Monday fire engulfs vacant home

Fire struck same vacant building five years ago

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - A late evening fire broke out in the 2600 block of Avenue O Monday evening just south of Hy-Vee.

The fire fully engulfed the home shortly after 9 p.m. when a witness called the fire department after seeing flames coming from the home.

An all-call was dispatched about about 9:30 p.m.

Fort Madison Police and Lee County EMS were on the scene assisting.

The witness told police the same structure caught fire about five years ago and that someone had been seen at the structure at about noon on Monday.

Other witnesses at the scene said the building was vacant and was being used by the owner for storage.

One neighbor said he tried to reach the owner of the house by phone, but couldn't make contact.

The cause of the fire is unknown.

Fort Madison firefighters enter the door of a smoke-filled house in the 2600 block of Avenue O Monday evening at about 9:30. Witnesses say the house was vacant and was being used for storage. Flames fully engulfed the building, but firefighters had flames under control quickly.

School board sets April 3 vote

Bond would cost $75K homeowner $72.75/year for 20 years.

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - The Fort Madison School board accepted 193 signatures Monday night and quickly voted 7-0 to add a question to an April 3 ballot to build a new pre-K 3 school on Bluff Road.

The referendum is for a $30 million, 20-year bond to build, furnish, and equip the new school just east of the current Fort Madison Middle School as well as new baseball and softball facilities.

The referendum will have a .97/$1,000 assessed valuation impact on homeowners in the district.

A $75,000 assessed home would see a $72.75 increase in their annual tax bill for 20 years or until the bond has been paid off by the district.

The cost is $3 million higher than the previous referendum due to an increase in construction costs over the past year.

District Business Manager Sandra Elmore took a roll call vote to approve the resolution to submit the signatures and request the ballot, which passed 7-0.

Superintendent Erin Slater said in a recent article that the district may look at satellite voting to help get people who couldn't or didn't vote in the last referendum election in June.

In June, district residents voted 56% in favor of building the new school, however state law requires a supermajority of 60% plus one vote for the measure to be approved.

Central Lee school district unveiled plans last week to ask voters for close to $10 million for construction in that district. That referendum will also be on the ballot on April 3.

In other action, the district set the last day of the school year for students at May 31 and June 1 for teachers. The original school calendar had those days set for May 30 and 31, but the recent snow day has pushed the school year out one day.

Loesback gives shutdown pay to veteran charities

WASHINGTON D.C. – Congressman Dave Loebsack released the following statement after the House voted on legislation to reopen the government.

"Let me be clear, the shutdown is the result of one thing: the inability to compromise. This whole disaster shows just how broken Washington really is. While I remain deeply skeptical that today's agreement will actually lead to the change that is needed, it at least provides a framework to begin dealing with issues Iowans tell me they want addressed. I will support the effort in hopes that Congress can somehow do better.

"With the shutdown being the most recent example of the dysfunction in Washington, it makes no sense to me that the only people who did not feel any of the pain are Members of Congress themselves. I do not believe Members of Congress should be treated differently from the thousands of other federal employees who were furloughed and Iowans who suffered from the shutdown. I will be donating my pay to veteran charities.

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GEORGE W. GRAY

George W. Gray, 87, of Donnellson, Iowa, passed away at 3:24 p.m. Sunday, January 21, 2018 at the Fort Madison Community Hospital in Fort Madison.

Born July 19, 1930 in Athens, Missouri the son of Leon and Ruth (Vice) Gray. On July 6, 1956 he married Vera Malone in Kahoka, Missouri.

Survivors include his wife: Vera of Donnellson; three sons: Allen (Lani) Gray of Fort Madison, Chris (Barb) Gray of Donnellon and Kent (Jill) Gray of Argyle; one daughter: Heather Nichols of Washington; eleven grandchildren, five great grandchildren and several nieces, nephews and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, twelve brothers and four sisters.

George was a United States Army Veteran having served during the Korean War. He worked for Schlichers Well Co. and Lee County Secondary Roads, during this time and after, he was a handyman. He attended Donnellson Presbyterian Church and now Zion Mennonite Church. George was a member of the Donnellon American Legion Post #474. He enjoyed traveling, boating, camping, fishing, gardening, turkey and deer hunting, being outdoors and spending time with his family.

Friends may call from 12:00 noon to 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, January 23, 2018 at the Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson.

Family will receive friends from 9:30 a.m. until the time of service Wednesday, January 24, 2018 at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson.

A funeral service will be held at 11:00 a.m. Wednesday, January 24, 2018 at Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson with Pastor Pam Unruh officiating.

Burial will be at Charleston Cemetery, Charleston, Iowa with full military rites presented by the Donnellson American Legion Post #474. A memorial has been established in his memory for the Charleston Cemetery.

A memorial is being established in his memory for the Charleston Cemetery. Schmitz Funeral Home in Donnellson is assisting the family with arrangements.

