

PEN CITY CURRENT

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

Monday, September 23, 2024 | 6 pages | Volume 8 • Issue 153



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Candidate forums start Thursday

SEVERAL SIT OUT: Atwood, Graber, Reichman, Rinker say they'll sit out of forum

BY PCC STAFF

LEE COUNTY - Area voters will have a chance to hear candidates' views on an array of topics at three upcoming forums – the first of which will be held Thursday, Sept 26. Mississippi Valley Publishing (MVP), the Pen City Current and the Southeast Iowa League of Women Voters (LWV) have joined forces to coordinate and sponsor the forums. All three will take place at the Lee County Career Advantage Center at 2495 280th St., Montrose. The first, set for 6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, is for state candi-

dates with invites being extended to Nannette Griffin, Jeff Reichman, Nicholas Atwood, Martin Graber, Jim Beres and Matt Rinker. The second forum will be 6-8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 3, and is for those seeking seats on the Lee County Board of Supervisors: Ron Fedler, Denise Fraise, Joey Herren, Teresa Murray, Garry Seyb, James Steffen, Ginger Kingsley and Matt Pflug. And the third, for Lee County Sheriff candidates Stacy Weber and Elliott Vandenberg and Lee County Auditor

See **FORUMS**, page 3



Those who skip forums factor out voters

I'm going out on a limb today. I usually leave politics out of my Sunday musings. I really want these to be something in which a smile over a cup of coffee is a win. But as goes with the mighty oak that peppers my roof with acorns and my yard with branches - every limb breaks. I got an email Saturday on the way to Williamsburg indicating that now State Rep. Matt Rinker is bailing on the forums Mississippi Valley Publishing, Pen City Current, and the League of Women Voters are planning for the next three Thursdays. Rinker was the ONLY member of the Lee County Republican party to commit to the state legislator forum that takes place on Thursday at the Lee County Career Advantage Center in Montrose at 6:30 p.m. It took some arm twisting on our part because Rinker has a litany of personal commitments including a family and volunteer work.

There are few things that rank up there with family and volunteerism. I know that more than anyone. But, after first declining as the rest of the state Republican state candidates have done, citing football and family, Rinker agreed to participate if I moved the forum to a date AND a time to accommodate his schedule. We did that. Now six days before the event, he backs out with an undefined scheduling conflict. Let's roll that back. Clearly, we were looking at his schedule when we accommodated it for the forum and jostled things around. This splashes in shallow water. We can go all day on this but his reasons for not participating we hope are his own. What cannot and should not be ignored is the pattern of candidates this year who have declined to participate in a county-wide forum. They have unilaterally factored you out of this election.

See **VOTERS**, page 2



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Becky Rump of the FMHS Class of 1974, addresses a group of 50th and 60th reunion guests at the new Fort Madison Junior/Senior High Saturday morning. The group was offered a tour of the newly renovated school.

AREA EVENTS

4th annual River & Rail weekend this Friday and Saturday

FORT MADISON - Fort Madison, Iowa welcomes the 4th Annual River & Rail Weekend on September 27 & 28. This event celebrates the two key elements that have shaped our community: the majestic Mississippi River and the 60 to 80 trains that pass through daily. Railfans from around the world gather at our riverfront to experience

the stunning scenery showcased on the Virtual Railfan cam for the past 4 years. Kick off River & Rail Weekend with Nostalgia Night at the Santa Fe Depot on Friday, featuring a lively 60's beach theme. Enjoy a fun beach atmosphere with delicious food and music track-side, plus participate in a dunk tank fundraiser supporting the Fort Madison

Tourism Bureau. On Saturday, join us for a lineup of engaging events, including guest speakers and Operation Lifesaver at the CB&Q Depot, along with tours of the Transportation Museum. The Amtrak Lobby will host the Artists & Authors

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WEATHER

MON 23 Sep.....Partly sunny with chance of showers, 68° F/ 54° F
TUE 24 Sep.....Partly sunny and cool, 71° F/ 51° F
WED 25 Sep.....Sunny, 75° F/ 52° F

