

Local People. Local Stories.

# PCM EXPLORER

## MONROE

### FOAM MUCH FUN

Monroe Public Library host foam cannon for kids on the square



Kids young and old have a great time with the foam cannon at the Monroe Public Library event Aug. 10. Jamee A. Pierson/PCM Explorer

## PCM

### And they're off

Social and emotional needs, along with safety top priorities for school district

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PCM is starting out the year in celebration mode as the district goes into its 30th year. Superintendent Michelle Havenstrite is excited for the beginning of the year and continuing to be "stronger together."

"We are so excited about the start of the school year. There are so many, many positive, innovative things happening in our district," Havenstrite said.



Havenstrite

"(We are) super thrilled to be offering three sections of all day preschool," Havenstrite said. "This will provide double the amount of time for our littlest Mustangs to play, grow, learn and socialize."

The district as a whole is focusing on the social and emotional needs of not only students but staff and families. PCM received a \$50,000 grant to provide training to the staff on mental health and throughout the year how the training is being implemented will be shared.

At the elementary level, the schools will be focusing on providing equitable education opportunities and increasing grade-level collaboration. The 2022-2023 school year marks the first time both Monroe and Prairie City fourth and fifth grade students will be combined together for instruction, located at Prairie City Elementary. The district is also bringing back developmental kindergarten and adding to the preschool offerings.

"Our elementary and middle schools were recipients of the Kern Family Foundation Grant to implement the Leader In Me program," Havenstrite said. "The high school will be learning about and implementing Restorative Practices. We have hired two Student Advocates — and hope to have a third on staff before school starts. These

START • 3

## PRAIRIE CITY

### Sidewalk requirements updated in PC

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The City of Prairie City has updated its sidewalks ordinance with a new language and requirements. The city council approved the third reading of the ordinance during the Aug. 10 meeting.

The changes range from the

finish of the sidewalk to where sidewalks will be required in future construction in the city.

"We've talked about this for several months now," mayor Eric Imerman said.

When removing snow or ice, the city will require removal within 24 hours after the cessation of the storm or other cause or accumulation. If it is not re-

moved in that time, the city administrator may, without notice to the property owner, remove the accumulation.

The city will maybe use its own forces to remove the snow, ice or accumulations, or the city may hire an independent contractor to do the work. The cost

SIDEWALKS • 3

## COUNTY DRAMA

### Hold-up over ARPA money leads to conflict

Treasurer asks for timeline, auditor reveals issues with re-verification

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Supervisors approved an agreement with the county's financial advisor to determine the eligibility of a number of American Rescue Plan Act-funded projects, which were authorized by the

board more than four weeks ago and resulted in a debate with elected officials on Aug. 2 about the hold-up.

Jasper County has \$7.22 million in ARPA funds. On July 5, the board of supervisors voted in favor of dispersing about \$150,000 to five projects: new EMS storage racks and

emergency radios, as well as donations to American Legion Post 111, astronomical observatory and the county fair board.

However, the supervisors approved the resolution pending further review from the county's financial consultant.

The board of supervisors this past

week authorized financial advisor Public Financial Management (PFM) to assist the county and determine the eligibility of these projects and whether they align with the federal government's guidelines. It will also advise the county on additional communication with the feds.

ARPA • 5

## NO MORE DELAYS

Supervisor goes on the offensive against auditor to get ARPA projects their money

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Jasper County Supervisor Doug Cupples said the county auditor is a liar after it was revealed on Aug. 9 that the excuse Dennis Parrott gave to the board and the public about the hold-up over federal stimulus money was not true, inevitably resulting in yet another heated argument in the supervisors chambers.



From left: Jasper County Auditor Dennis Parrott and Jasper County Supervisor Doug Cupples argued over the dispersal of \$150,000 of ARPA funds to five individual projects. Christopher Braunschweig/PCM Explorer

The county has its American Rescue Plan Act funds and supervisors are well within their right to distribute the money, Cupples suggested.

Which contradicts a statement Parrott made a week before when he claimed the five entities receiving a total of \$150,000 in ARPA funds would have to wait because of an authorization issue with the website SAM.gov. Parrott

claimed the website authorizes all ARPA expenditures, which Cupples refuted.

For the past year, the county

has not spent any of its ARPA funds, which totals \$7.2 million. The county was beginning to make headway on dis-

tributing money to individual projects when its ARPA committee was formed and made the recommendation to allot 2

percent of its funds to smaller projects.

The board of supervisors voted to do so on July 5, but only after its financial advisor reviewed the projects. Four weeks later, during the Aug. 2 supervisors meeting, the board authorized financial advisor Public Financial Management to determine the projects' eligibility to receive ARPA funds.

At which time Parrott was questioned about the timeline of the funds by Jasper County Treasurer Doug Bishop, who argued organizations have been patiently waiting to receive their money. Parrott would not give a firm date and said they would have to wait longer to receive their money because of the SAM.gov issue.

However, Cupples found that the SAM registration —

FUNDING • 6