

IPERS bill gets county support

HOLMES: Supervisor says increase to protection employees not good for taxpayers

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

LEE COUNTY – A letter of support for an Iowa House bill that would increase IPERS contributions for state protection employees in exchange for earlier retirement met with some resistance Tuesday morning.

House File 967 proposes to decrease the retirement age of protection employees, which includes correctional officers and Lee County EMS Ambulance employees, but not regular Lee County employees, to the age of 50 with 22 years of service. The employees would be able to retire with full benefits out of the state's Iowa Public Employees Retirement System.

Supervisor Garry Seyb said the county has an employee that is asking the county to support measure. He said he has not heard from any employees opposed to new law.

The bill proposes a higher cost sharing for the employee which would be a 50/50 split, Seyb said on the contributions.

Lee County EMS Ambulance Director Mark Long said he hasn't heard of anyone opposed to the bill, but he was going to withhold comment because it does require an increase in contributions and he was "on the fence". He said that may be attractive to senior level employees but may not be favorable to younger EMTs and paramedics just getting started that count on that income.

See COUNTY, page 7

Personal record

Central Lee's Allison Gruntmeir clears a hurdle early in the girls' 100-meter hurdle event Monday in Donnellson. Gruntmeir set a personal best in the event as the Lady Hawks captured 3rd place overall. See page 4 for the complete story from Monday's meet.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC



STATE NEWS

New law heightens penalties for assaults on first responders

DES MOINES—On Friday, Governor Kim Reynolds signed into law Attorney General Brenna Bird's legislative priority that increases penalties for assaults against law enforcement and first responders.

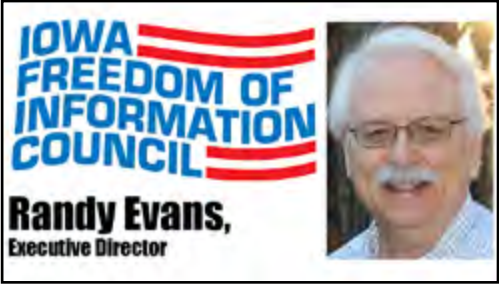
"Law enforcement are heroes who

deserve our respect and appreciation," said Attorney General Bird. "Each day that these brave men and women put on their badge, they take a risk to keep us safe. Now, it's our turn to return the favor and protect them from the violent,

targeted attacks that we've seen rise across the country. I want to thank Governor Reynolds for signing my proposal to heighten penalties for assaults on law enforcement and first responders, as well as the Iowa

See PENALTIES, page 7

COMMENTARY



Debris gone, but secrets remain in Davenport

As we approach the second anniversary of a tragedy that shocked the people of Davenport and brought national attention to the issue of building safety, government secrecy continues to cloud public understanding of just what happened and who to hold accountable.

The tragedy occurred a few minutes before 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 28, 2023, when the back wall of a Davenport apartment building gave way, bringing down much of the six-story residence that occupied a quarter block across the street from City Hall.

Three people died in the collapse. Rescuers amputated the leg of a fourth victim to free her from the rubble.

Before the dust from bricks and other building materials settled, the community asked how and why the collapse occurred, who was responsible, and how the city could avoid similar tragedies in the future.

The debris is gone now, and the dead are buried. But questions still linger — largely because local officials continue to use their power and pay attorneys to keep many pertinent documents secreted from journalists and concerned residents.

The Iowa Legislature intended just the opposite when it wrote the state's public records law 50 years ago. Likewise, sound government does not act this way.

The latest skirmish in this drawn-out fight over access to records and informa-

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WEATHER

WED 23 AprSlight chance thunderstorms, then showers, 76° F/ 56° F
THU 24 AprMostly sunny, then chance of thunderstorms, 81° F/ 59° F
FRI 25 AprShowers likely, 70° F/ 49° F

IOWA LOTTERY

DOUBLE PLAY 04/21.....	18 23 34 35 67, Powerball: 13
LOTTO AMERICA 04/21.....	2 4 13 21 44, Star Ball: 8 All Star Bonus: 3
LUCKY FOR LIFE 04/21.....	12 25 29 36 47, Lucky Ball: 3
PICK 3 MIDDAY 04/21.....	772
PICK 3 EVENING 04/21.....	644
PICK 4 MIDDAY 04/21.....	5985
PICK 4 EVENING 04/21.....	2289
POWERBALL 04/21.....	4 33 45 46 51, Powerball: 25 Power Play: 3

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Obituaries

OBITUARIES

EARL D. CORR

Earl Delbert Corr, 74, of Keokuk, passed away on Monday, March 24, 2025, at his home in Keokuk.