IOWA LOTTERY

DOUBLE PLAY 09/21.....417 37 46 49, Powerball: 19
LOTTO AMERICA 09/21.....14 8 37 45, Star Ball: 7 All Star Bonus: 4
LUCKY FOR LIFE 09/22.....5 13 27 35 48, Lucky Ball: 14
MEGA MILLIONS 09/20.....20 21 40 49 55, Mega Ball: 11 Megaplier: 3
PICK 3 MIDDAY 09/19, 09/20, 09/21.....4 5 1, 4 8 2, 3 5 1
PICK 3 EVENING 09/19, 09/20, 09/21.....6 5 4, 8 5 3, 2 6 7
PICK 4 MIDDAY 09/19, 09/20, 09/21.....3 4 8 6, 5 5 1 1, 6 0 9 5
PICK 4 EVENING 09/19, 09/20, 09/21.....6 4 8 7, 13 9 9, 8 3 5 7
POWERBALL 09/21.....17 19 21 37 45, Powerball: 14 Power Play: 2

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From the Front

Reasons for not showing up to forums are thin

VOTERS - Continued from Page 1

Whether you're a Democrat or a Republican, they don't value your vote. They'll read this and shake their heads and say I'm a small fish in a big pond. But this small fish swims quicker than the big ones. Matt Rinker, Jeff Reichman, and Martin Graber, do not deserve your vote if they cannot engage with you as voters. Nor does Elliott Vandenberg, Jim Steffen, or Nic Atwood, all of whom now have said they will not be participating in their respective forums. I've been racking my brain trying to give them a reason for not showing up. You know what? There is none. They put their name on a ballot in a crazy and admirable wish to represent the very people they can't see their way to meeting with this Thursday or the following two. The only way this can be seen is power over people. They believe they can win without getting in front of you in this format. Maybe they can, but what does it say that they believe that? Graber said we didn't reach out to his campaign, and he wasn't aware and that was three weeks ago. I reached out to him directly before that and personally have not been provided a contact for his "campaign". I did reach out to James Creen, the head of the Lee County Republican Party and encouraged him to remind all the candidates of the importance of being in front of voters this close to the election. And that was about four weeks ago. He said he would. He suggested questions had been released to Democratic candidates in prior years. This is unfounded even from them and it creates plausibility for absence without proof of assertion. They seem to want to win on the math. Sen. Reichman said "we're doing our own thing". Fine, more opportunity for voters - why wouldn't you do both? We, too, have heard the concerns that a Democratic candidate was given prior ac-

cess to questions at a debate in 2022. I've chased that down because I wholeheartedly hate when candidates have questions in advance. That candidate was Rebecca Bowker and she's a data nerd and she'll tell you that. To not think Rebecca would show up overly-prepared for any question is to greatly underestimate her.

The people that organized that forum in 2022 were still working on questions the day of the forum. All parties are adamant that questions were not released beforehand and never have been.

We need to be able to see what the candidates' base of knowledge is off-hand, but also how they react and conduct themselves. It's all part of the body of work. We need to see how candid they will be with questions and how their platforms are put together.

It's not only our right and our privilege, it's our responsibility as voters to get in front of candidates, be informed, and make the best decision on Nov. 5.

Steffen said he, too, will not be participating in the Oct. 3 debate with supervisors, because he wanted it in his district and he wanted a long-form debate. We didn't release the format for the forums until after all had committed to attend or not. So he couldn't have known the format wasn't a long form debate, and we believe this is. Any vote as a supervisor impacts the county in general. So having a countywide forum makes perfect sense, and even if it didn't, he wants a seat at the table, so he needs to get to the table.

These folks cannot be worth a vote from any party, not because of their beliefs and platforms, but simply because they refuse to let you be part of any format. I could be wrong, but I'm not aware of any forums they've participated in. They can say they don't like the League or the media or whatever, but damn, hate the player, not the game.

