

PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and **Read** all over

Friday, December 22, 2023 | 7 pages | Volume 8 • Issue 9



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County to look at permit fees

BUDGET: Engineer says county is subsidizing a lot of private work

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – As part of the county's efforts to carve out space in the budget under a 4-year state mandate to reduce the general levy to \$3.50 by 2029, department heads are taking another look at revenues and expenses.

One of those changes could be increasing permitting fees the county charges for services provided by the county's engineering department and secondary roads functions.

County Engineer Ben Hull proposed increasing three specific fees at Monday's Lee County Board of Supervisors meeting.



HULL

Hull asked the supervisors to reconsider fees for entrance way permits, utility permits, and dust control permits. He also said he would like to increase the county's costs for rock as it's one of the bigger ticket items in his budget.

Hull said his department is essentially loaning the county money. He said his ending balance at the end of fiscal year 2025 is

\$2.6 million.

"That's a number that makes me uncomfortable. It's not

See HULL, page 6



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Members of the Fort Madison High School Future Farmers of America club give the Fort Madison Board of Directors an update from the National Convention they attended this year.

IOWA NEWS

State unemployment rate ticks up .2% for November

DES MOINES, IOWA – Iowa's seasonal-adjusted unemployment rate increased to 3.3 percent in November, up from 3.1 percent one year ago. Iowa's labor force participation rate decreased to 68.1 percent in November (down 0.3 percent from October and 0.1 percent from one year ago) even as businesses gained 4,700 jobs. Meanwhile, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped to 3.7 percent in November.

"Despite some Iowans leaving their

jobs in November, we saw employers add over 4,500 jobs, and we have gained over 10,000 jobs in the past year," said Beth Townsend, Executive Director of Iowa Workforce Development. "A bright spot in today's report includes an increase of over 1,000 jobs in health care, an industry that has struggled to find workers. That industry is up 8,500 jobs in 2023, which will help ease some of the gaps in the industry created by the pandemic. Additional-

ly, there are over 62,000 jobs posted on IowaWORKS, a number which continues to exceed the total number of unemployed in Iowa."

The number of unemployed Iowans increased to 57,200 in November from 56,000 in October.

The total number of working Iowans decreased to 1,672,000 in November. This figure is 8,000 lower than October but 3,800 higher than one year ago.

EDITORIAL

EMPTY NEST

By Curt Swarm



Where have all the rabbits gone

Where have all the rabbits gone, long time passing?

The Empty Nest farm has typically been overrun with rabbits for the eight years Ginnie and I have lived here. In fact, they've been so thick that when we pull in the driveway at night, and the car lights flash across the blue spruce windbreak, it's like cockroaches scattering across linoleum when you flip on the lights. I'm not exaggerating.

Of course Buddy loves it. We have a little pen for him outside the kitchen door. When I get up in the middle of the night, Buddy usually gets up with me, and I put him out to take care of business. Sometimes there might be a rabbit or two in his pen. He has a ball chasing them around and around, and even might catch one if they get stuck in the fence trying to escape. Last year was Buddy's record: three rabbits intercepted. I let him do a little chewing before I take them away from him, as our vet advises.

And I begrudge the fact the rabbits (that Ginnie thinks are so cute) absolutely riddle and destroy much of our vegetation over the winter. The lilacs that I hand planted when we first moved to the farm, the fire bushes that Ginnie gave me for Father's Day, our McIntosh apple tree, the weeping cherry tree, peach tree, flowering plum, etc., etc., are all victims of gnawing incisor damage that can be quite destructive. I've put wire and tubing around a lot of the flora, and it helps some. Barely.

But this year, here in the fall of 2023, the rabbits are gone. Poof! Where did they go? It was just this spring that Ginnie discovered a rabbit nest in her strawberry bed, and Buddy had his fair share of baby bunnies. I kid you not. Rabbits are not skittering at night when we pull in the driveway.