Earl was born on February 17, 1951, in Keokuk, Iowa, the son of Delbert Earl and Mary Ellen (Haage) Corr. He graduated from Keokuk High School in 1970, and enjoyed fishing, watching wrestling and fixing things. He loved food, either cooking at home or going for rides to his favorite restaurants.

Earl is survived by two children: Sherry and Jeff; his brother Chuck Corr; and his cat Lucky.

Earl is preceded in death by his parents and his sister Mary Louise Koechle.

A memorial service will be held at 11 am on Monday, April 28, 2025, at Printy Funeral Home, 917 Blondeau Street, Keokuk, Iowa. Visitation will be held at the funeral home on Monday from 10 am to 11 am directly before the service.

Tributes and condolences may be left at www.printyfuneralhome.com. Printy Funeral Home of Keokuk is in charge of arrangements.



CORR

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

KIM L. LATTA

Kim L. Latta, 69, of Muscatine, Iowa, formerly of Burlington, passed away at 6:05 a.m. Sunday, April 20, 2025, at Acura Healthcare in Muscatine.

He was born on June 20, 1955, in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, the son of Edward E. and Made-line A. (Seyb) Latta.

Kim was a 1973 graduate of Central Lee High School. He attended Drake University and later graduated from Oklahoma University with a Bachelor of Science in Education Degree. He taught school in New Mexico and later substitute taught in Kansas and Missouri. Kim also taught English as a second language in Mok'po, South Korea. Later he worked in sales at World Airways in Oakland, California. He then worked for twelve years as a casino dealer at Catfish Bend Casino until his retirement.

Kim was preceded in death by his parents and bothers: Gayle, Gary and Lynn. Per his wishes, his body has been entrusted to the crematory of Schmitz Funeral Home for cremation.

At Kim's request, no services will be held. Schmitz Funeral Home of Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

ROGER W. COWLES

Roger W. Cowles, 79, of Altoona, IA and formerly of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 12:24 a.m. on Tuesday, April 22, 2025 at Taylor House Hospice in Des Moines, IA. Service information and a full obituary will be published when it is completed. King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory is assisting the family with the arrangements.

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Sports

Central Lee ladies 3rd at Hawk Relays; Hound boys 2nd

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

DONNELLSON – The Fort Madison boys took second at the Monday night Hawk Relays at Central Lee High School in Donnellson.

Central Lee set a combined 23 personal bests as the girls captured third place and the boys finished in 5th, overall.

Aubrey Weber captured the girls’ title in the discus with a throw of 113’2”, while Allison Gruntmeier took the title in the high jump with a leap of 4’10”. Weber was second in the shotput with a throw of 31’9”.

Peyton Lambert and Mason McLey finished 1 and 2 in the boys’ 400-meter dash for the Hounds with quick 52.08 and 53.00, and Nolan Guzman won the open 800 by about 10 seconds with a 1:59.00 time, ahead of Central Lee’s Brett Cook who came in 2nd at 2:09.58.

Riley Tripp took the 1600-meter run with a 4:44.96, a full 25 seconds ahead of the pack. Calvin Johnson was second with a 5:09.02.

“I’ve been doing splits in the 400 and being able to do that actual open I didn’t know what to expect,” Lambert said.

He hadn’t run the open in about five weeks, but had been doing 400 legs on relay squads and his fastest open to date had been a 53.5. He said running with McLey helped movitate him.

“So a 1.5 second PR is huge,” he said. “(Mason’s) been the number one guy all season so that pushed me a little. I can’t let him get that. I had a good finish and said he that to me.”

The Bloodhounds got another first-place finish from the 4x800 relay team of Lambert, McLey, Tripp, and Guzman at 9:12.59 in a very tight finish with Keokuk who was right behind at 9:13.44.

