Library board talks staffing, hours changes

Chairman says staffing cuts would reduce library hours
BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON – With recent discussions surrounding the tightening of city finances, Fort Madison Public Library officials are finding themselves looking ahead to possible changes in staffing and hours.

At Thursday’s regular Public Library Board meeting, the board discussed, but made no changes to, the current staffing levels and hours at the library.

Library Director Sarah Clendineng updated the board on several recent discussions during city budget workshops of cutting a full-time person from the library.

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“Something that came up and blindsided me at the Feb. 19th meeting, one councilman discussed that, through attrition, if we had a full-time employee retire then have the city marketing director work part-time for the library and part-time for the city,” Clendineng said.

“After talking with the City Manager, there was a questions about if that would be a significant savings…and the buildings are 10 blocks apart. If she’s working close with him on marketing, being here at the library may not be the best way to handle that manage that position. So there’s some concerns there.”

Clendineng said the staff is appropriate compared to other cities’ circulation and revenue numbers.

Fort Madison City Councilman Matt Mohrfeld suggested on Feb. 5 that the library not fill a full-time position that could be coming open due to retirement. Clendineng responded that to eliminate a position would require cutting other positions and attrition, if we had a full-time position retire then have the city marketing director work part-time for the library and part-time for the city.

Mohrfeld responded by asking why, because the city parks department maintains all the city parks with less staff.

In the future, Iowa fertilizer Company will continue to conduct safety drills Wednesday evening on the plant property just south of Wever.

Officials said emergency crews will be on site from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and the drill is part of the on-going commitment and focus on safety, the environment and the well-being of the surrounding communities.

During this time, residents and those passing through the area will see heightened activity and noise at the plant and the use of emergency vehicles such as fire trucks, ambulances, or helicopters. Additionally, alarms and sirens may also be heard during the simulated drill.

This two-hour training program will help ensure our 240-member Iowa Fertilizer team and other outside agencies remain fully prepared to respond to any unplanned emergency situations, even if those types of situations are unlikely to occur.

In the future, Iowa fertilizer Company will continue to conduct these types of drills and will provide similar announcements to the community, local media, and other officials.

LIBRARY
See page 8

IFC to hold safety drills Wednesday

Emergency crews to be on scene beginning at 6 p.m.

WEVER – The Iowa Fertilizer Plant will be conducting safety drills Wednesday evening on the plant property just south of Wever.

Officials said emergency crews will be on site from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. and the drill is part of the on-going commitment and focus on safety, the environment and the well-being of the surrounding communities.

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Pen City Current
Tuesday, February 26, 2019 | 8 pages | Volume 3 • Issue 57

We’re L.O.S.T. on city’s sales tax slide

The Fort Madison city budget has hit the skids. Despite an increase in county valuations of almost 23%, the city is staring at a loss of almost $330,000 in sales tax in this current year alone. That’s $4.7 million dollars on sales that didn’t take place in Fort Madison this year…that did last year.

What the hell, people? You took your shopping elsewhere to the tune of $4.7 million! Or did you just buy it online?

If you bought it online, you’re paying the tax now, but will that help the city find “greener” pastures?