Ginnie and I went rabbit hunting. We drove around the farm yard after dark,

See SWARM, page 6

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WEATHER

FRI 22 Dec.....Rainy & cool, 50° F/45° F
SAT 23 Dec.....Mostly cloudy, 56° F/47° F
SUN 24 Dec.....Rain likely, 54° F/49° F

IOWA LOTTERY

LOTTO AMERICA 12/20.....4 14 15 17 28, Star Ball: 7 All Star Bonus: 2
LUCKY FOR LIFE 12/20.....1 11 19 34 40, Lucky Ball: 11
PICK 3 MIDDAY 12/20.....4 8 9
PICK 3 EVENING 12/20.....6 8 2
PICK 4 MIDDAY 12/20.....6 9 6 8
PICK 4 EVENING 12/20.....6 4 5 9
POWERBALL 12/20.....27 35 41 56 60, Powerball: 16 Power Play: 2

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For the Record/Obituaries

For the Record

Fort Madison Police Report

12/19/23 - 10:03 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 1100 block of 24th Street.

12/19/23 - 1:32 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of larceny/theft in the 2600 block of Avenue I.

12/19/23 - 3:22 p.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of vandalism in the 2600 block of Avenue I.

12/19/23 - 10:48 p.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Matthew Jay Wells, 23, of Davenport, in the 1300 block of 14th Street, on charges of public intoxication and disorderly conduct - fight/violence. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/20/23 - 12:34 a.m. - Fort Madison police responded to a report of a property damage accident at 18th Street and Avenue F.

12/20/23 - 1:02 a.m. - Fort Madison police arrested Brian Scott Burch, at 18th Street and Avenue F, on a charge of 1st offense OWI. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

Keokuk Police Report

12/18/23 - 8:02 a.m. - Keokuk police responded to a report of a two-vehicle acci-

dent in the 1300 block of Main Street. According to the report, a vehicle driven by Paula Faye Vice, 60, of Keokuk, was backing up from a gas pump and struck a parked vehicle, causing minor damages to the driver's side and driver's side rear doors. No injuries were reported. Vice was cited for failure to provide security against liability. Both vehicles were driven from the scene.

12/19/23 - 7:57 a.m. - Keokuk police cited and released Victoria Marie Scott, 30, of Fort Madison, in the 3500 block of Main Street, on a charge of driving under suspension.

12/19/23 - 11:09 p.m. - Keokuk police arrested Angela Leann Hansen, 50, of Keokuk, in the 1900 block of Timea Street, on a warrant for failure to appear/contempt of court and a charge of driving under suspension. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/20/23 - 2:43 a.m. - Keokuk police arrested Jack Lee Dangel, 33, of Montrose, in the 1100 block of Franklin Street, on a warrant for failure to appear/contempt of court. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

Lee County Sheriff Report

12/18/23 - 11:15 a.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Collin Elijah Segoviano, 25, of Waterloo, at the sheriff's office, on warrants for possession of a controlled substance - 1,2,3rd and possession of drug paraphernalia. He was taken to Lee County Jail and later released on bond.

12/18/23 - 1:00 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Nancy Jean Reese, 44, of Waterloo, at the South Lee County Courthouse, on a warrant for failure to appear. She was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/18/23 - 9:30 p.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested Bradley Allen Ferrel, 34, of Denmark, at Hwy. 61 and Carbide Lane, Keokuk, on charges of 5th degree criminal mischief, 5th degree theft less than \$300, and 1st offense domestic assault - bodily injury. He was taken to Lee County Jail.

12/19/23 - 9:36 a.m. - Lee County sheriff deputies arrested a 16-year-old male juvenile, of Ottumwa, in the 2500 block of 255th Street, Montrose, on a charge of simple assault. He was referred to juvenile court.

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

OBITUARIES

LARRY WILCOX

Larry Wilcox took his last breath on earth and his next breath in the presence of Jesus Christ on December 19, 2023. Born in Carroll, Iowa on February 24, 1937 to Alva(h?) and Grace Wilcox, he married Janice Ann(e?), the "prettiest girl on Simpson's campus" on June 26, 1960 in Victor Iowa. Larry and Janice honeymooned in South Dakota then immediately moved to Fairfield, Iowa. His career led him to Chariton, Iowa then Fort Madison, Iowa where he settled for good in 1967.



