registered is available at this link. Teachers and students are encouraged to post photos of their Youth Straw Poll activities on social media, utilizing the #BeAVoter hashtag.

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Classifieds/Public Notices

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE
Fort Madison
Community School
District
Regular Board Meeting
11/20/2023 - 06:00 PM
Central Office,
Board Room
1930 Avenue M
Fort Madison, Iowa
52627
MEETING MINUTES

Public Comments are welcome. They are limited to 3 minutes. Any member of the public who wishes to participate in public comments must be physically present at the meeting and follow the appropriate sign in procedures. Attendees Voting Members Dianne Hope, Director Josh Wykert, Board President Lois DiPrima, Director Mio Santiago, Vice President Paul Wilkerson, Director Non-Voting Members Dr.

Erin Slater, Superintendent of Curriculum, Sp. Ed & Student Services Sandy Elmore, Director of Business Services
 I. Call meeting to order and determination of a quorum The meeting was called to order by President Wykert at 6:00 p.m. II. Recognition of guests President Wykert welcomed members of the audience in attendance and explained the procedures for the meeting. III. Reading of Foundation documents The Board read and reviewed the Foundation documents consisting of the Vision, Mission and Belief statements and the Goals for the Fort Madison Community School District. IV. Monthly communications

A. Student Representative Report The Board received a report of recent and upcoming activities at the High School . B. PK-6; 7-12 Renovation and Construction Update The Board received an update on the progress of the Middle School PK-6 and High School 7-12 Renovation and Construction Project. C. District Successes! Superintendent Slater shared information regarding a new program entitled CEO to be offered at the Career Tech Center. D. Superintendent Goal Report Superintendent Slater reviewed the Increased Visibility goal and steps taken towards the achievement of this goal. E. District Presentation 1. Tech Plan

Annual Presentation Director of Technology, John Hager, reviewed the 5 Year Technology Plan with the Board. V. Approve the agenda Motion made by: Dianne Hope Motion seconded by: Lois DiPrima Voting: Unanimously Approved VI. Consent Agenda Motion made by: Lois DiPrima Motion seconded by: Mio Santiago Voting: Unanimously Approved A. Minutes 1. Public Hearing - October 16, 2023 2. Regular Board Meeting - October 16, 2023 3. Work Session - November 06, 2023 B. Financial Reports 1. October Balance Sheet 2. Revenue Summary Report 3. Expenditure Report 4. Student Activity Report C. Accounts payable 1. October General Ac-

count Board Bills for Approval 2. November General Account Board Bills for Approval 3. Student Activity Account Board Bills for Approval 4. Nutrition Account Board Bills for Approval 5. American Express Board Bills for Approval D. Consider personnel resignations 1. Di Di Jackson - Associate, LE 2. Jordyn Meierotto - 1/2 Track Coach, HS 3. Marisa Bunn - Therapeutic Support, MS 4. Stephanie Olson - Cheer, HS 5. Grant Marshall - Transportation, CO E. Consider employment of personnel 1. Jordyn Meierotto - Asst. Track Coach, HS 2. Doug Hayes - 7/8 Grade Wrestling 3. Keith Helling - 1/2 Girls Track Coach, HS 4. Keith Helling - 1/2 Boys Track

Coach, HS 5. Jill Stull - 1/2 Asst. Girls Track Coach, HS 6. Kent Bailey - 1/2 Asst. Athletic Enhancement, HS 7. Chuck Banks - 1/2 Asst. Athletic Enhancement, HS 8. Sasha Manley - Behavior Interventionist, RE 9. Charles Plimpton - Associate, HS 10. Makenna Claman - Associate, MS 11. Mary Chaknine - Associate, MS 12. Denielle Huey - Secretary, MS 13. Darren Blickhan - Associate, MS 14. Kelsey Hugg - Truancy Officer 15. Staci McDowell - Food Service, MS 16. Elizabeth Nabors - Secretary, RE 17. Andrew Brobston - Bus Mechanic, CO 18. Angela Mueller - Secretary, CO 19. Jessica Shoup - Maintenance, CO 20. Linda Hamelton -

BUSINESS DIRECTORY



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Classifieds/Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES

Restorative Interventionist, MS 21. Shelby C. Scott - Restorative Interventionist, HS 22. Taylor Jackson - Therapeutic Support, MS 23. Jill McKay - Therapeutic Support, MS 24. Michelle Gravitt - Food Service, MS 25. Carol Scott - Food Service, HS 26. Crystalle Kryzak - Food Service, RE 27. Heather Wellman - Food Service, RE 28. Tristen Dickerson - 7th Grade Boys Basketball Coach 29. Tristen Dickerson - 8th Grade Boys Basketball 30. Jeffrey Estrada - Transportation, CO 31. Kent Bailey - Asst. Girls Basketball Coach, HS F. Consider contract modifications 1. Debra Ridgeway - Teacher, LE 2. Lisa Vincent - Teacher, RE 3. Mitchell Simms - Teacher, MS 4. Jill Stull - Guidance Counselor, RE 5. Ian Blanchard - Teacher, MS G. Consider leave of absence H. Consider open enrollment requests I. Other reports 1. 23-24 Donations 2. 23-24 Fundraisers 3. MS/HS Renovations and Additions Project Summary VII. Action Items A. Director of Curriculum and Student Services B. Superintendent 1. Consider approval of Girls Wrestling Sharing Agreement with Danville for 23-24 year Motion made by: Mio Santiago Motion seconded by: Lois DiPrima Voting: Unanimously Approved 2. Chronological Policies for Review Motion made by: Lois DiPrima Motion seconded by: Dianne Hope Voting: Unanimously Approved 1. Policy 702: Cash in School Buildings 2. Policy 702.01: Petty Cash Ac-