See TAX, page 5
Lee County Health Department Hospice

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Fort Madison Police Report

02/21/19 – 6:29 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1100 block of 48th Street. A report of a stolen vehicle in a damage accident in the 02/22/19 – 10:17 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1600 block of Avenue E. 02/21/19 – 1:14 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1600 block of Avenue E. 02/21/19 – 12:38 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1600 block of Avenue E. 02/21/19 – 1:54 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2000 block of Avenue B. 02/21/19 – 8:54 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 1700 block of Avenue H. 02/22/19 – 7:29 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft on Alta Drive. 02/22/19 – 7:36 p.m. Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 2000 block of Avenue B. 02/22/19 – 8:14 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the Fort Madison area. 02/22/19 – 8:34 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 1500 block of Avenue L. 02/23/19 – 10:15 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in the 1800 block of 294th Street. 02/22/19 – 4:05 p.m. Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen vehicle in the 1100 block of 48th Street. 02/22/19 – 6:20 p.m. Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2400 block of Avenue G. 02/22/19 – 2:37 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a shoplifter in the 1800 block of Avenue H. 02/22/19 – 7:36 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 1500 block of Avenue L. 02/22/19 – 5:26 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1100 block of 48th Street. 02/22/19 – 7:57 a.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 300 block of Avenue B. 02/24/19 – 11:07 p.m. – Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in progress in the 2400 block of Avenue A. 02/22/19 – 10:35 a.m. – Fort Madison Police cited Susan Rose Green, 34, of Fort Madison at the police department, on a charge of 5th degree theft. She was released upon citation. 02/23/19 – 8:55 p.m. – Fort Madison Police arrested Patrick Francisco Jimenez, 21, of Fort Madison, in the 800 block of Avenue G, on a charge of domestic abuse serious assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. Lee County Sheriff’s Report 02/21/19 – 8:53 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Roderick Vaughn Rice, 40, of Fort Madison, at the sheriff’s office on a warrant for sex offender registration violation. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. 02/21/19 – 8:56 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Ryan Wade Siegrest, 40, of Fort Madison, at the Lee County Jail on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. 02/22/19 – 11:50 a.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Ashley Michelle Youngs, 22, of Argyle, in the 1800 block of 294th Street, on a charge of domestic abuse assault. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and released. 02/22/19 – 12:28 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Mehgin Adar McGhry, 28, of Quincy, at the Adams/Hancock county line, on a warrant for violation of probation. She was taken to Lee County Jail and held. 02/23/19 – 2:53 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Leah Marcelle, Ehret-Cox, 33, of Ottumwa on the Wapello County Jail on a warrant for failure to appear. She was held in custody. 02/21/19 – 4:00 p.m. – Lee County Sheriff’s deputies arrested Justin Robert Snowden 37, of Montrose, at the sheriff’s office on a warrant for failure to appear. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held. "For the Record/Lottery Numbers" 2/24 EVENING 6 5 5 2/24 EVENING 3 4 5 IOWA LOTTERY WINNING NUMBERS Lotto Drawings Game Draw Days Sales Cut Off Time Approx. Draw Time Lucky for Life® Mon & Thu 8:30 pm 9:38 pm Mega Millions® Tues & Fri 8:59 pm 10:00 pm Powerball® Wed & Sat 8:59 pm 9:59 pm Lotto America™ Wed & Sat 8:59 pm 10:00 pm Pick 3 – Midday Daily Noon 12:20 pm Pick 3 – Evening Daily 4:00 pm 10:00 pm Pick 4 – Midday Daily Noon 12:20 pm Pick 4 – Evening Daily 4:00 pm 10:00 pm For additional information please contact Shelley Sheerin at 319-372-2486 ext. 7 Tuesday, February 26th at 6:30 p.m. at HTC Elementary in West Point. Please call Eileen at 319-837-6131 ext. 106 to schedule a one hour appointment for you and your child.

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FORT MADISON – Joshua R. Denning, CRPC, CLTC a Private Wealth Advisor with Joshua Denning & Associates, a private wealth advisory practice of Ameriprise Financial Services, Inc. in Fort Madison, Iowa, has qualified for the company’s Circle of Success annual recognition program and will be honored for this achievement in 2019.

To earn this achievement, Denning established himself as one of the company’s top advisors. Only a select number of high-performing advisors earn this distinction.

He has 21 years of experience with Ameriprise Financial. As a Private Wealth Advisor, Denning provides financial advice that is anchored in a solid understanding of client needs and expectations and is delivered in one-on-one relationships with his clients.

“Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is time for home.”

- Edith Sitwell

Winter Hours:
Tu - F 10am - 5pm and Saturdays 10am - 2pm

Farmhouse Style Decor, Silks, Gift Items, Soaps, Lotions, Jams & Salsas, Milton Creamery Cheeses, Swed & Co. Coffee and Fancy Favor Cookies

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Revenue off LOST reflects countywide drop in purchases

TAX - Continued from Page 1

Manager David Varley and City Finance Director Peggy Steffensmeier have both said, and I’ve confirmed, that the state won’t break those figures down.