It's literally part of the process they are just choosing to take away from you, as a voter. Let that sink in. You're not worthy against a nothing-to-gain and something-to-lose mindset.

Let's put it this way, if you come up with a reason to avoid voters and then have the audacity to ask for their vote, you cannot, cannot, be a representative of those people.

I've never been more independent in my life. It's just one of the reasons my wife and I aren't together. She says we don't think the same way about those things anymore. I've voted for and endorsed Republicans and Democrats both. I want the very best person to represent me and my interests in Fort Madison, Lee County, Des Moines, and Washington. A person that won't sit in a candidate forum so I can fine tune my base of knowledge on who that very best person is, will not ever get my support.

Your political preference is based on you and your interests. You vote for who you think is best in that sphere, right?

But if they dodge voters by not returning phone calls, emails, texts, and requests for appearances, how in anyone's mind, can they be the best person to represent your best interests?

Elliott Vandenberg refuses to engage in a one-on-one with Stacy Weber unless the state patrol handles the event. The state patrol has no standing in Lee County government. He won't get my vote, not because Weber is clearly the best candidate on paper - and he his, but because Vandenberg won't go toe-to-toe with him, anywhere. Elliott's a great guy with a great smile and somewhere along the line he's family. But if I take the names and faces away and look at the resume and body of work, I'm voting Weber.

And that's Beside the Point. It really is. The point is you put your name on a ballot - you wanted to do this. So when did it become on your terms? It's the purview and the decision of the electorate to determine if you get to do this.

By telling us they will not engage in these large format forums tells me as a member of that electorate, that they think they can win on numbers, and they assume they have your support. In some cases they're right, and in some they are wrong. But as one candidate told me recently...it doesn't matter. You must face the voters and address the questions and concerns they have. Nothing else matters. Your vote is hypercritical to our process of representation. Want proof - ask U.S. Rep. Mariannette Miller-Meeks or Rita Hart.

I could never endorse, or worse yet, vote for (again, from a small fish) a candidate who willingly stays away from voters seven weeks from the election. That is the beginning of the end of the democracy we have through Election Day, and the Republic that exists after.

You cannot factor out the voters, and every single voter needs to send that message on Nov. 5. By putting their name on a ballot all candidates choose to win your vote, not assume it. Taking away your chance to listen to make that decision for yourself tells you all you need to know about that candidate, I don't care what party you're from. This is America. It ain't the best, but it's the best we've got - And that is Beside the Point.

Chuck Vandenberg is editor/co-owner of Pen City Current and can be reached at Charles.V@PenCityCurrent.com.

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It's Black & White and Read all over

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From the Front

Forums to be held next three Thursdays at Career Advantage Center

FORUMS - Continued from Page 1

candidates Roslyn Garcia and Sherri Yasenchock, will be held 6-7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 10.

“One of the basic tenets of the LWV is to educate voters. To reach that goal, the LWV works with partners to provide citizens with opportunities to learn about a candidate’s platform, to hear their views on a variety of topics, and their goals for making Iowa a better place to live. Forums provide that space, and give voters the opportunity to decide which candidate they feel is best for the office,” said LWV representative Martha Wolf.

While the three sponsors have contributed to the vast list of questions that will be put to candidates, they have reached out to others involved in agriculture, education, government, and economic development to see that virtually every major issue pertaining to the specific office is covered.

“We believe we’ve come up with a format that is more favorable to candidates while keeping the discussion engaged and compelling. These forums are for voters and we appreciate the candidates who agreed to take part,” said Chuck Vandenberg, editor of Pen City Current.. “We’re partnering with Radio Keokuk, former Mississippi Valley Publishing Publisher Mark Smidt, and area economic development officials who have agreed to moderate the forums.”

MVP Managing Editor Robin Delaney, who has sponsored numerous forums over the years, agrees that this format will be more interesting and give voters more insight into the candidates’ views than the traditional format used in the past.

“I honestly can’t think of a main issue on the state and county level that is not included in this list. Attendees will be able to tell that the questions were drafted by several entities over the last few weeks.”