On line condolences to the family may be left at www.schmitzfuneralhomes.com.

SHIRLEY ANN ERB

Shirley Erb, 90 of Argyle, IA died Monday, January 22, 2018 at the Ft. Madison Community Hospital in Ft. Madison, IA.

She was born January 19, 1928 the daughter of Harvey R. and Icel Hurd Cook. On February 15, 1947 she was united in marriage to Theodore Erb in Keokuk, IA. He preceded her in death on December 20, 1997.

Shirley attended the Melrose United Methodist Church in Argyle, IA.

Shirley enjoyed being a homemaker and spent her life making a wonderful home for her family. She adored her grandchildren and treasured the time she spent with them. She loved to watch hummingbirds, enjoyed doing embroidery and was an avid reader.

She is survived by three sons, Theodore N. Erb (Myrtle) of North Liberty, IA, Michael E. Erb (Julie) of Argyle, IA and John A. Erb of Montrose, IA, one daughter, Christina A. McBride (Darrell) of Farmington, IA, eight grandchildren, D. James McBride, Kathleen Miller, William Erb, Jason Erb, Sharon Erb, Melissa Stiller, Brandon Erb and Tiffany Robins, many great grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren, three brothers, Jerry Cook of Florida, Leonard Cook of Illinois and Harvey Cook.

A funeral service will be held at 10 a.m., Friday at the Vigen Memorial Home in Keokuk with Pastor Dawn Butler officiating. Burial will be in the Keokuk National Cemetery in Keokuk, IA.

Visitation will be held after 1 p.m., Thursday, at the funeral home with family meeting from 5-7 p.m. Memorials may be made to the Melrose United Methodist Church or the Jackson Township Fire Department.

Online condolences may be left for the family at www.vigenmemorialhome.com.
Michael Waggoner, 36, in Madison Police cited Stephen
01/20/18 - 3:33 a.m. - Fort a report of a larceny/theft in Madison Police responded to
01/20/18 - 8:55 p.m. - Fort a report of a burglary in the 400 block of Avenue A.
01/18/18 - 10:18 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested James Christopher Greek, 47, of Madison. Madison Police was traveling south in the 2800 block of Avenue O, for driving under suspension. She was released upon citation.
01/18/18 - 10:00 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Taylor, II, 38, of Burlington, in the 2300 block of Avenue G, on a charge of driving while barred. She was released in custody.
01/18/18 - 7:21 p.m. - Fort Madison Police cited Frank Dean Davis, 20, of Fort Madison, in the 1500 block of 37th Street, for possession of drug paraphernalia. He was released upon citation.

Lee County Sheriff’s Report
01/17/18 - 10:22 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested a 17-year-old Keokuk male juvenile on a warrant for 3rd degree burglary.
01/17/18 - 10:45 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Kyle Wayne Rea, 21, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff’s office on a charge of violation of a restraining order.
01/18/18 - 00:00 - Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Timothy Aaron Williams, 35, of Donnelson at the sheriff’s office on a warrant for failure to appear and a court ordered hold. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.

For the Record
Pen City Current - Tuesday, January 23, 2018 - 3
Steffensmeier making most of senior year

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG

FORT MADISON - After finishing 3rd at last year’s state wrestling tournament, Central Lee senior Harlan Steffensmeier, who wrestles for Fort Madison High School, said he finished 7th as a freshman, 5th as a sophomore and 3rd as a junior. So his senior year he was looking for a state title.

The soft-spoken, but laser-focused son of 2017 Iowa High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame inductee Gary Steffensmeier, said this year he’s grown into his style of wrestling and it’s shown results.

On Saturday, the 35-2 Steffensmeier rode out a 5-4 victory over West Des Moines Valley’s Grant Stotts, at the Ed Winger Classic in Urbandale. A week ago he faced Cayd Lara from North Scott and lost a 6-3 decision. 1AWrestle.com has Stotts as the state’s top wrestler at 152, but The Predicament.com has Lara as the No. 1 ranked wrestler in the weight class. Steffensmeier, as of the Jan. 18 rankings, was No. 4 in both ranking publications.

Steffensmeier said he believes he can win every time he takes the mat.

"Looking back on the year, I definitely feel like I’ve grown a lot since the first tournament of the year at Independence," he said after practice Monday. "I lost there, and I lost last week, but each week I feel like I’m getting better and better.

Results would prove that correct. The only other loss Steffensmeier suffered this year was to New Hampshire’s Noah Fye at the Independence Invite at the beginning of December. Fye beat Steffensmeier on the front side of the bracket in a 6-0 decision, but Steffensmeier ran into Fye again for 3rd place and got the better of him in a 6-2 decision.

Wrestling at 138 lbs, Steffensmeier was bumped from the championship match by Tristan Lara, the older brother of Cayd, in a major decision. This year with the move to 152 lbs, Steffensmeier said he feels his style of wrestling fits better at the heavier weight. "I feel like every year I’ve had a chance to win state, but this year my style is really clicking and I’ve made a lot of improvements over the summer and during the season. I had to go back and re-evaluate my technique."

