

# PEN CITY CURRENT

It's Black & White and Read all over

Wednesday, March 27, 2024 | 7 pages | Volume 8 • Issue 57



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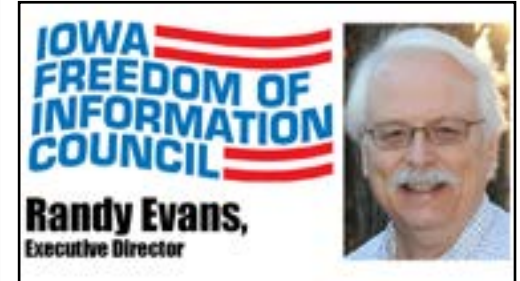
# S.T.E.A.M.-ing ahead



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Haven Chaknine, 13, a 7th grader at Fort Madison Middle School works on a circuit board with OCI Fertilizer engineer Jeremy Hymes at Friday's STEAM festival at the middle school. A packed school had exhibition and displays in areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math.

## COMMENTARY



## Leaders need to address cancer issue

No problem is so big that we can't run from it — or at least avoid thinking about it. That's human nature.

There are many concerns that should command our attention but do not. Too often we hope or assume a serious problem will go away or will spare us.

In the aftermath of the Covid pandemic, too many of us discount whatever the scientists tell us — as if the anonymous pundit on social media knows more than the people who have devoted their lives to studying a particular problem.

But there is something else I have come to realize, unfortunately. Government leaders in Iowa have shown little interest in understanding "the Big C" — the widespread presence of cancer in Iowa.

Fighting cancer should not be a partisan issue. But in Iowa, it certainly appears to be. Perhaps that is because of anxiety cancer's devastating toll may be tied to agriculture, especially to the herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers and nitrates that are common today.

Consider two national rankings our state should not celebrate:

Iowa has the fastest-growing rate of new cancer cases in the United States, according to the Iowa Cancer Registry, a research initiative at the University of Iowa. And Iowa's overall cancer rate is second only to Kentucky's among the 50 states.

The statistics translate into 21,000 Iowans being diagnosed with new cases of cancer this year, the researchers reported recently, and 6,100 of our friends, neighbors and relatives dying from the disease.

Experts are not ready to point their fin-

See **BILL**, page 7

See **CANCER**, page 4

## AEA BILL PASSES

### Local officials respond to Senate passing AEA bill Tuesday

New bill raises starting teacher pay to \$50K over two years

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG  
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – A bill to restructure the state's Area Education Agencies, increase teacher pay, and provide a 2.5% increase in the state's student aid formula is moving to the governor's desk, but with opposition from area education officials.

House File 2612 allocates all money currently assigned to AEAs for media and general education back to schools,



GRABER



SLATER

and raises teacher pay to \$50,000 for beginning teachers over the

next two years. It also includes a State Supplemental Aid increase of 2.5% for the upcoming year.

AEAs would continue receiving 90% of the state funding that they currently receive, while school districts would have control over 10%.

School districts control all the state dollars for media and general education services that currently go to the AEAs allowing them to spend the money on

private vendors, or continue working with the AEAs, all under a fee-for-service model.

Rep. Martin Graber (Dist. 100-FM) said he thinks the rural districts will likely continue relationships with AEAs as they currently do. Graber voted against the bill in the House.

"I think in our area with smaller schools, they'll go right back to AEAs and do business with them," Graber said. "The intent here is to make (AEAs) better so our kids get all the possible help they can. I don't dislike the bill, but my constituents told me they didn't like it so I didn't vote for it."