It should be noted that some candidates have told sponsors they do not plan to attend. Some have said they do not see merit in participating, while others wanted to dictate the questions and format.

“When candidates don’t attend, in my opinion, it marks the beginning of the end,” Vandenberg said. “That’s putting power over people. Not only is it our right and privilege to weigh the validity of all candidates on a ballot, it’s our responsibility. The candidates themselves need to respect that and engage with voters. If you can’t do that, what’s the vote worth?”

Delaney said several attempts were made to persuade these candidates to reconsider, but were unsuccessful.

“All we (the media and LWV) can do is provide the opportunity for both voters and candidates, which we are doing,” Delaney added “If candidates do not seize that opportunity and, in my opinion, fulfill their obligation to those they hope to become their constituents, that says a lot. If someone can’t show up for me at a forum, why should I trust them to show up for me at the state capitol?”



Lunch Specials
Sept 23-27
11am - 1pm

Monday, September 23
 Lasagna, Applesauce, Garlic Bread

Tuesday, September 24
 BBQ Pork, Cheese Potatoes, Baked Beans

Wednesday, September 25
 Tater Tot Casserole, Green Beans, Blueberry Fluff

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
 FRIED CHICKEN DINNERS

Friday, September 27
 Grilling on the Sidewalk

Southeast Iowa Depot Tour highlights 11 historic depots

WEEKEND - Continued from Page 1

event, showcasing river and trail-themed books and art. Meet local artist James Knapp and author Robert Tabern during this special event.

Additionally, guided Caboose and Steam Engine tours will be available on Saturday, along with a train show and mini meet. Don’t miss the river and rail sidewalk chalk competition hosted by the Fort Madison Area Art Association, the Lee County Sheriff Search & Rescue boat will be on site, along with an engine themed trolley tour of the riverfront, Santa Fe Depot Complex, downtown, and the Park to Park District sponsored by the Fort Madison Chamber of Commerce. Enjoy 45-minute Mississippi River tours departing from the new Fort Madison Marina on both Friday and Saturday.

In addition to River & Rail Weekend, embark on a journey through time on October 5 & 6 with the Southeast Iowa

Depot Tour. Explore 11 lovingly preserved depots across five southeast Iowa counties and uncover the rich history of our region’s transportation heritage, all set against the backdrop of our scenic rolling hills.

We invite everyone to join us for these exciting events that showcase our culture and history of Fort Madison. Come for the scenic beauty, history and trains — there’s something for everyone!

For more information on River & Rail: Chi Eastin - Tourism Director
 Fort Madison Tourism Bureau
 319-372-5472 ext 104

tourism@fortmadison.com
 For more information on SEIA Depot Tour:

Emily Starnes - Tourism Director
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Sports/Classifieds

HAWKS FOOTBALL

Central Lee boys move to 4-0 with win over No. 10 DC

BY JOHN BOHNENKAMP
PCC SPORTS

BLOOMFIELD — Brayden Wyrick saw victory coming his way, so he figured he might as well grab it.

Wyrick's interception with 52 seconds left sealed Central Lee's 21-14 win over Davis County on Friday night, keeping the Hawks undefeated as they opened Class 2A District 5 play.

"That's big for us," said Central Lee coach Doug Dodds, whose team didn't win a district game last season after a 3-0 nondistrict start. "It's good for the kids. That's who I'm the happiest for, they do all the work."

"This means a lot," said Wyrick, a senior wide receiver/defensive back. "We were doubted by a lot of people, but we just took it for what it was."

Wyrick remembered back to last season, when a 20-14 loss to Davis County in the district opener set the tone for the rest of the season.

"It kind of took a toll on everybody," Wyrick said. The mood was a lot different after this win.

"District football brings out something different in everybody," Dodds said. "We knew we had to respond, because last year we got punched in the mouth right away, so this year we had to come out



and be the ones who did that."