Kenden Bowie and Hunter Smrt finished 1-2 in the high jump. Bowie won with a 6’2” and Smrt cleared the 6’ mark for the second time this year. Central Lee’s Kegan Damico was third with a leap of 5’10”. Dayton Lamar had one of his best leaps in the long jump for Fort Madison with a 21’4.75”. The Hawks’ Kain Arrowood was 4th at 18’6.5”.

Urijah Brooks won the shot with a solid 53’6” which led the pack by more than

9’5”. Brayton Schneider was 3rd in a rare shot entry with a 37’10.75”. Schneider also won the discus with a spin of 146’6” followed by Central Lee’s Jack Benner at 118’5.5”.

Schneider said he’s been putting in a lot of work in the weight room and in the circle with his father in the offseason and that has produced results this year.

“I’ve been practicing a lot with my dad, just a lot of that and lifting more. Lifting has been a big part of it,” Scheider said. The senior set a school record in the discus this year for Fort Madison at 158 feet.

He said a trip to former Bloodhound and Iowa Hawkeye Elijah Barnes’ throwing camp has also helped with his mechanics. He said he will probably need a throw in the high 140s or 150 at districts to get to state in May.

The Hounds finished with 127 points behind Keokuk’s 142. Central Lee had 64.

In the girls’ event, the Lady Hawks finished with 82 points behind Keokuk’s 175 and Van Buren’s 130. Fort Madison’s girls squad didn’t participate.

Damico was second in the 400 hurdles and set a personal mark with a 58.41. The Hawks got 3rd-place finishes in the 4x400 with Cook, Damico, Luke Kruse, and Brayden Wyrick in a season’s best at 3:41.73; the Sprint Medley with Blake Davis, Evan Fogarty, Kruse, and Riley Salter-Rickman with a 1:45.55.

The Lady Hawks had eight personal bests on the day. Kamryn Cox in the 400m Hurdles took second and set a personal best with a 1:16.8. The Hawks shuttle hurdle squad of Kamryn Cox, Ava Washburn, Gruntmeir, and Julia Fraise took second and set a season best with a 1:16.09.

Other personal bests include Gruntmeir in the 100m Hurdles with 17.98; Kylie Fortune in the Long Jump with 14’7.5” and in the 100 meters at 14.18. Afton Maynes set personal marks in the open 800 with a 2:56.8 and the 1500 meters at 6:20.15. Fraise set a personal best in the 100 hurdles at 19.29.

The Bloodhounds qualified three entrants for this week’s Drake Relays which kick off Wednesday. Kenden Bowie qualified in the high jump, Brylie Lorence qualified for the A flight in the shotput, and Julian Dear qualified in the 100. He will run in flight two Friday morning in lane 8.



Fort Madison’s Peyton Lambert, front, and Mason McLey, rear, took off from the blocks in the open 400 Monday night at the Hawk Relays in Donnellson.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

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Thursday, April 24th
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Grilling on the Sidewalk

Classifieds/Public Notices

PEN CITY CURRENT CLASSIFIEDS

PUBLIC NOTICES

**PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING NOTICE**

The Green Bay Levee & Drainage District will hold a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, April 24, 2025, at Heartland Co-op, east of Wever.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Attention: Fort Madison High School Class of 2020. If you would like your Cumulative File, please email marsha.bowen@fmcsd.org by May 19, 2025. Any records left after that time will be shredded.

**PUBLIC NOTICE
MEETING NOTICE**

The Mount Pleasant City Council will meet in Regular Session on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, at City Hall, 307 E. Monroe Street, second-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.

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 proposed 2025/2026 Budget.

b) Resolution authorizing adoption of the 2025/2026 Budget for the City of Mount Pleasant and authorizing its filing.

*c) Outdoor Amplified Sound Permit for PFLAG Mount Pleasant in Central

Park, July 12, 2025, 1 :00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

*d) Renewal of a Class F Retail Alcohol License for Veterans Club of Henry County, Iowa at 300 West Monroe Street.