counts - DELETE 3. Policy 703.01: Budget Planning 4. Policy 703.02: Spending Plan - NEW 5. Policy 704.01: Local - State - Federal - Miscellaneous Revenue 6. Policy 704.02: Debt Management 7. Regulation 704.02-R(2): Debt Management - Bond Disclosure Policy Fort Madison Community School District 8. Policy 704.04: Gifts - Grants - Bequests 9. Policy 704.05: Student Activity Fund 10. Policy 704.06: Online Fundraising Campaigns/Crowdfunding 11. Policy 704.11: Free Admission - Senior Citizens 3. Quarterly Policies for Review 5 Motion made by: Dianne Hope Motion seconded by: Lois DiPrima Voting: Unanimously Approved 1. Policy 401.01: Equal Employment Opportunity 2. Policy 503.01: Student Conduct 3. Regulation 503.01-R(1): Student Conduct - Student Suspension 4. Policy 503.02: Expulsion 5. Regulation 605.03R(1): Objection to Instructional Materials - Reconsideration of Instructional Materials Regulation C. Board Secretary/Director of Finance 1. Consider approval of Annual Transportation Report for Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2023 Motion made by: Dianne Hope

Motion seconded by: Lois DiPrima Voting: Unanimously Approved 2. Consider Approval of 2020 3500 Chevrolet Express 12 Passenger Van purchase for the 23-24 school year in the amount of \$48,035 Motion made by: Mio Santiago Motion seconded by: Lois DiPrima Voting: Unanimously Approved 3. Consider Approval of 2022 Chevrolet Express 12 Passenger Van Purchase for the 23-24 School Year in the amount of \$53,280 Motion made by: Dianne Hope Motion seconded by: Mio Santiago Voting: Unanimously Approved VIII. Discussion Items A. Director of Curriculum and Student Services 1. Certified Enrollment including Special Education Count The Board reviewed the Certified Enrollment and Special Education enrollments. 2. Board Instructional Tour The Board will visit the Middle School for the next Instructional Tour. 6 3. PLC Update The Board discussed the ongoing efforts related to the Professional Learning Communities initiative. B. Superintendent 1. Chronological Policies for Discussion The Board reviewed and discussed the Board policies. 1. Regulation 704.02-R(1): Debt Management

- Post Issuance Compliance Regulation for Tax-Exempt Obligations 2. Policy 704.03: Investments 3. Policy 704.10: Gate Receipts and Admissions 2. Quarterly Policies for Discussion The Board reviewed and discussed the Board policies. 1. Policy 503.08: Discipline of Students Who Make Threats of Violence of Cause Incidents of Violence - NEW 2. Regulation 503.08-R(1): Discipline of Students Who Make Threats of Violence or Cause Incidents of Violence - Student Threats of Violence and Incidents of Violence - NEW C. Board Secretary/Business Manager D. Board Member Attendance The Board Member Attendance report was accepted as presented. E. Staff Attendance The Staff Attendance Report was accepted as presented. IX. Comments from the audience There were none. X. Legislative update The Board received a Legislative update. XI. Announcements A. Board Work Session: December 4, 2023, 6:00 PM - Central Office Board Room B. Regular/Annual Board Meeting - December 18, 2023, 6:00 PM - Central Office Board Room C. Board of Directors Organization

Meeting - December 18, 2023, 6:00 PM - Central Office Board Room XII. Adjourn The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 p.m. Motion made by: Lois DiPrima Motion seconded by: Mio Santiago Voting: Unanimously Approved

action was taken. Adjournment: 5:04 p.m. Approved: October 2, 2023 Chad Bird, City Manager Jon D. Billups, Mayor

PUBLIC NOTICE MINUTES OF THE BURLINGTON, IOWA CITY COUNCIL INFORMAL WORK SESSION September 25, 2023

The Burlington City Council met in an informal work session at 4:30 p.m. in the Thomas J. Smith Council Chambers, City Hall with Mayor Billups and Council Member Graham-Murray present. Council Member Critser arrived at 4:45 p.m. Council Members Maupin and Wilson were absent. Items discussed at the informal work session are listed on the work session agenda on file in the office of the City Clerk. No

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- **Production Lead** - Day shift, \$28.05+ per hour, depending upon experience.