Teacher pay will increase to a min-

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## WEATHER

WED 27 Mar.....Clear & chilly, 47° F/29° F  
THU 28 Mar.....Clear & cool, 59° F/39° F  
FRI 29 Mar.....Partly sunny, 66° F/44° F

## IOWA LOTTERY

DOUBLE PLAY 03/25.....2 14 20 28 64, Powerball: 4  
LOTTO AMERICA 03/25.....19 32 35 40 43, Star Ball: 4 All Star Bonus: 2  
LUCKY FOR LIFE 03/25.....1 4 31 39 47, Lucky Ball: 5  
PICK 3 MIDDAY 03/25.....0 3 7  
PICK 3 EVENING 03/25.....2 3 0  
PICK 4 MIDDAY 03/25.....3 2 9 3  
PICK 4 EVENING 03/25.....9 8 0 4  
POWERBALL 03/25.....7 11 19 53 68, Powerball: 23 Power Play: 2

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# Obituaries/Scene Around Town

## OBITUARIES

### SHERRY D. FAETH

Sherry D. Faeth, 83 of Ft. Madison passed away on Monday, March 25, 2024 at the West Point Care Center.

She was born on July 14, 1940 in Des Moines to Gerald and Vivian Hardy Hull.



FAETH

On March 3, 1958 she married William Faeth III in Des Moines. Sherry was a homemaker and also worked for Ft. Madison Schools serving breakfast and lunch to the kids. She was a member of St. John United Church of Christ and Order of Eastern Star for over fifty years. Sherry was a 4-H leader for many years and she enjoyed hunting, fishing, sewing, quilting and doing stained glass work.

Survivors include her husband, Bill Faeth of Ft. Madison; two daughters, Rhonda (Joe Paradee) Faeth of Ft. Madison and Becky (John) Meinhardt of Donnellson; one son, Rob (Janet) Faeth of Ft. Madison; one daughter in law, Tina Faeth of Ft. Madison; six grandchildren, Lucas (Jen) Faeth, Marcus (Katie) Faeth, Jacob Zumdom, Shane (Kaci) Zumdom, William (Paige) Robert Faeth V and Courtney Faeth; six great grandchildren and one on the way; one niece and one nephew. She was preceded in death by her parents, a son, Randy and one brother, Jerry.

Friends may call after 2 PM on Monday, April 1, 2024 at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory where the family will meet with friends from 4-6 PM. The funeral service will be held on Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 10:30 AM at St. John United Church of Christ with Rev. Jim Luder officiating. Per her wishes, cremation has been entrusted to King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory.

A memorial has been established for St. John United Church of Christ or Lee County Hospice and online condolences may be left at [www.kinglynk.com](http://www.kinglynk.com).



Students at Friday's STEAM Festival at Fort Madison Middle School work with marshmallows and uncooked pasta noodles to engineer some displays.

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Lunch Specials  
March 25-29  
11am - 1pm

Monday, March 25

Tenderloin, Fries, Oreo Fluff

Tuesday, March 26

Goulash, Cottage Cheese, Breadstick

Wednesday, March 27

Tater Tot Casserole, Applesauce

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

FRIED CHICKEN DINNERS

Friday, March 29

Fish & Shrimp Dinners

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## Local News/Lee County News

# Test Kitchen holding 5K Cottontail fun run Saturday

**FUNDRAISER:** Event to take place along the riverfront in Riverview Park in downtown Fort Madison

FORT MADISON – The YMCA Test Kitchen is thrilled to announce its upcoming event, the Cottontail Dash Fun Run/Walk, scheduled for Saturday, March 30, 2024. This exciting community event promises a morning of fun, fitness, and family-friendly activity along the scenic Fort Madison Riverview Park trail.

Participants are invited to sign in starting at 7:30 AM, with the run/walk officially commencing at 8:00 AM. The first 100 participants will receive a long-sleeved event t-shirt to commemorate their participation in this memorable event. The Cottontail Dash is a free will donation event, welcoming individuals of all ages and fitness levels to join in the fun.

The route for the 2-mile fun run/walk will follow the same scenic path as the Fort Madison

YMCA's 2023 Turkey Trot, showcasing the beauty of the riverfront, including the new marina and the jetty wall.

"We're excited to offer a more laid-back approach to our community run events," said Karen Siefken, YTK Administrator.