9. New Business

a) Approve purchase of lawn mower for the Public Works Department.

b) Resolution authorizing Mayor to sign the Fire Protection Agreement between the Benefitted Fire District and the City of Mount Pleasant.

c) First reading of Ordinance amending Chapter 69 (Parking Regulations) of the City Code of Ordinances.

d) First reading of Ordinance amending City Code Chapter 25, Entitled Municipal Fees and Charges.

e) Approve employee health insurance renewal for FYE 26.

f) Approve contract to purchase a new Police Department vehicle.

g) Resolution authorizing the filing of an application for the Iowa's Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) for

the construction of the Washington-Grand Connector Trail.

h) Resolution setting date for Public Hearing on proposed sale of real property located at 502 North Hamlin Street.

i) Resolution setting date for Public Hearing on proposed sale of real property located at 500 North Hamlin Street.

j) Resolution setting date for Public Hearing on proposed sale of real property located at 207 South Marion Street.

k) Resolution setting date for Public Hearing on proposed sale of real property located at 306 North Lee Street.

l) Resolution setting date for Public Hearing on proposed sale of property at 312 East Vernon Street to Henry County Habitat for Humanity.

m) Resolution approving release of real estate mortgage granted under the City Housing Assistance Program and authorizing Mayor to execute on behalf of City Council.

n) Resolution approving closed session checklist.

o) Resolution authorizing the appointment of Simon Phanthouvong to the Fire Department Reserves.

p) Resolution authorizing the appointment of Ethan Faeth to the Fire Department Reserves.

10. Public Forum.

11. Adjourn to meet in adjourned session Tuesday, April 29, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

**PUBLIC NOTICE
Fire Hydrant Flushing
to Begin the Week
of April 21, 2025**

In an effort to maintain high-quality water and ensure reliable fire protection, the Fort Madison Water Department will begin its semi-annual fire hydrant flushing the week of April 21, 2025. During this time, residents may notice temporary water discoloration and reduced water pressure. These conditions are normal and will resolve after a short period. Motorists are advised to use caution when approaching crews working near fire hydrants.

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From the Front

A little hypocrisy in play with Davenport building collapse

EVANS - Continued from Page 1

tion comes courtesy of Scott County Attorney Kelly Cunningham. She asked the Iowa Public Information Board last month to ratify her belief that she can keep the report from an independent investigation of the collapse secret.

Her request for a “declaratory order” from the IPIB likely will hit the board’s May 15 agenda when the staff is expected to recommend whether an Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation report qualifies for a disclosure exemption under the public records act.

While that contention is murky, this much should be crystal clear to the county attorney, the Iowa Public Information Board, and Davenport city officials:

The people of Davenport hunger for facts about the tragedy. They want to know what problems with the building’s structural integrity were reported by tenants before the building fell. They want the facts about the owner’s maintenance of the residence. They want to know the facts about what building code enforcement officials at City Hall did — and did not do — in response to tenant and neighbor complaints before the collapse.

Keeping the DCI report secret further dashes the already damaged public trust and confidence in how lo-

cal elected officials acted before and after the collapse. Public distrust has intensified since Cunningham decided not to file criminal charges and, instead, asked the IPIB for help to keep the DCI report confidential.

The Iowa Freedom of Information Council, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization I lead, believes nothing in the public records law prevents Cunningham from releasing the full DCI report, scrubbed only of birth dates and other private personal information about tenants or the names of any confidential sources.

Although Cunningham cites Iowa court decisions to justify her request to keep the DCI report secret, the public records law expressly says confidential documents CAN be made public by the lawful custodian of a record. In this case, Cunningham is that lawful custodian, so the choice is hers if she has the courage to make it.

In her request to the IPIB, Cunningham said, “The concern of the Scott County Attorney is the safety of the public and individuals who in some way were involved with the City of Davenport and/or were perceived to have had something to do with the building collapse. The public involvement and outrage surrounding the May 28, 2023 events has been immense.”

She also told the IPIB that Andrew Wold, the building owner when the collapse occurred, and his build-

ing manager have received threats to their safety and protests at their homes.

What Cunningham ignores is that the immense public interest in the DCI report comes from people who want to know precisely, and without spin or favor, what state agents found so the public can hold city leaders accountable for preventing a repeat of the tragedy.

The Iowa Supreme Court, in a 1998 decision, provided a very cogent explanation of the role the public records law has in matters like this: “The purpose of [the public records law] is to open the doors of government to public scrutiny [and] to prevent government from secreting its decision-making activities from the public, on whose behalf it is its duty to act.”