WILCOX

Larry leaves a legacy of faith. He faithfully and gently led his family, which expanded to include his son Mark. He parented patiently and prayed for his son all day, every day. Larry prayed for his daughter-in-law Liz, even before she was born and long before she understood her need to be prayed for. Larry loved, adored, thought constantly about and prayed for his grandson Max. He prayed for a darling little girl named BreAnn, whom Janice taught at Community Bible Study almost 15 years ago. BreAnn became Larry's granddaughter-in-law, and he was so happy to attend the wedding this past summer. Larry loved, enjoyed, was delighted by and prayed for his granddaughter Natalie. His only in-person 'appearance' at church in the past few years was to see his grandson-in-law Conner be baptized as a new believer. He fulfilled his wish to attend both his grandchildren's weddings when he attended Natalie and Connor's wedding this summer as well. More than anything, Larry loved the Lord and wanted to please Him. He was a student of God's word and loved to read and study the Bible. He enjoyed talking about Israel, Bible prophecy, and was serious about passing along truth to the next generation. Larry was kind and funny. He really liked the Hawkeyes. He was just a great guy.

Larry is preceded in death by his parents and his beloved wife Janice. He leaves his son Mark (Elizabeth) Wilcox, grandson Max (BreAnn Yaley) Wilcox and granddaughter Natalie (Conner Beck). He cares deeply about his sister-in-law Donna Dolmage Dale, her husband Jan and their kids.

A visitation will be held from 9:15 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Friday, December 22, 2023 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory in Fort Madison. The funeral service will immediately follow at 10:00 a.m. at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory with Pastor Chris Carr officiating. Burial will be held at Fairview Cemetery. Memorials have been established for Community Bible study (CBS), Great River Christian School or Harmony Bible Church. Online condolences to the Wilcox family may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

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Outgoing directors

Fort Madison Community School District Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater poses with outgoing board members from left to right Carol Ross, Dianne Hope, and Lois DiPrima. The three directors served in their last meeting Monday night.



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Sports

Hound boys fall to Washington in conference battle

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – The pace of play in Tuesday’s 73-63 loss to Washington was evidence that the Fort Madison Bloodhounds have some work to do over the coming holiday break.

The Hounds still have a game Thursday in Mt. Vernon, but if the look on Hounds’ faces exiting the lockerroom after Tuesday’s loss was any indication, there’s a hill to climb.

One by one, or two, the Hounds left the locker room with an obvious frustration of what transpired over the final 10 minutes, and the post-game conversation with Head Coach Ryan Wilson.

“When we stepped on the floor, we weren’t ready to play. You saw that in the first quarter. We weren’t rebounding, and they were all over the ball on the offensive glass. They were all over the ball anywhere the ball was. We just didn’t come out ready to go,” Wilson said.

“Then to just play catch up and play catch up. We mixed up our defenses a bit, but we didn’t play good defense. You score 63 points in a high school basketball game, you should have a shot to win and we didn’t have a shot tonight.”

The Hounds hung with the sneaky good Demons through the first three periods but trailed by as much as seven with four minutes left in the game. The Demons, whose offense is built around rapid fire passing on the perimeter to free up shooters and open lanes, dominated the bigger Bloodhounds on the glass throughout the first half. It wasn’t until Fort Madison got down by seven in the third that that dynamic changed, albeit temporarily.

Down 7, Carson Rashid tried to score attacking the basket but missed and Hunter Cresswell came up with the board, missed the put back, came up with the rebound again and scored, igniting the crowd and the Hounds’ offense.

A defensive stop set the tone for another strong possession for the Hounds with junior Dayton Lamar scoring inside off a

nice assist from Cresswell. Lamar was fouled on the play and converted the freethrow to make it a 2-point game at 41-39.

Washington’s Logan McDole would miss at the other end and Fort Madison would have a chance to tie the game, but Lamar missed two shots under the basket, getting his own rebound after the miss.

Freshman Nic Stone would hit a 3-ball in front of the Demon bench to stretch the lead to 44-39. The bucket prompted a Washington :30 second timeout where Wilson said he charged the Hounds with finding their energy.