Kayden Calfee's 6-yard touchdown run with 11:18 left in the game, his third touchdown of the night, gave Central Lee its final lead, then the defense shut down the Mustangs (3-1, 0-1).

Davis County started its final drive on its own 25-yard line, but got into Central Lee territory on an 11-yard run by quarterback Cason Young on third-and-10.

The Mustangs were at the Central Lee 48 when Young rolled to his left. Wyrick was in the right place to step in front of the pass.

"When they ran (three wide receivers), I was told that the second guy would always run a 10-yard out (route)," Wyrick said. "I saw the quarterback, he was staring the receiver down, so I just overpursued and saw it coming right at me. I was able to get a few yards (after the interception) and get out of bounds. When

I saw how much time was left, I knew the game was over."

Calfee then did three kneel-downs, running out the clock as the Hawks celebrated.

Davis County scored first in the second quarter on Young's 33-yard touchdown run. Central Lee came back to tie the game with just four seconds left in the first half, when Calfee scored on a 3-yard run.

Carter Will's 12-yard touchdown run with 8:58 left in the third quarter put the Mustangs up 14-7, but again the Hawks would tie it, this time on a 29-yard touchdown run by Calfee.

The final touchdown run came on a possession in which Calfee had one touchdown run called back by a penalty. But he was able to get into the end zone four plays later for what proved to be the game-winner.

Calfee had 134 rushing yards and Chase Johnson had 108 rushing yards, the second consecutive week the two topped the 100-yard mark.

Central Lee had an almost 7-minute advantage in time of possession.

"Ultimately, we did our jobs," Dodds said. "The (defensive) line stepped up, and our offensive line controlled the line of scrimmage."

"I told the kids this week, nobody is going to care what it looks like. The only thing they'll see is we're 1-0."

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PUBLIC NOTICES

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September 23, 2024 MEETING CONVENING TIME: 10:00 A.M. 933 AVE H

-----AGENDA-----
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 Pledge of Allegiance
 Approve Agenda
 Public Input

Consider Approval to Fill Vacancy of Secondary Roads Maintenance Worker II Position
 Consider Approval of Resolution to Accept FY25 LRTF Grants for UTV and Accessories and Authorize Engineer to Execute IDOT Funding Agreements
 Consider Approval of Resolution Supporting Keokuk-Hamilton Dam Museum's Destination Iowa Grant
 Consent Agenda
 • Monday, September 16, 2024 Board Minutes
 • Claims for Payment
 • Special Class B Native Wine License Reports:
 A. Commission of Veteran Affairs Minutes of Meeting

B. Manure Management Plan for Mehmert Farms in Pleasant Ridge Township
 Commission or Committee Reports
 Adjourn
 Workshop-Beacon

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 Lee County provides equal opportunity in employment to all persons regardless of age, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, or disability.
 For a job description, a list of qualifications, and to apply, download an application from our county's website, www.leecounty.org/employment.aspx and turn it into the County Engineer Office or email it to engineer@leecountyiowa.gov along with a resume. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.
 If you have any questions, please contact Lee County Engineer Office at (319) 372-2541 or email them to engineer@leecountyiowa.gov.

LEE COUNTY SECONDARY ROADS MECHANIC CLASS II

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 Lee County provides equal opportunity in employment to all person regardless of age, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, religion, or disability. The position pay range is \$24.17 to \$29.51 per hour.
 For a job description, a list of qualifications, and to apply, download an application from our county's website, www.leecounty.org/employment.aspx and turn it into the County Engineer Office or email it to engineer@leecountyiowa.gov along with a resume. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled.
 If you have any questions, please contact Lee County Engineer Office at (319) 372-2541 or email them to engineer@leecountyiowa.gov.

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 or
 • Any equivalent combination of education and experience.

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Submit applications to Mark Boussetot at City Hall, 811 Avenue E, Fort Madison, IA 52627 or via email at mboussetot@fortmadison-ia.com by 4:30pm on Friday, October 4th, 2024.