"The Cottontail Dash is all about enjoying a leisurely stroll or jog along the beautiful Fort Madison Riverview Park trail while supporting the YMCA Test Kitchen's vital food, music, and educational programs."

In addition to the run/walk, participants can enjoy complimentary cinnamon rolls, hot chocolate, lemonade, and water. Participants can register for a chance to win a gift basket featuring three Test Kitchen cookbooks, a commemorative Elliott Test Kitchen apron, and YMCA Test Kitchen t-shirt, and

more.

This event is made possible through the generous support of the Fort Madison community, including the Fort Madison Rotary Club, Fort Madison Kiwanis Club, and Fort Madison Lion's Club, as well as our esteemed sponsors: OCI, Two Rivers Bank, Dr. Mark Pothitakis DDS, Connection Bank, Great River Heath, Pen City Current, and Jim Baier.

"We are so appreciative of our sponsors and their unwavering support," added Siefken. "Their contributions ensure the success of the Cottontail Dash and help further the YMCA Test Kitchen's mission of serving the youth of our community."

For more information and updates on the Cottontail Dash Fun Run/Walk, please visit the YMCA Test Kitchen or Fort Madison YMCA Facebook pages.

# Primary absentee applications available

LEE COUNTY - Lee County Auditor Denise Fraise has announced the Lee County Auditor's Office is now accepting absentee ballot requests for the June 4, 2024, Primary Election.

Request forms can be obtained on the County website- [www.leecounty.org](http://www.leecounty.org) - under the heading "I want to .... Get... Absentee Ballot" Click on "Absentee Ballot Request Form" to download a request form. You must include the date the request is signed. Requests should be delivered or mailed to the Lee County Auditor, 933 Avenue H Fort Madison IA 52627.

Absentee ballots will be available on Wednesday, May 15, 2024. This is the first day that absentee ballots may be mailed to voters. It is also the first day to vote absentee in person at the County Auditor's Office, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or the Courthouse in Keokuk, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 and 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eligible voters may vote in person until June 3, 2024, at 4:30 p.m. The deadline to mail absentee ballots is Monday, May 20th, 2024.

All absentee ballots must be received by the County Auditor by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, June 4, 2024. Postmarks or bar codes printed on ballot envelopes will no longer make a ballot received after Election Day valid except ballots from participants in the Safe at Home program received by the Secretary of State in time to be transmitted to the County Auditor by noon on the Monday following the election and ballots from uniformed and overseas citizens received by noon on the Monday following the election.

The only people who may return a voted absentee ballot to the County Auditor's Office other than the voter, are someone living in the voter's household, an immediate family

member, the special precinct election officials who deliver a ballot to the resident of a health care facility, or a delivery agent if a voter is unable to return a ballot due to blindness or other disability.

If an eligible elector is not already registered to vote, he or she may do so in one of the following ways:

- Register to vote by mail: Voter registration forms are available on the Lee County website - [www.leecounty.org](http://www.leecounty.org) - under the heading "I want to .... Register... To Vote" Click on "Register to Vote" to download a voter registration form. The completed form should be mailed to the Lee County Auditor, 933 Avenue H Fort Madison IA

- Register to vote in person at the County Auditor's Office by May 20th by 5:00 p.m. After May 20th, you may register and vote in person until 4:30 p.m. June 3rd. You must show proof of identity and proof of residency.

- Register to vote online: Voters may go to <https://sos.iowa.gov/> and follow the online voter registration link. An Iowa driver's license or non-operator ID is required for online registration.

Eligible electors may also register to vote at their polling site on Election Day with both proof of identify and proof of residency. This "SAME DAY VOTER REGISTRATION" procedure may slow up the voting experience for voters choosing to wait until Election Day to register and vote at the polling site.

Polls will be open for the Primary Election on June 4th, 2024, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Employers must allow employees two consecutive hours to vote on Election Day if the employee does not already have two consecutive hours off during the time the polls are open.