He said he credits his dad, his coaches, and Pablo Ubasa from Ubasa Wrestling Academy. "Yeah, for sure my dad," he said. "I wasn’t always wrestling. I didn’t start until 3rd grade and that’s as not young as it gets. My dad always brought me to wrestling meets and I just got a feel for it and love for it."

As the wins pile up and the state meet at Wells Fargo Arena set for Feb. 15-17 in Des Moines, Steffensmeier said he just keeps preparing and gearing up for each match.

"I just keep preparing. They’re all tough guys and I have to treat every match the same and can’t look over anybody," he said. "You make it to state and everyone there is tough in their own way. I just go and prepare myself and get ready to fight."

This weekend’s win over Stott’s gave him his first title ever at the Urbandale meet, and was the school’s first Outstanding Wrestler award since Bryce Meyer in 2013. Steffensmeier said he was excited with the honor but humbly deflected, saying a lot of the wrestlers there could have earned the award.

“They usually consider the people that get first-place, so I knew I had a chance but I just didn’t know,” he said. "There were people who were more controlling in their matches and they pinned every guy and put up more points than I did. I guess they just liked the way I wrestled and saw I had a good tournament. But I was really excited and I can’t remember if I’ve ever made it to the finals, but I know it was the first time I won the title."

He said with regards to the match with Stotts, he had to get to his game early.

He’s a really really tough kid and I had to get to my stuff early," Steffensmeier said. "He scored a couple take downs and that’s 100% on me. I have to go back and change up some things."

The two each had take downs and escapes in the first period for a 4-4 tie.

“He deferred to me in the second period and I chose bottom and got out and I got a point for that and it was 5-4. The third period he chose down and I was able to ride him through the period. I know if I get on top of someone I have the ability to put a hammer down on them. I feel like I’ve gained some comfort there but I can still wrestle in the other positions, too.”

Steffensmeier revealed that he has committed to attend the U.S. Air Force Academy on a wrestling scholarship where he plans to wrestle for four years and then he’ll have a five-year commitment to the Air Force. But in a move that seems to befit this young man, he said he would like to become a pilot and fly fighter jets, which would move his commitment to 10 years of military service.

“My dream is to become a pilot and fly fighter jets because I enjoy it. Everything else comes after that. If you go out there and wrestle and love getting better then you’re going to get the scholarships and achievements.”

His commitment to the U.S. Air Force begins in June where he’ll go through basic training prior to attending the academy.

"I always wrestle because I enjoy it. Everything else comes after that. If you go out there and wrestle and you love getting better, then you’re going to get the scholarships and achievements."

-Harlan Steffensmeier,
FMHS senior wrestler
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**LETTS** - The Fort Madison junior varsity wrestlers competed in the Louisa-Muscatine Invitational on Friday. Results for all FMHS wrestlers are listed below as posted by [trackwrestling.com](http://trackwrestling.com).

**Junior Varsity 7** Logan Kearns (Fort Madison) - 4th Junior Varsity - Round 1 - Levi Boudewyn (Keokuk) over Logan Kearns (Fort Madison) (Dec 8-3)

**Junior Varsity 8** - Will Larson (Fort Madison) - 3rd Junior Varsity - Round 1 - Zavion Mueller (Camanet Central) over Will Larson (Fort Madison) (Dec 6-1)

**Junior Varsity 9** - Bryce Britton (Fort Madison) - 2nd Junior Varsity - Round 2 - Cale Poehlman (West Burlington) over Bryce Britton (Fort Madison) (Dec 1-2)

**Junior Varsity 10** - Chance Hocker (Fort Madison) over Austin Haas (Fort Madison) over Cale Yeager (Highland) over Austin Haas (Fort Madison) (Dec 4-0)

**Junior Varsity 11** - Chance Hocker (Fort Madison) over Cale Yeager (Highland) over Austin Haas (Fort Madison) (Dec 4-0)

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Work ahead on long-term commonsense budget

 Lopezbeck - Continued from Page 1

salary from the three days the government was shut-
down to local charities in Iowa that support our veterans. “Whether the govern-
ment is open or closed, my number one priority is making sure the needs of Iowans continue to be met. That is why my offic-

len need and deserve assis-
tance dealing with federal agencies and working families will have my support. “Now the work begins on coming to an agree-
ment on a long-term, commonsense budget. Our nation cannot afford to continue kicking the can down the road. Over the past fiscal year, the government has been funded by a series of short-term budget plans, a process Defense Sec-
cretary Mattis says does more harm to our mili-
tary readiness than “any enemy in the field.” As a military parent, I stand ready to continue working with anyone on a long-
term solution instead of pursuing partisan, short-term funding plans that puts our men and women in uniform at risk.”

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