The United States Supreme Court had similar guidance in a 1980 case when the court said: “People in an open society do not demand infallibility from their institutions, but it is difficult for them to accept what they are prohibited from observing.”

The Quad-City Times summed this up nicely in a recent editorial: “How can we learn without all the facts? The facts don’t belong to public officials. They belong to all of us. Public information can be inconvenient and uncomfortable, but it is vital for a citizen-powered government.”

The message is clear. But why the Scott County attorney has not received the message is anyone’s guess.

Randy Evans is Executive Director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council and regular contributor to Pen City Current.



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From the Front

County jailers in favor of new law

COUNTY - Continued from Page 1

Lee County Sheriff Elliott Vandenberg said he hasn't heard of any employees in the jail opposing the bill.

"I think it's a good thing. Everyone I've talked to is in support of it," he said.

Supervisor Chuck Holmes said he opposes the bill because of the increase in costs to the employees.

"I don't support this letter. Not even close," Holmes said.

He said a consulting firm was hired and a study was done in August using 2023 valuation reports. He said that study estimated a \$262.5 million increase in the unfunded liability in that one year.

He agreed the contribution does go to a 50/50 split for employees/county from the 40/60 current split. And despite the simple math, Holmes said the change does not reduce the county's portion due to increases in the bill for the overall contribution by 7.1%. Holmes said the county's increase for those employees will be about 2%.

"As it's been pointed out, that fund is funded at 103%, but that fund is going to have to be supported with a \$262 million increase to keep at 100%," Holmes said.

"I don't see how our employees can afford an increase to IPERS by \$3,400 a year. It's just outta the question."

Seyb responded by saying that the employees are paying for 72% of the increase. He said he's done some research on the American Medical Association website that shows the lifespan effect of the early retirement. He said the Federal Bureau of Prisons also has a study reflecting that.

"The studies are there to show it. The bottom line is that we have an employee asking to be able to pay more to leave earlier and asking us to support that," Seyb said.

He said if you go across Lee County, this isn't just county employees including the Iowa State Penitentiary. Seyb also

pointed to a 1.5% cost-of-living increase built into the law, whereas other employees are locked into a fixed revenue stream and don't see that increase. Seyb said the state and county struggle to fill these types of positions, and this new benefit will help attract and retain correctional officers.

"It's not just a county-level decision in my mind, but that's just me," Seyb said.

Holmes said the bill looks to open a Pandora's box of sorts with other state employees, including state teachers and even agriculture producers who encounter stress and danger in their careers on a daily basis.

"I agree that it's a good thing for the employees who are going to receive the benefit. But we have to look at our taxpayers. It's going to cost them 2% more forever to support it," Holmes said.

"Of course the employees support it because they will end up drawing more out of the system than they ever put in it. Also, I don't see Social Security at the federal level lowering the retirement age. It's gone up from 65 to 66 to 67. And the federal government isn't separating employees out. Everyone's treated equal."

Holmes was the only supervisor to vote in opposition to the letter of support that was not addressed to any specific legislator in Congress. Chairwoman Denise Fraise, along with supervisors Seyb, Tim Wondra, and Ginger Knisely voted in favor of the letter of support.

On April 17th the bill was renumbered out of the House Committee on State Government as House File 1023 and moved to the House Ways and Means Committee. Of the 46 lobbyists representing 25 entities declared on the bill, 0 were opposed while 19 were in favor and 27 were undecided, including the Iowa State Association of Counties, Iowa State Association of County Supervisors, the Iowa Chapter of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (APCO), as well as IPERS

New law stiffens penalties for assaults

PENALTIES - Continued from Page 1

legislature for passing it. In Iowa, we back the blue."

In 2023, assaults on law enforcement reached a national 10-year high. This new law will protect law enforcement, first responders, and corrections officers by raising penalties for assaults to up to:

- 10 years in prison when the assault involves a dangerous weapon or is meant to inflict serious injury
- 5 years when the assault causes bodily injury

A mandatory minimum sentence of seven days in jail for all other assaults against first responders

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Powdered Milk
Canned Juices
Beans (canned and dried)

Rice (Brown/white)
Crackers
Cereal (Ready to Eat)
Pasta
Bottled Water