Fort Madison went to work out of the timeout through the rest of the third period pulling down four offensive rebounds with Cresswell working inside and out. He would score on an errant Julian Dear 3-ball gobbling up two boards in the process, and then would score from deep off the left wing to tie the game at 46 with :40 left in the period.

Jan De Gracia Hernandez would put up a bucket off another Cresswell assist on the next possession for a 2-point Bloodhound lead, but Stone would answer with a three near the horn for a 49-48 Demon lead headed into the final period.

Washington would capitalize on the lead and go 8-10 from the field in the final period with three consecutive 3-balls, two from Stone to move the lead back to 8, despite five points from Fort Madison Nolan Guzman. His 3-pointer with six minutes left gave the Hounds a brief 55-53 lead before Washington went on an 18-8 run to put the game away.

“We scored enough points to win today. It’s frustrating. It comes down to wanting to play defense, wanting to go get the ball and wanting it more than them. Washington probably had 10 times they got on the floor for a ball. We had 0,” Wilson said.

“We drew up a good scouting report. We knew all of them would shoot the three. And we let ‘em. Frustrating.”

Cresswell finished with 14 points to lead Fort Madison after getting into foul trouble early and sitting out most of the second period. Guzman had 12. Roman Roth led all scorers with 19.



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Fort Madison’s Nolan Guzman gets free inside for a bucket in the second quarter of the Hounds’ 73-63 loss to Washington Tuesday night in the Hound Dome.

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Education News/Classifieds



Individual Achievement

Fort Madison Community School District Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater poses with FMCS District board of directors and their certificates of Individual Achievement they received from the Iowa Association of School Boards during Monday night's Board of Directors meeting

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Classifieds/Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICE PROCEEDINGS FORT MADISON CITY COUNCIL 12/5/2023

At 5:30 P.M., Council met in regular session on Tuesday, December 5, 2023. Mayor Mohrfeld presided with Council Members Roller, Bowker, Yager, Amandus, Andrews, Gray and Rink present.

On motion, Council approved the Consent Agenda: Minutes of 11/21/2023; Liquor License Renewals: Garner Foods and River Rocks Bar & Grill; Claims dated 11/30/2023, November Manuals, November Library Claims; and Payroll of 12/1/2023.

On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-83, accepting the submitted plat of survey and waiving subdivision requirements for property owned by Craig and Margaret Abolt on Chalk Ridge Road. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-84 approving applications for a Three-Year Urban

EXPENDITURES	
General	\$61,162.48
Special Rev.	191,609.96
Road Use	22,135.00
Debt	256,181.25
Capital	0.00
Water	61,095.44
Sewer	27,544.45
Slid Waste, IWC	2,673.72
SW Utility	836.99
	\$623,239.29

REVENUES	
General	\$18,490.00
Special Rev.	255,861.84
Road Use	113,679.65
Debt	1,592.93
Capital	9,778.05
Water	300,138.92
Sewer	248,897.86
Slid Wst & IWC	81,938.39

CLAIMS 12/5/2023

ACCESS LEASING SYSTEM, PRINTER LEASE	793.17
ACCESS SYSTEMS, COMPUTER/IT LEASE	5,531.62
AHLERS & COONEY, PC, PROF FEE	393.00
ALLIANT ENERGY, ELECTRIC	38,929.61
ALTORFER INC., GENERATOR INSPECTION	4,909.00
AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES, GUN CLEANER/PENS/ETC	33.77
ARAMARK UNIFORM SERVICES, UNIFORM/SHOP SUPPLIES	215.63
BATES SANITATION & ASPHALT, ASPHALT PATCHING	6,853.08
BEN CHANEY, TRAINING	33.88
BRANDON GILPIN, TRAINING	38.37
BROZENES HYDRAULIC SERVICE, SWEEPER HOSE PARTS	657.35
BURLINGTON MUNI WATER, BACTERIA SAMPLE	204.00
CIVICPLUS, ANNUAL FEE	5,057.50
CORE & MAIN LP, COP-	

Revitalization Tax Exemption for Justin & Melissa Pieper, 2 Blackhawk Heights and Dalton Ray Mabeus, 3023 Avenue K. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-85, approving the Mayor's signature on a Grant Agreement with the IDNR Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) for the PORT Phase IV Trail Project. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-86, approving the Mayor's signature on an Engineering Services Agreement between McClure Engineering and the City of Fort Madison for PIP-2023-03 Rehabilitate and Remark Airfield Pavements at the Fort Madison Municipal Airport. On motion, Council adopted Resolution No. 2023-87, appointing Laura Liegois as City Manager and authorizing the Mayor and Clerk's signatures on an Employment Agreement.

