

TIMES CITIZEN EDITORIAL

To Zoom or not to Zoom? Supervisors choose

The Hardin County Board of Supervisors decided May 1 to take away the Zoom element from their weekly meetings. Zoom is a program that gives people the opportunity to attend meetings remotely and in real time. The option was an addition during the COVID era, and it gave members of the county the ability to attend Supervisors meetings live online from the comfort of their homes or businesses with no cost to the county or the, rather than traveling to the courthouse in Eldora, where the meetings are held.

Although only a handful of people used the Zoom option, it was always available for those who had an interest in attending a particular meeting and

did not want to drive to Eldora.

During an April 24 public hearing on the budget, Zoom users – who are normally muted during the Supervisors meetings – were “unmuted” and given the opportunity to speak. At this time, one user was not able to unmute her microphone and received a message on her computer screen stating, “The host is not allowing participants to unmute themselves.”

Later, that same user sent a screenshot of this message to the Supervisors, who then declared at their May 1 meeting that it was a computer glitch. Then, because of this one incident, the Supervisors made the decision to remove the Zoom feature from their meetings all

together. Instead, they will record the meetings and upload them to YouTube at a future date, which could be a week or more later.

Supervisor BJ Hoffman also said he talked to other Supervisors across Iowa to see what type of equipment they used to record their meetings and noted some do not use YouTube or Zoom at all.

Hoffman also stated that he had heard “frustrations” with the timeliness of items being posted to the county’s website, and he said the agenda to their meetings are posted at the close of business Friday in the vestibule at the courthouse by Hardin County Auditor Jolene Pieters. Pieters also emails Monday’s agenda

to a select group of people on the Friday afternoon before each meeting.

On the other hand, school board meetings are not Zoomed, and the Iowa Falls City Council is not either. However, Eldora City Council is. It is a preference by each board as to what they wish to do.

Why are the Supervisors different? Their constituents who elected them to office live across Hardin County and some of them do not have the ability to be in Eldora at 9 a.m. on Monday mornings. Most other boards and councils hold their meetings during the evenings when more people can attend.

Some feel this is taking away transparency. Some feel

the Supervisors don’t want people to know what is going on. We feel that the public service promise made by Supervisors should provide this option. Not doing this is kind of like being open for business when it is convenient, but not shoveling the sidewalks on time.

Starting this week, the Times Citizen will be recording meetings on time. These recordings will be available on the Times Citizen website after the meeting by clicking on the KIFG link.

Our job as a newspaper is to report on the news in a timely manner, and if the option to view the Supervisors meetings is taken away, an audio recording by us will replace it. We hope this helps. ■

Springtime in Iowa

It’s that time of year ... the time when I stare around in my yard and wonder why, oh why, did I put in so many flower gardens? When I was young and energetic, I filled up this and dug up that, gleefully putting in as many perennials as I could. I traded plants with friends for cooler varieties and made the gardens even larger.



Little Pieces
Elaine Loring

Elaine Loring is the editor of Times Citizen and resides in Iowa Falls. She can be reached at eloring@iafalls.com.

What was I thinking? Now I’m old, and I’m tired. The last thing I want to do is uncover these headaches, then monitor them with Deer Be Gone, and the other things that keep critters away. There was a time where I’d rush out to do these garden chores, even with three rambunctious boys running amok. And I got it all done and everything was beautiful.

Those were the days, One Mother’s Day, years and years ago, my husband put in a decorative pond. Cool, right? Well, like the gardens, it needs to be cleaned out a few times a year ... and last year it went completely untouched. It was full of decaying leaves and a million tree frogs. Those frogs chirp all night, and that sound takes a while to get used to, especially since this pond is near the bedroom window.

So, over the weekend I was diligently pulling dead grass and weeds, and getting the gardens to a presentable state, when the Cow Man decided to clean out that pond. Bless his heart! We hadn’t done it for so long, it was just gross. He said he did it because he didn’t want me to accuse him of “being lazy.” So, he drained it, put on his knee-high

waders and scooped out two wheelbarrows full of wet, smelly leaves while chucking the tree frogs to the side.

When he finished, the water was actually clear, and we could see to the bottom. Now, we need to put in the pump fountain, which hopefully still works.

However, he didn’t throw those tree frogs too far. They came back... with their friends. The back-and-forth chips went on all night until the sun came up. Obviously, they were happy to have clean water, too.

Thanks to the Cow Man, things are getting done, it’s just taking time.

Now, the final job on my list is to get rid of the wasps building a nest in my mailbox. The first time I noticed it, only one flew out and I thought it was nothing, but now several fly when I pull the door open. I looked inside and they are building a colony against the back wall. I went to the store to get wasp spray and they only had one three-pack. I certainly didn’t need that much.

It’s a good thing I’m freakishly tall. There were single bottles on the very top shelf, and I could just barely reach them to get one down. I haven’t used it yet ... I’ll have to see how bad it has become when I pick up the mail today.