Time to make some calls.

How that isn’t public information is beyond me. The only argument we can fathom is that it may be proprietary and give competitors an advantage from one retail outlet to the next. But I don’t buy it, everyone knows it’s 1 percent. They know that 1 percent of that respective purchase should go to the city. Well, actually it would appear that it doesn’t work that way.

The disbursements aren’t even based on sales. The state collects the 1 percent tax and then distributes it based on this formula – copied from the Iowa Department of Revenues FAQ on Local Option Sales Tax.

"Each county’s account is distributed on the basis of population (75 percent) and property tax levies (25 percent). The population factor is based on the most recent certified federal census. The property tax factor is the sum of property tax dollars levied by boards of supervisors or city councils for the three years from July 1, 1982 through June 30, 1985. The property tax data is compiled from city and county tax reports available in the State Department of Management. Only population and property tax levies of the jurisdiction imposing the tax are used in figuring percentages.

The actual distribution is computed as follows:

\[
D = (1.75 \times P \times X) + (0.25 \times V \times X)
\]

D = distribution for the taxing jurisdiction
P = jurisdiction percentage of the population
V = jurisdiction percentage of the property tax levied
Z = the total collections for the county in which the jurisdiction is located.

Examples of an actual distribution are in 701 Iowa Administrative Code § 107.107.

So it would appear the 1% is put into a pool of money distributed by the state based on that formula. Per a conversation I had with Steffensmeier and Varley, the state isn’t real forthcoming about how and why those figures dropped so dramatically, it’s happening all around the state.

The sales tax revenue dropped in the 2017-18 year, as well and some thought that maybe it was a byproduct of the fertilizer plant being completed and the workers that made Fort Madison home for several years artificially inflated our sales tax outlook.

I’m no economist, but in theory, if they use that formula, these folks were counted in our population and most didn’t buy property, so it shouldn’t have. Again, in theory…had an impact.

I’m no scientist either, but you have a control and variable in most experiments and if we look at it from that perspective, the control would be, I think, the formula, while the variable would be changes to the P, V, and Z. P and V are set by the formula so the change would be in total sales tax collection by the county.

So then if we’re to evaluate the problem and try to mitigate, the next step would be to call and see if we can find where qualifying purchases have fallen off.

The state may not tell you, but according to the Department of Revenue, two county employees can enter into an agreement with the state to see the actual figures, but those figures couldn’t be disclosed to say…the Pen City Current, because the state considers them confidential. Anyone leaking that information is subject to severe criminal penalty.

I would argue those numbers are public record. (I’ve argued with a lot of people lately on what should be considered public and what isn’t). The levy amounts are public record, the census is public record, why an amount that was allocated to the state pool by election of the voters be protected due to confidentiality?

It could, in theory, be troublesome if they broke it down by individual business, but couldn’t the state look at sectors: e.g. restaurants, gas stations, furniture stores, auto services (auto sales do not collect the 1%, but repairs and services are subject to the tax)? At least then cities, chambers, and other business advocacy groups could target marketing efforts and campaigns.

We can analyze it until the cows come home, but in the end, the state isn’t doing much to help local governments stay in the black. At least they could provide information to help us help ourselves.

And by the way, it is just me or would Shopko be a perfect place for one of those outdoor stores. Wal-Mart and Target are too close, but where’s the closest Bass Pro Shop or Cabela’s…But that’s Beside the Point.

New Year. Fresh Start.

Thank you to all our customers who worked to reduce their environmental footprint last year. We’re looking forward to helping you continue your efforts and to educating our communities on more ways to help this year.