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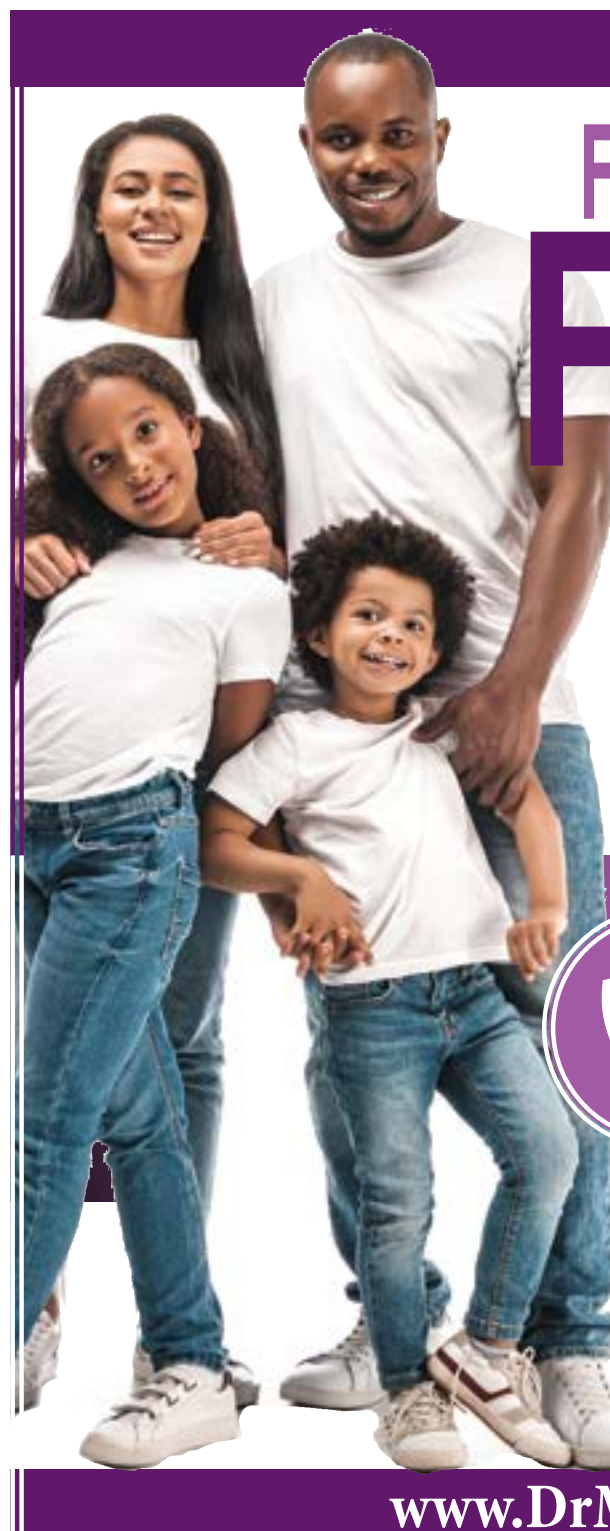
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## From the Front

# Expert says ag chemicals are contributing factors to cancer spread

**CANCER** - Continued from Page 1

ger at one reason to blame for these worrisome rankings.

The recent Iowa Cancer Registry report took note the state has the highest rate of binge alcohol drinking in the Midwest. Twenty-two percent of Iowa residents report having engaged in binge drinking, which is defined as consuming five or more drinks on one occasion for men and four or more drinks for women. Iowa's binge-drinking rate exceeds the national rate of 17 percent.

But others who study cancer rates believe another potential link to the cancer numbers — farm chemicals — is being overlooked or downplayed.

James Merchant, the former dean of the University of Iowa College of Public Health, recently told The New Lede, an online news site, "Is alcohol responsible for the increase in cancer incidence here since 2014? I personally doubt that."

Iowa's per-capita consumption of alcohol ranks 24th nationally, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has noted Iowans do not appear to be drinking more heavily now than they did years ago.