The meeting adjourned at 6:17 P.M.

/s/ Matt J. Mohrfeld, Mayor

ATTEST: /s/ Melinda L. Blind, City Clerk

PAYROLL 12/1/2023	
General	\$ 230,278.83
Road Use	23,863.61
Water	38,403.49
Sewer	33,572.94
Solid Waste	16,954.05
Airport	486.54
Storm Water	3,177.25
	\$346,736.71

PER TUBE	3,422.00
CRESCENT ELECTRIC SUPPLY, FUSES	144.08
CUSTOM BRICK - STONE CO., ROOF PROJECT - FINAL	39,530.00
DAKOTA SUPPLY GROUP, ADAPTER	929.37
DODD PRINTING & STATIONERY, OFFICE SUPPLIES	6.82
DOUDS STONE, LLC, ROADSTONE	234.72
DUNKIN GARAGE & TOWING, OIL CHANGE	85.00
EMD MILLIPORE CORP, TESTING SUPPLIES	1,394.48
EUROFINS ENVIRONMENT TESTING, WEEKLY SAMPLE	710.48
FARM & HOME SUPPLY, MISC ITEMS & SAFETY	799.87
FORT MADISON PARTNERS, GROW FORT MADISON RECRUIT.	5,000.00
FORT MADISON WATER DEPT, WATER	17.23
FRENCH-RENEKER-ASSOC., PROF FEE	10,918.94
HACH COMPANY, TEST SUPPLIES	1,269.34

HEARTSMART.COM, AED BATTERY	487.60
HUFFMAN WELDING & MACHINE, MISC & SAFETY ITEMS	736.64
HUMBURD AUTO SERVICE, TIRE REPAIR	118.01
IDEAL READY MIX COMPANY, INC, CONCRETE	556.00
INDUSTRIAL ELECTRIC MOTORS, WET/DRY VAC	238.97
IOWA ONE CALL, LOCATES	172.80
IOWA PRISON INDUSTRIES, PARK SIGNS	534.60
JIM BAIER INC., VEHICLE REPAIR	1,509.00
KIMBALL MIDWEST, CONNECTOR/TIES/CLEANER	188.14
LAURA LIEGOIS, TRAVEL EXPENSE	272.19
LEE COUNTY AUDITOR, 2023 ELECTION	2,075.21
LYNCH DALLAS, P.C., PROF FEE	3,241.00
MENARD - WEST BURLINGTON, EXTENSION CORDS	335.34
MENKE & COMPANY, FURNITURE	500.00
MICROBAC LABORATORIES LLC, DAILY SAMPLE	46.00
MIDAMERICAN ENERGY COMPANY, HEAT	833.00
MIDLAND SCIENTIFIC INC., TESTING SUPPLIES	136.72
MWCNC, GRATES	375.00
NORRIS ASPHALT PAVING, SURFACING	514.29
PATRICK MARSH, TRAVEL EXPENSE	932.66
PEN CITY CURRENT, JOB POSITING	54.00
POSTMASTER, FORT MADISON, POSTAGE	1,977.36
RAIRDEN'S AUTO SALVAGE, TOW STREET SWEEPER	350.00
RANGEMASTERS, TRAINING CENTER	2,240.44
SANDRY FIRE SUPPLY, L.L.C., FACE MASK REPAIR	436.95
SINCLAIR TRACTOR, WINDOWPANE	55.18
STATE HYGIENIC LABORATORY, WATER SAMPLE	21.00
THE PARK CATALOG, MEMORIAL BENCH	2,873.00
TRUCK REPAIR INC., SWEEPER HOSE	734.63
TRUELINE FIRE & SAFETY, CLOTHING ALLOWANCE	557.87
UPS, SHIPPING	11.81
VEENSTRA & KIMM, INC, PROF FEE	2,530.00
WATER SOLUTIONS UNLIMITED, CHEMICALS	4,788.66
WORKING FIRE FURNITURE, RECLINER	1,038.98
TOTAL	159,585.36
GENEAL	31,918.43