Sports

Bloodhounds fade quick in loss to No. 2 Williamsburg

**BY CHUCK
VANDENBERG**
PCC EDITOR

WILLIAMSBURG – Former Arizona Cardinals NFL coach Denny Green was caught in a post-game tyrant years back screaming “They are who we thought they were!”

Fort Madison got a taste of who Williamsburg was Friday night when the second best team in the state in 3A rolled over the Bloodhounds 67-6 in Williamsburg. The loss sent Fort Madison to an 0-4 start and an 0-1 start in

District 4 play.

The Hounds gave up 46 yards on the Raiders first three plays from scrimmage following the opening kick, but then were able to slow the hosts down.

With the help of three false start penalties, Fort Madison slowed the high-scoring Raider offense to the point of a 4th and goal at the 1-yard line. But quarterback Grant Hocker who threw seven touchdowns on the night bulled in from the one to give the Raiders a 7-0 lead with 7:58 left in the first quarter.

The Hounds stay poised

and came out with some confidence the Raiders weren't ready for and went 24 yards on eight plays with quarterback Marcus Guzman rushing for 15 yards and going 2 for 2 for six yards. However, a Henry Graham 4th and 7 punt from Fort Madison's own 44 was blocked setting up a second score from the Raiders just three plays later when Hocker found senior Rayce Heitman on 28-yard catch-and-run for a 14-0 lead with 3:45 left in the quarter.

Fort Madison would go all Guzman on the next

series and the quarterback responded with runs of 6, 1, 2, and a 44-yarder off right tackle for a touchdown to make it 14-6 with Graham's PAT going wide left.

But that's about all the offense Williamsburg would allow the Hounds to muster while the No. 2 Raiders scored a touchdown on every single possession the rest of way while holding Fort Madison to just seven net yards of offense the rest of the game.

Hocker regularly found receivers beyond the

Bloodhound secondary or on out routes where catches turned into big gains. He had touchdown throws of 1, 8, 12, 17, 19, 28, 37 yards on the night. On the Raiders last scoring drive in the second quarter they threw the ball five times scoring on an 8-yard pass play with back-up quarterback Bryson Wetjen hooking up with Lincoln Shropp.

The running clock became a factor with about two minutes left in the 2nd quarter and cut the second half to less than 30 minutes of play.

Head Coach Derek

Doherty said the Hounds showed up with effort, attitude, and toughness.

“Yeah, (Williamsburg's) a really good team, but in that first quarter we were competing and then I don't feel that we did that in the second quarter,” he said.

“Things started getting hard and we started shying away and that's just a suffocating feeling. How do you get kids to want to put their best out there all four quarters. That's been our challenge to them.”

He said the Bloodhounds new they were coming up to face a great program and the only expectation was for them to bring their best self.

“Honest to God, that's all we asked of them,” he said.

The Hounds had that mentality in the first quarter making the fresh Raiders work hard after the first three plays from scrimmage and then Guzman getting through the defensive line and outrunning everyone for half the field to the red turf endzone at Bob Murphy Stadium.

“These guys are so hard to read. It's so hard to get a pulse on them. We even have a psychology curriculum that we've implemented,” he said.

“I believe in us physically and schematically, but the hardest thing is getting them mentally in it from a competition standpoint. If you want to play at a high level, you have to compete at a high level.”

Guzman finished with 61 yards on 13 carries and a score and threw for just three yards on 5 of 17 passing. Stefan Berlett came on in the fourth quarter and completed 2-of-3 passes for 13 yards with the Williamsburg bench on the field.

Schlich had three catches on seven targets for 11 yards to lead Fort Madison in receptions. He also had 58 return yards on the night. Fort Madison had just 78 total yards of offense on the night. Brody Cashman had 10.5 tackles chasing plays down from behind, including one tackle for loss. Noah Swigart had 6.5 tackles.

Williamsburg improves to 3-1 on the year and 1-0 in district play. Fort Madison will take their winless record back home to host 0-4 Davenport Assumption next week at Jim Youel Field.

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