Governor signs budget law, officials react

Dems wanted to use slush fund, GOP says that would’ve pushed problem to 2018

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON - Gov. Terry Branstad signed into law today, a bill that balances the current fiscal year budget, which was facing a shortfall of approximately $117 million.

Although not an unexpected result from a Republican-controlled legislature, several local officials weighed in on the 1st legislative bill to be signed into law in the new session.

The future site of the park being planned to commemorate the battles of the War of 1812 fought in Fort Madison has had the surface scraped and is now in need of good top soil for a grass bed to be seeded. Anyone interesting in donating to the project should contact Andy Andrews at the

Rich Taylor said Iowa had to offset the shortfall and coming as a result of this hurt Iowans. got $700 million in a slab we could have used," Taylor could have fixed this and then went to work on corporate tax cuts to repay those funds next year.

"Now we're cutting education, public safety including Iowa Highway Patrol by a million. You get in a wreck you better hope someone shows up because the state patrol may not make it," Taylor said.

The governor said in signing the bill he was pleased that critical funding wasn’t part of the de-appropriation.

Lt. Gov. Reynolds and I appreciate that the 1st bill passed by the Iowa legislature, responsibly balances the budget. Terry

Condition adjustments pleased that tough de-exempting Medicaid backfill for local governments from reduction, providing stability for Iowa schools, businesses, and families.


"Critics of the bill say we could have financed this for fiscal year 2017," said Branstad. "As I said to my of the State address, these are required by law. I’m the legislature made the decisions early in the session K-12 education funding, payments and property tax backfill for local governments from reduction, providing stability for Iowa schools, businesses, and families."

Task force nabs two in Keokuk

MONTROSE - The Lee County Narcotics Task Force reports the arrest of two Keokuk, Iowa residents on misdemeanor drug charges.

Rachel Gennelle James, 47, of 3616 235th Avenue, Lot 25B, Keokuk, Iowa was arrested on January 30th, 2017 at the Lee County Sheriff’s Office on a misdemeanor drug charge. James is charged with Possession of a Controlled Substance (marijuana), a serious misdemeanor. If convicted, James faces up to 1 year in the Lee County jail.

The arrest of James stems from an investigation by the Lee County Narcotics Task Force into allegations that she was involved in the use of illegal drugs in the Lee County area.

In an unrelated matter, Jeremiah David Gray, 38, of 1902 Palean Street, Keokuk, Iowa was arrested on January 31st, 2017 at the Keokuk Police Department on misdemeanor or drug charges. Gray is charged with Possession of Drug Paraphernalia, a simple misdemeanor, and Maintaining a Drug House, an aggravated misdemeanor. If convicted, Gray faces up to 2 years and 30 days in a state correctional facility. The Lee County Attorney’s Office, Lee County Sheriff’s Office, Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement, Iowa State Penitentiary K9 Unit, and the 8th Judicial District of Probation and Parole assisted the Lee County Narcotics Task Force in this investigation.

The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Lee County budget levy static to FY 2017

Tax asking drops .016/$1000 for 2018 fiscal year

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

MONTROSE - Lee County Budget Director Cindy Renstrom has turned in a 2018 preliminary budget that is very similar to 2017.

The county levy for 2018 is being projected at $10,372 per $1,000 assessed valuation with revenue generation at $11,671,396. In 2017, the levy was $10,388 per $1,000 and generated $11,572,060. Renstrom said the difference is in debt service.

"The reason it went down is that I’m using some of the debt service fund to cover some of the levy," Renstrom said. "I also didn’t raise the general supplemental even though (Public Safety Answering Point-911) went up about $70,000 because we have enough carry over to cover it."

Renstrom also said if health insurance rates come in lower, which she seemed to think it will, that could possibly help lower the rate a bit as well. Currently the county pays $1,410 towards a county employee’s health insurance per month and $916 to a single policy. The employees pay $95 and $20 for family and single respectively.

The general categories for the budget are General Basic, General Supplemental, Mental Health-Developmental Disability, Debt Service and Rural Basic. The projected rates for each category are $3.50 for General Basic and General Supplemental; 69.7 cents for MH-DD; 54.9 cents; and $2.127 for Rural Basic.

Valuations for the county sit at $1.26 billion compared to 1.25 billion

See LEVY, page 2

Top shaved-need dirt

The future site of the park being planned to commemorate the battles of the War of 1812 fought in Fort Madison has had the surface scraped and is now in need of good top soil for a grass bed to be seeded. Anyone interested in donating to the project should contact Andy Andrews at the North Lee County Historical Society at 372-7661.
Ash says community college cut could have been worse

**BUDGET** - Continued from Page 1

in 2017 an increase of $9.1 million. The increase in assessed valuations will result in an additional $99,000 in revenue.

The $10.37 levy is the lowest levy the county has sub-

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We did the best we could to soften the blow in these three critical areas. It is my hope that in the coming budget year we will do everything we can to re-establish the funding levels for our prisons, our courts and our highway law enforcement.

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LANE 5TH GRADE

Principal’s Scholar

B Honor Roll
Makenna Bernhardt, Micah Bernhardt, Micky Gabe, Kyle Gabe, Darren Harwood, Brooklynd Hellberg, Elizabeth Ingraham, Ayven Kemper, Aixandra Kersh, Dewon Knight, Cloey Koch, Jennifer Marshall, Ayden Moyers, Jace Nixson, Kameron Segoviano, Elizabeth Smith, Jahlari Starks, Shelby Stotts, Benjamin Ward, Alexis Whaley, Kevin Winn

4TH GRADE

Principal’s Scholar

A Honor Roll

B Honor Roll
William Bauswell, Ken-don Bowie, Madison Britt, Nolan Carle, Hannah Carlson, Kaden Durbin, Conner Enger, Jef-frey Fedler, Micah Frease, Joseph Fuller, Madison Gasaway, Zoe Gilman, Michella Jones, Michael Kemper, Abigail Kendelst, Aiden Mitchell, Brogan Moon, Alex Moore, Jesus Oronia, Kevin Padgett, Evan Richmond, Andrew Scanlan, Megan Shacklett, Gavyn Siemens, Lilli-ana Stormer, Michael Thrasrer, Gracie Wagner.