SPECIAL REVENUES	55,037.99
ROAD USE	5,144.74
WATER	42,504.38
WASTEWATER	22,425.24
SOLID WASTE	1,412.02
AIRPORT	305.57
STORM WATER	836.99
TOTAL	159,585.36

MANUALS - NOV 2023

ALLIANT ENERGY, ELECTRIC	11,357.47
ANSER IOWA, ANSWERING SERVICE	232
CENTURY LINK, PHONE	186.57
CHASE CARD SERVICE, CREDIT CARD FEES	4,452.82
HENDERSON PRODUCTS, INC, PIVOTS	1,498.26
IOWA DEPT. OF REVENUE, SALES & WET TAX	16,748.34
MASTERCARD, ZOOM/DOOR/TRAINING	3,649.05
MIDWEST GROUP BENEFITS, MONTHLY PROCESS FEE	34,247.33
PITNEY BOWES, MEETER RENTAL	171
PROFESSIONAL HEALTH SERVICES, PHYSICALS	10,350.00
TONY AND CINDY BAXTER, INTEREST - BLUFF APT	3,950.00
UMB BANK, N.A., INTEREST PAYMENTS	252,231.25
WELLMARK BC/BS, HEALTH INS PREMIUMS	102,396.79
WEX BANK, FUEL USAGE	15,336.71
GENERAL	22,411.41
SPECIAL REVENUES	136,182.17
ROAD USE	16,990.26
DEBT SERVICE	256,181.25
WATER	18,591.06
WASTEWATER	5,119.21
SOLID WASTE	1,261.70
AIRPORT	70.53
TOTAL	456,807.59

LIBRARY - NOV 2023

ACCESS SYSTEMS, INK	
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CARTRIDGES	143.51
ALTOONA PUBLIC LIBRARY, BOOK LOAN	18.95
AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES, PAPER SHREDDER	652.51
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Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition Monday, December 25 through Friday, January 5. Our special 2023 Year In Review editions will publish Wednesday, January 3 through Friday, January 5. Breaking news will continue to be published on our website 24/7.

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From the Front

Engineer reviewing fees on three service permits

HULL - Continued from Page 1

enough. Based off of our budget, that's about three months of expenses on hand. The problem with that is for the last three or four years, you've been giving us the rural property tax transfer on the last day of the quarter.

"So at all times, we are essentially, and I want to be careful with my words here because I don't mean this in any legal sense, we're loaning the rest of the county \$800,000 to \$900,000 on any given day," he said.

He said the county is subsidizing permits where the department is operating in the red and he'd like to make some changes there.

Regarding installation of entrances to private property on county roads, Hull said he'd prefer the county not be in that business.

The county charges a \$600 fee for gravel road access installations and maintenance of those installations. They charged \$1,300 for paved driveway entrances.

"The biggest one on my list is something honestly I would prefer our crews didn't have to do and that's the installation of entrances to private driveways in the county," Hull said.

Hull provided some data that showed the county spends about \$93 dollars just on administrative costs alone. In a sampling of 11 entrances installed in the past year, the county lost \$906 per driveway.

"That means were spending about \$1,500 recouping about \$600 per the scheduled fees in our policy which were set in 2012."

He said he looked at two paved entrances and the county is spending about \$4,000 per entrance and getting \$1,300 back.

Hull said the county is subsidizing, on average over the 11 entrances sampled, the county took a loss of about \$1,400 per entrance.

"Well, we need to stop doing that," Supervisor Tom Schulz said.

"That needs to be looked at," said Supervisor Matt Pflug.

Hull asked if the county would prefer to stop subsidizing them or to adjust the fees, which could prompt owners to look at other options.

"We're in an agricultural community and a lot of folks do have the means to install their own."

The county issued 72 permits over the last five years for entrances and installed 23 of those.

Hull said he preferred to have the county maintenance workers on the roads rather than doing the construction.