Merchant, a retired professor of occupational and environmental health, told The New Lede, "What needs to be looked at are things that are probable or possible

carcinogens that have increased beginning in about 1990, because of the well-recognized latency of environmental cancers. Those carcinogens associated with industrial agriculture are the ones that really need to be looked at very closely."

Dr. Richard Deming, a well-known Des Moines oncologist, told an audience in Cedar Rapids last fall, "If you did an aerial map of Iowa, we are — river to river, and north to south — a bath of ag chemicals: herbicides, pesticides, fertilizers, nitrates."

He added: "We're not yet at the point where we can say what every single chemical that ultimately gets into our water supply or onto our skin causes, but when you look at the amount of ag chemicals Iowans are exposed to compared to other states, I suspect that we'll find that might also be one of the contributing factors."

The Cedar Rapids Gazette is publishing a series of articles this week that delve into Iowa's high cancer rates and the potential causes and solutions. Maps with the articles show the distribution of various types of cancer across the state. They are eye-opening and should motivate Iowans to demand their state government, especially the Legislature, do more to understand these case numbers and better protect Iowans.

David Cwierty, director of the UI Center for Health

Effects of Environmental Contamination, told the Gazette, "At some point, we need to move from just talking about it and wanting to study it, to saying, 'OK, we've probably got enough evidence that we're uniquely vulnerable, and we should do something about it.'"

He told The New Lede, "We shouldn't be so foolish as to think that the unrivaled scale of production doesn't come with very unique consequences or challenges for our state."

No one expects UI researchers to find cures for cancer. But lawmakers could provide money for inexpensive water filters that can remove nitrates and other chemicals from drinking water in rural homes where people have no option but to rely on private wells.

Lawmakers could toughen penalties for fouling Iowa's water supplies with manure and chemicals. Yes, agriculture is important in Iowa, but the health and safety of Iowans is important, too.

State Senator Janice Weiner, an Iowa City Democrat, told The New Lede, "We have a serious problem in Iowa. We owe it to Iowans not to whitewash anything — but to approach it scientifically and get to the bottom of this, wherever research and clinical tests lead us."

Randy Evans can be reached at [DMRevs2810@gmail.com](mailto:DMRevs2810@gmail.com).



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**PUBLIC NOTICES**

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
NOTICE  
LEE COUNTY BOARD  
OF SUPERVISORS  
\*\*WEDNESDAY\*\*  
March 27, 2024  
MEETING  
CONVENING TIME:  
1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: 933 AVE H  
FORT MADISON IA**

**---AGENDA---**

Special Board Meeting  
Mar 27, 2024, 1 :00 - 2 :00 PM (America/Chicago)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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If you would like to pose a question to the Board, please use the Chat feature and wait for the Chairman to address you. If you are participating by phone, please wait until everyone is done speaking before addressing the Board.

Please keep your microphone muted to cut down on background noise. If you are participating by phone, press \*6, this will mute your phone.  
Discussion of Employee Health Insurance

**PUBLIC MEETING  
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**PUBLIC NOTICE  
Minutes for the  
Lee County  
Conservation Board  
Meeting  
February 13, 2024  
Lee County  
Conservation Center  
2652 Hwy 61  
Montrose, IA 52639**

Called to order at 5:00 p.m.

Roll call: Alton\_X\_Moore\_X\_Patrick\_X\_Benjamin\_X\_Reed\_X\_

Staff Present: Huebner, Sestito, Oldfield, Risser, Pawling, Steele

Supervisor: Holmes

1. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Reed to approve the agenda

2nd: Moore

Motion Carried

2. Approval of Minutes from January 9 and 29, 2024

Motion by Alton to approve the minutes

2nd: Benjamin

Motion Carried

3. Public Input

No public input

4. Approval of Bills

Motion by Alton to approve of the bills

2nd: Reed

Motion Carried

5. Approval of Financial Report

Huebner stated that she is working on the budget amendment with the county budget director, and it should be completed by the end of the month.