Here are just a few ways you can help:

• Don’t put plastic bags in recycling bins
• Rinse & clean all food jars & cans before recycling
• Flatten empty boxes for better storage & volume reduction
• Place all recyclables loose in bins
• Don’t recycle wrapping paper
• Properly dispose of all electronics and household hazardous waste
We are seeking an individual Region serves all of Lee, United Way of the Great River to residents in Clark, Hannock, and Lee Counties. United Way of the Great River Region supports non-profit organizations that provide programs addressing needs in health, education and financial stability to residents in Clark, Hancock, and Lee Counties. United Way of the Great River Region serves all of Lee, Hancock, and Clark Counties. All donations are tax-deductible.

**HELP WANTED**

**COMMUNITY GARDEN COORDINATOR NEEDED**

RSVP/United Way of the Great River Region is seeking a Community Garden Coordinator.

Do you like to garden and work outdoors? Do you like to plant, plant and harvest food?

We are seeking an individual this Spring who will plan, plant, cultivate, harvest and lead other volunteers in our Community Garden (garden is located at 2606 Avenue L, Fort Madison, Iowa behind Hy-Vee).

Must enjoy working outside, gardening and harvesting. Will direct garden activities with other volunteers and may require some bending, stooping and lifting of 10 lbs. or less. Times: 1 hour, 2 times per week.

If interested and for more information, please call Tammy at 319-372-8043.

United Way of the Great River Region supports non-profit organizations and agencies that provide programs addressing needs in health, education and financial stability to residents in Clark, Hancock, and Lee Counties.

United Way of the Great River Region serves all of Lee, Hancock, and Clark Counties. All donations are tax-deductible.

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**MOVING SALE**

Everything must go! Seriously it really must go!

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February 19, 2019, at City Hall, 811 Avenue E. Mayor Randolph presided with Council Administration, at 5:41 P.M. Mayor’s reappointments to the Old Fort Commission term expiring March 31, 2022, and Marty Dean to the Southeast Regional Riverboat Company, term ending December 31, 2021. At 7:16 P.M. on motion, Council adjourned until March 5, 2019, at 5:30 P.M. On motion, Council approved the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget and set Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at 5:30 P.M., as the date for hearing. On motion, Council approved the Public Works Director’s signature on an agreement with Visu-Sewer, not to exceed $35,000, to seal manholes from 2nd to 6th Streets avenue A on motion. Council closed the public hearing. On motion, Council approved the Consent Agenda: Minutes of 2/5/2019; Outdoor Service Orchard: Horan’s Cabaret: St. Patrick’s Day Celebration, 1317 Avenue G – effective 3/16 and 3/17/2019; Partial Liquor License Refund: Columbus Club Inc., in the amount of $97,50; Resolution No. 2019-24 granting property tax exemption to Brenda S/Berman L. Derr, 820 Avenue G; January Financial Report; and Payment of Claims. The public hearing concerning Public Improvement Project 2018-02, Avenue G Sidewalk and Storm Water Improvements was cancelled. Mayor Randolph opened the public hearing concerning an amendment to Title 10, Chapter 1, Title: Purpose, and Chapter 10, Administration, at 5:41 P.M. With no oral or written comments, on motion, Council closed the public hearing. On motion, Council approved the first reading of an ordinance to amend Title 10, Chapter 1, Title: Purpose, and Chapter 10, Administration. On amended motion, Council approved the Fiscal Year 2019-20 Budget and set Tuesday, March 5, 2019, at 5:30 P.M. as the date for hearing. On motion, Council approved the Public Works Director’s signature on an agreement with Visu-Sewer, not to exceed $35,000, to seal manholes from 2nd to 6th Streets avenue A on motion. Council closed the public hearing. On motion, Council approved the Consent Agenda: Minutes of 2/5/2019; Outdoor Service Orchard: Horan’s Cabaret: St. Patrick’s Day Celebration, 1317 Avenue G – effective 3/16 and 3/17/2019; Partial Liquor License Refund: Columbus Club Inc., in the amount of $97,50; Resolution No. 2019-24 granting property tax exemption to Brenda S/Berman L. Derr, 820 Avenue G; January Financial Report; and Payment of Claims. The public hearing concerning Public Improvement Project 2018-02, Avenue G Sidewalk and Storm Water Improvements was cancelled. 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Library to revisit Saturday hours at next meeting

LIBRARY - Continued from Page 1

options going forward, despite nothing being cut from the library's budget for the next fiscal year.