He said the maintenance of the entrances is the county's responsibility which makes the cost to the county even higher.

Hull showed that Des Moines charges 60% to the property owner for the cost of replacing an existing driveway of the same size.

Pflug asked Hull if he would like to see the county go away from installing the entrances and Hull said that would be his preference.

"My question, and what I'm hearing is something needs to change, is do you want us to just stop doing it, or adjust the fees?"

Seyb said he would prefer the county not be in that business, because as he's said with regard to the county health department's Home Health and Hospice program, there are private companies that will do that work and a lot of farmers have the equipment to do the work.

"This is following the exact guidance I put out there, and this is exactly what I'm looking for," Seyb said.

Hull said the county would still charge a permit for administrative fees associated with the construction of the entrance ways.

Hull also showed that the county is spending

about \$253 per 300 feet of dust control measures for magnesium chloride or calcium chloride. They spend \$972 per 300 feet of soy-based dust control.

The county received 427 applications for dust control in 2023. Hull said the county has to go out and grade the roads prior to the dust control application.

Seyb said there are additional costs for the soy preparation. He asked what the board thought would be a sufficient fee to charge for each surface preparation, which is what the county does before the dust control, whether salt or soy, is applied.

The county is averaging about 65 applications for utility permits over the past eight years. Hull said the county spends about \$177.50 on each permit. He said the county is seeing massive fiber optic investments, which is a good thing. He said recent fiber optic permits involved 38 county road crossings and he said he points those out because they regularly pose a problem in the future.

The county currently does not charge for utility permits and Hull said many counties are actively reviewing that policy.

Hull said some counties such as Clinton County are charging per crossing, and some charge per mile or a hybrid. He said he didn't want to get charges so high that it would be prohibitive to homeowners looking to have fiber run to their home. He said he would also like to charge \$50 for each time he has to go out and review a field installation.

Seyb said there should be some sort of premium fee to the county for the work that needs to be done and for the choices private owners make. However, he said he didn't want it to be cost-prohibitive for safety reasons. Hull said a survey of other counties showed an average county fee of \$50 per application. Seyb said the soy should be higher.

No fee decisions were made, but Hull said he had enough direction to plug in some numbers for his budget presentation at the beginning of the year.

Empty Nest experiencing a cycle of missing jack rabbits

SWARM - Continued from Page 1

with the car lights on bright, looking for those "wascal wabbits." Nothing. "Maybe it's wabbittitus," I told Ginnie, in my Elmer Fudd voice. We did finally see one lone rabbit all by itself in the middle of the spruce grove. Ginnie breathed a sigh of relief.

It reminds me of when we lived in Colorado. The company I worked for built a factory on the Front Range. We were new to Colorado, and didn't know quite how Iowans were supposed to act

in the Wild West. Anywho, the prairie was crawling with thousands (literally) of jack rabbits. The night shift workers at the factory would get off work at midnight and ride around on fenders of pickup trucks and jalopies, with the headlights on, holding shotguns and pistols, and shoot the bejeebers out of the jacks. I'm not kidding They had a hoot. It's a wonder someone didn't get killed.

Then about a foot of snow fell, and the jacks made paths through the snow

from one spot to another. Even in broad daylight, when pulling into the parking lot, you could see rabbit ears moving along the deep paths. From an Iowa-boy standpoint, this was an amazing sight. To the locals, it was life as usual.

The next year, the jack rabbits were gone. I mean all gone. Where did they go? I asked one of the locals, and all he said was, "Cycles." With further prodding, he elaborated, "It's about a seven year swing. The jacks breed and grow to a large number, then, boom, they're gone. Dunno if it's disease or varmints, but it's been going on since Heck was a puppy."

I believe that's what happened here on the Empty Nest Farm. A naturally occurring cycle, like seven years of feast-or-famine. Our McIntosh apple tree didn't bloom this year either, after years of limb-breaking apple loads.

For everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...a time to break down and a time to build up... Ecclesiastes 3:1&3

Have a good story? Call or text Curt Swarm in Mt. Pleasant at 319-217-0526, email him at curtswarm@yahoo.com, or visit his website at www.empty-nest-words-photos-and-frames.com.



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