Huebner also stated that she has submitted for the LWCF grant \$150,000 reimbursement for the Pollmiller Trail.

Motion by Alton to approve the financial report

2nd: Moore

Motion Carried

6. Discuss and Take Action on Pheasants Forever Membership

Motion by Moore to approve yearly membership with Pheasants Forever for \$250

2nd: Reed

Motion Carried

7. Discuss and Take Action on Change to Lee County Conservation Bylaws

Huebner spoke with the county auditor and stated that the \$100 that is kept for change in the building is considered petty cash. She edited the bylaws from \$25 to \$100 petty cash and added in mention of the staff's credit limits at the discretion of the director.

Motion by Alton to approve the changes to the bylaws

2nd: Reed

Motion Carried

8. Discuss and Take Action on Pollmiller Shower House Bids

Huebner received 6 bids from for the Pollmiller Shower House ranging from \$133,957 to \$169,475. The lowest bid came from AC Contracting, who constructed the Chatfield shower house in 2020. The Board mentioned some concern with AC Contracting not meeting the deadline on the Chatfield shower house project. Oldfield stated this was mainly due to how wet the area at Chatfield was – Pollmiller should not have the same issue as it's in a higher area.

Moore asked if there was a penalty for going past the deadline. Oldfield stated that there was not in the contract, but something to consider in

the future.

Motion by Moore to accept the lowest bid from AC Contracting at \$133,957 for the Pollmiller Shower House Project

2nd: Alton

Motion Carried

9. Discuss and Take Action on Seasonal Hire Process

Huebner stated that she would like to hire 1 concessionaire and 2 conservation aides.

Motion by Alton to approve the seasonal hire process for 3 seasons

2nd: Reed

Motion Carried

10. Staff and Director Reports

Steele gave the education report, highlighting 47 school programs, science fairs, the OWLS program, and Eagle Days.

Oldfield gave the parks report, highlighting 25 camping nights and 4 cabin nights.

Huebner gave her director report, highlighting the Winterfest conference, getting numbers for the Outdoor Classroom and other FY 25 projects, waiting to hear back on the budget from the Board of Supervisors, painting updates and file organization in the conservation center, receiving a grant for a climbing turtle in the natural playground,

and working on policy updates.

Sestito gave an update on her leadership course, highlighting the selection of LCC's Art in Parks for their community project. The group is working with the 3 county high schools' welding classes to put sculptures in at Heron Bend Conservation Area.

11. Board Member Comments  
None

12. Adjournment  
Motion by Moore to adjourn the meeting at 5:31 p.m.

2nd: Reed  
Motion Carried

Board met in workshop following the meeting.

Jim Patrick, LCCB President  
Caroline Veihl, LCCB Secretary

**PUBLIC NOTICE  
MEETING NOTICE  
MT. PLEASANT CITY  
COUNCIL  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH  
27  
CITY HALL  
307 E. MONROE  
STREET, 2ND FLOOR  
5:30 P.M.**

The Mount Pleasant City Council will meet in Regular Session on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at City Hall, 307 E. Monroe Street, sec-

*we'll be right back!*

Pen City Current will not publish an e-Edition Monday, April 1 through Friday, April 5 so we can enjoy Spring break. The e-Edition will resume Monday, April 8.

News will still be published to our website & social media channels.

**Thank for reading!**

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## Classifieds/Public Notices

# PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

### PUBLIC NOTICES

ond-floor meeting room at 5 :30 p.m.