"I did want to start talking about possible scenarios since this came up. I think other people may be discussing it, so I'd like to get the board's opinion," she said.

Clendineng told the board that if the library lost a part-time position, they could potentially absorb the position, but then the library would not be able to stay open til 7 p.m. on Thursday.

"If we cut staff, we cut hours," Board Chairman Ron Welder said. "There isn't any way to work around losing some hours the library is open."

Clendineng said, agreeing the library is probably open longer than current staffing would typically allow. "We are open as many hours as we can be with the employees we have. If we lose any staff, we don't have any extra hours. And quite frankly, we might be open slightly more hours than we should be," she said.

"If a full-time employeeretires, someone mentioned going to a 25-hour a week position rather than a 40-hour, but if the replacement needed health insurance, it would wipe out any savings we would see."

She said it also causes an issue with making sure there are two people in the buildings at all times. Mehrfeld said the parks department runs with two full-time and two part-time which is less staff than the library. The city does take advantage of some limited Mt. Pleasant inmate labor.

Clendineng said what the parks employees do is very important, but that staff, in addition to maintenance, isn't being asked to staff the parks, or teach the public the best way to play games in the park, or to reserve park facilities for them.

"From what I know, the parks department may need more employees," Welder said.

Clendineng said it's a good time to start thinking about the options because city leaders are looking at them as well.

"I think it's worth considering because the city's financial position is not improving as has been mentioned and they are getting to the point where expenditures are exceeding revenues. If that doesn't change this may be something the board needs to look at in the future," she said.

She said in the event someone does retire, she would come back to the board for a discussion, but the current budget as presented does not have a funding reduction for the library.

In a related, but separate discussion topic, Clendineng also had the board look at the possibility of moving Saturday hours to earlier in the day. She said the change is being prompted by security issues for the staff as well as addressing keeping part-time hours under 26 per week.

Clendineng was looking at possibly moving the hours from the current 10 to 3 p.m. to a morning 9:15 or 9:30 opening and 1 p.m. closing. Board member Ron Welder said he wouldn't want to see the hours moved back up if avoidable.

"What other options, if any, are viable?" Welder asked. Clendineng said she could look at rearranging staff schedules during the week, but she said she didn't know how that would impact the weekly hours. But she said she would favor a 10:30 open on Saturday to allow more time for the library open and have both staffers come in at 10 to keep from having a staffer in the library alone.

Clendineng said the traffic at the library on Saturday varies widely and she said there is really no rhyme or reason to the traffic levels.

"It depends on what else is going on and weather. There are just so many factors. It does slow down in the afternoon," she said.

I think it's worthy of further discussion," Welder said.

The issue will come up again at the board's March meeting.

7th graders stay perfect

FORT MADISON – The Fort Madison 7th grade girls' basketball teams picked up a pair of wins Tuesday at home against Mount Pleasant.

In the A game, Fort Madison won by the score of 29-12. DeLanee Seay led a balanced offensive attack with 11 points, while Ieisha Coleman and Amy Yasenchok each pitched in with two points. With the win, Fort Madison's B team moves to 6-0 and is off until Monday against Ottumwa.

The Fort Madison B team won by the score of 15-6. The Bloodhounds were led in scoring by Paetyn Wiegand with eight points. Haley Lampe scored three points, while also adding eight steals and five rebounds. Aija Jenkins followed closely behind with six points and four steals. Lauryn Helmick added six points and Taylor Johnson finished up the scoring with four points.

The A team moves to 7-0 on the season with just two make-up games remaining on the schedule.

The next game is at Ottumwa on Monday followed by a home game on Tuesday against Washington. The Fort Madison B team won by a score of 15-6. The Bloodhounds were led in scoring by Paetyn Wiegand with eight points. Haley Lampe scored three points while Leisha Coleman and Amy Yasenchok each pitched in with two points. With the win, Fort Madison's B team moves to 6-0 and is off until Monday on the road against Ottumwa.

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