Ah, spring in Iowa. ■



Ellsworth College Foundation

‘Tis the season for graduation

I graduated high school in 19XX. We lived directly across the street from my high school. I remember my graduation day like it happened yesterday. I dressed in my cap and gown at home ready to walk out the door. Feeling well prepared, excited, and a bit nervous, I stepped out the door and like walking into a brick wall, it hit me ... what do I do now? Four years of high school all boiled down to this moment, and I had no idea what I was going to do with my life.



Guest Column
Gwen Groen

Gwen Groen is the director of the ECC Foundation.

but in the classroom, I had very little interest. Today, it makes me sad and if I could turn back time, this would be an area of change.

I visited colleges, but at 18 years old, parents that did not put an emphasis on higher education and parents that did not have the funds to put me through school, I chose to work.

True confession No. 2, I wanted to be a cosmetologist, but at that time, the curriculum included going to a morgue and fix the hair of a deceased person. Nope, I’M OUT!

After five years of working and playing, I de-

cidated it was time to buckle down and get serious about my life. I had a former grade schoolteacher, who by the way was also my father’s grade schoolteacher, offer to pay my college tuition. Thanks to Mrs. Harms, I began my higher education. I’m sure maturing five years helped, but I loved college and excelled in the classroom. Never did I think I would be a 3.8 GPA, but here I was a 3.8 student. I graduated and stepped into professional America and 35 years later have finally found my fit.

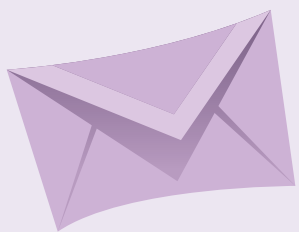
I guess for those reading this, my message is to never give up, never let a steppingstone become a barricade in your journey. You will find your passion; however, it may not happen when you think it should. But I can tell you,

when you know, you will know. Be open, be willing to listen and learn, and probably the most difficult, but most importantly, take the criticism and mistakes (you will have them) and turn them into a positive. A very wise man told me that I would learn much more from my mistakes that I ever will from my wins.

When this column prints, Ellsworth Community College students are preparing to walk across the stage in two days to receive their degree. High school seniors are anxiously awaiting probably one of the most exciting, fearful, and emotional days yet. These are huge accomplishments and rightly deserve to be celebrated. Congratulations to all and enjoy the ride! ■

Thinking about writing a letter to the editor?

The Times Citizen welcomes signed letters to the editor from our readers. All letters should be typed or legibly written and be 400 words or fewer. The Times Citizen reserves the right to edit all letters for content, punctuation and grammar. Letters should be signed, and include the name, address and phone number of the author. Letter writers may be contacted by the editor for verification of facts and authenticity.



Letters are printed in the Wednesday Times Citizen on this Opinions page, and should arrive at the Times Citizen offices by 12 p.m. on Mondays to ensure they are included in the Wednesday newspaper.

Letters can be delivered in several ways: by email to eloring@iafalls.com; by mail to P.O. Box 640, Iowa Falls, IA, 50126; or in person at 406 Stevens St., Iowa Falls (there is a drop box located to the left of the front door).

Letters

Supervisors need a pay cut

TO THE EDITOR:

After doing the research, looking at the dataset provided, and looking at like sized counties, population, land valuations, median incomes, and poverty rates, I found some very interesting information. Rather than just make vague implications that research was done, here are some simple facts from ISAC and the state:

We have a lower median income than all the counties that surround us. Hardin County is No. 44 from the top in popu-

lation ranking; are No. 31 from the top in land value. However, we are No. 39 in our poverty ranking. It has now risen to 9.9%.

Our elected officials individually rank between No. 49 and No. 56 in salary ranking after last year’s 6 percent pay raises. Nearly all of our elected county officials were at about the state average after the pay raise last year. In addition, among the non-elected officials or department heads, all but two are under the state averages. Not even mentioning where the employees who do all the daily grunt work to keep this county running stand.

One of the exceptions to these elected pay rankings is our board of supervisors. Last year, after the 6 percent pay increase

they voted for themselves, they ranked No. 28 from the top in the salary ranking. Only 27 counties have supervisors that are paid more annually than they are paid. How many of these 27 counties have higher population numbers than ours? Higher median income? Larger cities?

The comment one made about cutting percentages on salary recommendation having to be done across the board and was made in error. Especially since a few of our elected officials kindly requested and received increases lower than what was originally recommended. Again, thank you for your choices.

Our Board of Supervisors voted to give themselves the full 10 percent increase to hold a public

service position, apparently without consideration as to whether the public they serve can afford it or not.

Considering we are No. 44 in population, 39 in poverty, our other elected officials rank between 49 and 56 in pay, one would think that being all the way up to a 28 ranking for supervisor pay would be enough.

In lieu of this information, I would hope that our Board of Supervisors would reconsider their choice for the good of the people in this county. Especially since others in their party serving in Des Moines and D.C. are demanding wide ranging spending cuts.

**DONNA JUBER
HARDIN COUNTY**