#### AGENDA

1. Roll Call.
2. Consent Agenda: To the Public-All items with an asterisk(\*) are routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion and a roll call of the Councilmembers. There will be no separate discussion of items unless the Mayor, a Councilmember or citizen so request, in which event the item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered in its normal sequence on

- the Agenda.
3. Receive & file communications - City has received the FYE23 Audit.
  4. Approve agenda.
  - \*5. Approve minutes of previous meetings.
  - \*6. Approve payment of bills.
  - \*7. Receive report of Officers.
  8. Old Business
    - a) 5:30 p.m. Public Hearing on dangerous animal.
    - b) Resolution to affirm, modify or reverse dangerous animal.
    - c) Resolution to affirm, modify or reverse dangerous animal.
    - d) 5 :30 p.m. Public

- Hearing on proposed plans and specs for McCoy Street & Monroe Street.
- e) Resolution to approve plans and specs on file for Mccoy Street & Monroe Street Reconstruction Project.
  - f) 5:30 p.m. Public Hearing to vacate easements Wolcott's and Clarke's Additions.
  - g) Resolution vacating easements Walcott's and Clarke's Additions.
  - h) 3rd reading of Ordinance amending Chapter 25 Municipal Fees and Charges, Section 25-3 (b) Equipment Charges Per Hour of the City Code of

- Ordinances.
- i) Renewal of a Special Class B Retail Alcohol License for Mt. Pleasant Redemption Center located at 1001 North Broadway Street.
  9. New Business
    - a) Approve FYE25 Health Insurance Renewal.
    - b) Resolution setting Public Hearing to vacate alley at 800 W Washington Street, Lee's Addition Block 6.
    - c) Set date for a Public Hearing on proposed FYE25 Budget.
    - d) Approve resignation of Councilperson Jeff Batty.

10. Public Forum.
11. Adjourn to meet in regular session on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

E. Monroe Street, second-floor meeting room at 5:00 p.m.

#### AGENDA

**PUBLIC NOTICE MEETING NOTICE**  
**MT. PLEASANT CITY COUNCIL**  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27**  
**CITY HALL**  
**307 E. MONROE STREET, 2ND FLOOR**  
**5:30 P.M.**

The Mount Pleasant City Council will meet in Adjourned Session on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at City Hall, 307

1. Roll Call.
2. Approve agenda.
3. New Business
  - a) 5 :00 p.m. Public Hearing on City of Mount Pleasant 2024/2025 maximum property tax dollars.
  - b) Approve 2024/2025 maximum property tax dollars.
4. Public Forum.
5. Adjourn to meet in regular session on Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.

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## Education News/From the Front

# Slater calls legislation an "overreach"

**BILL** - Continued from Page 1

imum of \$47,500 this year and \$50,000 next year, up from \$33,500. The bill also includes new state money for schools to raise experienced teachers' salaries, and increase pay for non-salaried school staff.

Fort Madison Superintendent Dr. Erin Slater said she supports increasing teacher pay and she is hopeful the funds will be sustainable. But she said district funds will still be needed for other increases that are part of the bill.

"District funds will still be needed to address salary increases for teachers who earn over the minimum threshold amount," she said.

The bill will also create an additional special education department within the state's Department of Education. Slater said any human or fiscal resources diverted away from local districts does not support local student learning.

She said the bill does contain some positive adjustments, however she called it "an overreach to correct perceived concerns that do not exist in all of the state's AEA's."

"We will continue to utilize the AEA for services. Small, rural districts do not have the plethora of contractors and vendors that urban or large districts may have access to," Slater said.

"This is why this bill should be paused to allow stakeholders from urban, suburban and rural districts to educate policy makers as to the potential unintended consequences of such a bill. The timeline to implement such changes for personnel, budgets and services for the district and children is untenable."

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds said she's looking forward to the work of implementing the bill, which passed the senate on a 38-14 vote and carried the support of District 50 Sen. Jeff Reichman (R-Montrose).

"Today's vote by the Senate sends a strong message: every Iowa student deserves a world class education, and the compensation of every Iowa teacher should reflect the importance of their role," Reynolds said in a release to media Tuesday afternoon.

"Over the last several weeks, this bill has been the focus of much discussion and debate. Change is seldom easy, but it is necessary to achieve better results. Reforming the AEA system creates accountability, transparency, consistency, and most importantly, better outcomes for all Iowa's students."