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From the Front

Supervisors eyeing LCHD's Hospice program

HOSPICE - Continued from Page 1

gram can be self-sufficient.

LCHD finance operations manager Tammy Wilson said currently the program is running only about \$8,000 behind after moving some salaries and benefits into other grant programs.

The health department is also awaiting some reimbursements for room and board, and VA contracts that will make the picture even better.

The health department pays up front for hospice clients that live in long-term care facilities, and then gets reimbursed through Medicare. About \$105,000 of those payments are behind, according to Wilson.

The health board said the service was critical to the people of Lee County and the private sector is volatile, which could leave residents without hospice services.

"I think that'll be a regrettable event for all the citizens of Lee County to what this organization is dedicated to. These are the people that have the most serious problems. You know that and you know how difficult that is," health board member Dr. Philip Caropreso said to Holmes.

Caropreso said it appears that LCHD is being targeted by the supervisors.

"The whole process seems to have been decided beforehand and we're being confronted by this decision. People have already made up their mind with very little input, and no input from the experts in the department," Caropreso said.

Supervisor Matt Pflug, who is the Board of Supervisors' liaison to the LCHD board, said the health department is being targeted. Pflug said he agreed supervisors should give the health department time to show their budget for the next fiscal year before making any decisions.

"They're targeting the health department. I'm just gonna come right out and say it," Pflug said.

"What if these private service providers are gone tomorrow? It happened with the Keokuk hospital."

Holmes said he's spoken with Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center and was told they could handle the transition of hospice patients to their hospice program. He said there are three other hospice programs functioning in Lee County.

LCHD's Emily Biddenstadt said county residents need to have a choice for hospice care.

"We can't just transfer a patient to a different hospice provider," Biddenstadt said.

Seyb had said during a prior Board of Supervisors meeting that the county shouldn't be involved in providing public services on taxpayers' dimes, when private companies are providing the same service.

Holmes read a statement he had prepared for Thursday's board meeting.

Holmes, in reading from his statement, said the program should be discontinued.

"BOS chairman Garry Seyb and other supervisors support the premise that programs and services not required by code, and that have these programs and services provided by the private sector, and where the private sector is able to provide these programs and services to all Lee County residents who apply for it - should be discontinued," Holmes said.

He said he was going to ask an item be added to an upcoming agenda for the Board of Supervisors to decertify the Hospice Program and to terminate the operation of the program by the end of this fiscal year, which would be June 30, 2024.

Holmes said if that motion carried, there would be no budget appropriation for hospice services in the upcoming fiscal year.

LCHD board member Heather McCormick asked if Supervisors had the authority to terminate the Hospice program. Holmes said he didn't think the board could terminate the program, but could end property tax support in the budget process. McCormick has 30 years experience in health care finance and said supervisors shouldn't be "stirring the pot", if they don't have authority to shutter the program.

Lee County Health Department has been offering hospice care for 31 years and Ross said it's a service known for quality and compassion.

She said the staff is working diligently to show that the hospice program can function without taxpayer support and supervisors should wait to make any decisions until they see the department's project budget.

Holmes said he would take the board's reaction to his statement to Supervisors at their next meeting, but would leave it up to Seyb to add the item to the agenda. Pflug said he would reach out to Seyb to discourage that action.

Budget workshops usually take place immediately following the holidays in January.

AEA closing in on five decades of service

GPAEA - Continued from Page 1

Since 1975, Great Prairie AEA has been at the forefront of ensuring that every student has equal access to high-quality education, special education services, and resources. Serving 14 counties, 32 school districts, and nine accredited non-public schools, the agency's impact extends to over 36,000 children and youth.

What is an AEA? Great Prairie AEA is one of nine AEAs in Iowa, each assigned to a region of the state. AEAs are public entities funded by federal and state aid and local tax dollars. Great Prairie AEA employs specialists assigned to local communities, school districts, and non-public schools to provide various services. AEA staff members serve children in your community from birth (through direct services in the home to children who may be experiencing developmental delays) to high school (and some high school students with special needs up to the age of 21), families, and educators.

Over 80% of GPAEA's efforts directly support students with disabilities, offering essential services such as speech-language pathology, school psychology, physical therapy, audiology, and more. This targeted support ensures that students with diverse needs receive the assistance outlined in their Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), breaking down barriers to learning.

Beyond special education, Great Prairie AEA enriches the educational landscape by providing educators with ongoing support and professional development. Specialists in various curriculum areas, including math, reading, science, and digital learning, actively engage with local schools, providing training and consultation to ensure teachers are well-equipped to nurture a culture of continuous learning.

The agency also boasts a vast library of children's and professional books, along with digital resources for research projects and presentations. Creative Services further supports our schools by offering printing, graphic design, lamination, and vinyl graphics at a low cost. Moreover, technology support, including networking, Internet filtering, and cybersecurity tools, is readily available to ensure students are equipped for the digital age.

Iowa has long been known for its strong sense of community, dedication to education, and commitment to providing every child an opportunity to succeed. Great Prairie AEA embodies these values, reflecting a shared commitment that has endured for almost five decades.



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