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ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

Angela De La Riva, who began her economic development career in Ackley, has resigned from her county position.

De La Riva Leaves Position as County Economic Development Director

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The Hardin County Board of Supervisors accepted the resignation of county economic development director Angela De La Riva during Wednesday's meeting, ending her three-plus year tenure in that position.

An Ellsworth native, De La Riva offered the job in July of 2019. Prior to her hiring, the county did not employ an economic development director but rather relied on the Iowa Falls Area Development Corporation (IFADC) and the Ackley Development Commission (ADC).

She previously worked for a little more than one year as director of the ADC.

De La Riva's salary is \$66,500, and her final day in the role is Friday, Oct. 14. She said the timing was right to make a career change but was not ready to reveal where she is headed next.

"I'm happy with where the program is at right now, and I think it is at a point where someone else could come in and replicate and build on what we've been doing," De La Riva said.

The county is preparing to host community task force/economic engineering meetings in November with the help of Blane Canada, an economic development management advisory firm. That group completed a feasibility study on the county that looked at issues including population.

Economic Engineering is a numbers driven actionable approach to strategic planning. Stakeholders come together to create a comprehensive plan that includes setting community goals for spurring economic development.

Hardin County Supervisor Chair BJ Hoffman said the board would like to see what data and information is gleaned from those November sessions before proceeding with finding a new economic development director.

"With us starting this economic development engineering program, we are going to look at the partners in that and decide what they believe is the best fit moving forward with the position. The economic engineering task is a long process. I think it will be a matter of conferring with our partners from around the county and engaging our mayors and councils and economic development parties both private and public," Hoffman said.

The Supervisor chairman said the county is invested in having the infrastructure necessary to build, recruit and retain new businesses as well as current business operations.

De La Riva said she was proud of the grant writing the county was able to achieve during her tenure. She also mentioned the construction of the new Radcliffe American Legion Post No. 317 Community Center. The new \$500,000 facility was dedicated in April of 2021.

One of her biggest regrets was not completing the potential industrial park development at the Highway 20/65 corridor south of Iowa Falls.

"I've grown immensely in this role and credit Hardin County and Ackley for giving me tools to be very successful," De La Riva said.

Hoffman said he and the rest of the board - Renee McClellan and Lance Granow - have not held in-depth discussions regarding plans to find De La Riva's replacement.

The Community Task Force Sessions are scheduled for Nov. 8 (3-8 p.m.); Nov. 9 (9 a.m.-4 p.m.) and Nov. 10 (9 a.m.-1 p.m.). Those meetings will take place at the Hardin County Emergency Management Building (1031 Edgington Ave.) in Eldora. ●



Ackley Firemen are seeking additional volunteers. On Saturday, the crew spent some time training which included use of the department's cutters and spreaders to dismantle this car. Those wishing to serve on the crew would be able to take part in the trainings, including some of the most up to date equipment available.

Volunteer Opportunities

Ackley Fire AND Ambulance seeking service members

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

Like other rural communities, Ackley is seeing fewer volunteers on both the ambulance and fire departments. Both are issuing pleas for residents to step up and take on roles.

"Daytime coverage is where our biggest need is right now," explains Joan Frazier, AVAS president. Frazier heads the crew of 10. "Optimally, I need eight more individuals for a full crew," she said.

Kendall Meyer, Ackley Fire Chief, says his department is in need of four individuals to bring the total number of firemen to capacity.

To become a fireman, an application must be made to Meyer, Joe Hunt or Tim Eichmeier. Volunteers should have their Firefighter 1 training or be willing to get the training within a year. The class requires approximately 190 hours, with some of the training available on-line.

Those wishing to volunteer for the local fire department are asked to be available during the day, when the need is the greatest.

Eichmeier, former fire chief, says a class can be scheduled in Hardin County, for those interested in serving the residents of Ackley.

Frazier says she recently offered a local EMT class hoping to entice local volunteers to step into roles on the ambulance without success. She explains that the cost of the course will be covered by the City of Ackley providing participants promise a three-year commitment to the crew.

Ackley is not alone in the shortage of volunteers. The National Rural Health Association reports that 70 percent of rural EMS providers are having difficulty recruiting volunteers to meet staffing requirements.



PHOTOS BY BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

Once a month, the members of the Ackley Fire Department take part in trainings such as this one which took place on Saturday. Along with dismantling two vehicles, the members trained with their new nozzle to put out flames inside a vehicle. AVAS members also training monthly.

Frazier notes that historically, volunteering filled part of an individual's social circle.

"Today, that social circle is filled with social media, and I think regulations, training expectations, job responsibilities and time commitment put more pressure on volunteers," Frazier said. "It's a tough sell."

Meyer agrees. His department holds monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month and trainings are also held monthly.

"It's a lot to ask, but I can't think of a better way to give back to your community. It's very rewarding," he said.

Meyer is also doing his best to revive the Junior Firefighter program started in 2017 by former chief Eichmeier. The youth learn about personal protective equipment, protective clothing, helmets, goggles and more which protect the wearer from injury and are trained in fire safety and the history of firefighting. They learn how to support firemen at a scene including how to set up portable water tanks and getting tools, and filling and switching air tanks.

While not allowed to enter a building, they play a significant role.

Any AGWSR student interested in taking part should contact Meyer. ●



The Colors of Fall

BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

The beautiful colors of fall have arrived in the area. As leaves fall from trees, spreading shades of yellow, green, orange, and gold across the ground as a result of cooler evening temperatures. For a closer look at the beauty of the season, check inside this edition of the Ackley World Journal.



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