Graber said he voted against the bill because all the

emails, calls and correspondence he received asked him not to support it.

"Just like the unemployment bill, I listened to my constituents. Teacher pay was embedded in the bill, but I took the lead from my constituents," Graber said.

However he said did like that paraeducators pay was increased and a new work group was set up to get parties involved in another look at the state's AEAs.

"Everybody I talked to said reform is necessary and needed but without throwing the AEAs under the bus. We're very fortunate in our area with AEA, but it's my understanding if you go up one more step it isn't that great," Graber said

"We don't want to do anything to hurt students who receive services there, their parents, and we don't want to kill the AEAs."

A coalition of 31 superintendents around the state including Slater and Central Lee Superintendent Dr. Andy Crozier issued a statement earlier indicating deep concerns about the proposed changes to the AEAs. Crozier was not available for comment on the passage of the bill.

The coalition statement indicated a concern for the fee-for-service approach that would be part of the district's 10% funding for general education services and media services.

"Our message is clear: we are deeply concerned about the proposed changes to the AEAs, especially the shift towards a "Fee-for-Service" approach. The value of the AEA system as designed is that it is a cooperative that ensures that every school district, regardless of size or location, has access to the services it needs to serve students. Rural school districts, in particular, rely heavily on AEAs for critical support. Disrupting a model that has largely worked over the past 50 years will have grave consequences for the students we serve."

Nannette Griffin, who is opposing Reichman in the general election for the District 50 seat, said the overhaul is risky to area children.

"The Senate Republicans' decision to gut the AEAs despite bipartisan opposition jeopardizes crucial resources and support systems vital for student success. These agencies are crucial in delivering educational services and support across the state. Notably, the Great Prairie AEA serves around 35,000 children across southeast Iowa. Jeff Reichman's vote put those students' education at risk."

The governor is planning to sign the bill on Wednesday.

# Keokuk gets \$250K school safety grant

KEOKUK- The Keokuk Community School District was awarded a \$250,000 School Safety Improvement Grant from the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

"I am pleased that we are able to upgrade our security cameras," Dr. Kathy Dinger, KCSD superintendent, said. "Through this grant we will be able to add this additional level of security to our district for the safety of our students and parents."

The Grant has been approved for \$50,000 per school building and the district plans to use the funds for new security cameras for each building. To be awarded the grant, KCSD provided the scope of work, milestones and the budget, which was then approved by the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

"It is important to continue to make improvements on our security measures for the safety of our schools," Clint Wray, Keokuk School Board president, said. "Another improvement that we've made recently is through our agreements with local law enforcement that provides remote access to the KHS security cameras for the officers in case of an immediate concern or emergency."

The funds come from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) and is awarded by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Funding through this federal program is for minor capital improvements for security enhancements from the approved categories.

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**PEN CITY CURRENT**

# DCI investigating Waterloo police shooting

WATERLOO - On March 25, 2024, the Waterloo Police Department requested the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation to investigate an officer-involved shooting that occurred at 1204 Hartman Avenue in Waterloo.

At 2:46 p.m., employees at Victory Motors, located at 2701 Falls Avenue, called 911 to report that a neighbor, later identified as John Piazza, age 41, of 1204 Hartman Avenue in Waterloo, put a gun to an employee's face and fired a round at the property. Employees stated Piazza told them he would return with a rifle. Employees reported he was wearing jeans and a T-shirt, had a long

beard, and was bald.

Waterloo PD responded to 1204 Hartman Avenue, just behind Victory Motors, and observed a male fitting the description near the windows of the residence with a long gun. A Waterloo police officer observed Piazza point a long gun out of a window towards officers. The officer fired at Piazza, striking him. Officers entered the residence and found Piazza deceased.

This incident remains under investigation. Upon completion, the Iowa DCI will forward the results of the investigation to the Blackhawk County Attorney's Office for review.

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