

ALL-STATE BASKETBALL

Two Newton Cardinals grab all-state honors / 8A

NEWTON NEWS



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Christopher Braunschweig/Newton News

Conor Fudge, owner of Murph & Mary's Pub, has almost 20 years of bar experience and will be opening his first bar at Legacy Plaza this month. The pub's name and decor is inspired by his grandparents, Dick and Mary Agnes Murphy, who are longtime Newton residents and whose parents were Irish immigrants.

NEW MEANING TO FAMILY BUSINESS

Murph & Mary's Pub in Newton pays homage to owner's grandparents to create a warm and inviting atmosphere

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News

Customers won't see beer signs on the walls of Murph & Mary's Pub in Newton. Instead, they'll get a glimpse of owner Conor Fudge's family history through a fish hook mounted on a muskie-shaped

plaque, personalized drawings of the "Family Circus" comic strip and black-and-white photographs of his grandparents, whose namesakes serve as the inspiration for the bar itself. "This is my grandmother when she was 16 in the '30s," Fudge said, pointing to an old

photograph he intends to blow up and post on the wall. "We have pictures of my family everywhere. I'm not going to have beer signs or that kind of stuff. I want it to be more of a traditional, local pub. It's going to tell a story."

PUB | 2A

Newton city administrator gives explanation regarding revenue and FY24 budget

Muckler provides updated data after rollback error, says city is more efficient

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News

In response to multiple inquiries about property taxes and the fiscal year 2024 budget, city administrator Matt Muckler provided in-depth clarifications and other facts and figures at the March 6 council meeting that show the increase in City of Newton tax dollars is less than what was initially thought.

Muckler's speech reflected the sentiments he shared in letters to three citizens who spoke at the Feb. 20 city council meeting. Concerns were mostly aimed at a Facebook post which showed yet-to-be-updated property tax information. Some citizens in the comments claimed the city was raising taxes by 11.1 percent.

Officials were adamant that this was not true. The 11.1 percent figure that was shared is the the percent increase in max property tax dollars for the fiscal year 2024 budget. Plus, staff noted the residential rollback error from the state had not been corrected at that time, so the percentage would be even lower.

"The increase is 7.72 percent, not 11 percent. This is the correct number," Muckler said at the most recent council meeting.

BUDGET | 3A

Jasper County Conservation awarded \$500K Destination Iowa grant

Funds will go towards the long-awaited \$2.2M environmental education center

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News

Jasper County Conservation is so close to meeting its fundraising goal for the long-awaited environmental education center, especially now that the project was awarded a \$500,000 Destination Iowa grant on March 10 from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and Gov. Kim Reynolds.

There is still about 13 percent of remaining funds, or approximately \$300,000, to collect for

the estimated \$2.2 million environmental education center. Keri Van Zante, director of Jasper County Conservation, told Newton News the funding from the Destination Iowa grant is a boost for conservation and the community.

"Paired with the ARPA dollars provided by the Jasper County Board of Supervisors and generous private donors, we are within \$300,000 of being able to fund the center in its entirety! This is

GRANT | 3A



Illustration designs by Studio Melee

Updated designs show what Jasper County Conservation's environmental education center may look like.

Commercial property inspections temporarily suspended

Similarly to the rental property program, ad hoc committee will review policy

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News

In much the same way the Newton City Council suspended its rental housing inspection program to address issues brought up by local landlords, the mayor on March 6 proposed the commercial property inspection program be temporarily put on hold until similar problems are looked at by an ad hoc committee.

The ad hoc committee — which was comprised of council members Randy Ervin, Evelyn George and Craig Trotter — worked through the residential pro-

gram issues and had the building trades board have an opportunity to review those issues based on the information relayed to staff.

"I think we need to be doing the same thing with our commercial program," mayor Mike Hansen said. "So what I'm asking, council, is a consensus. That you allow me as your chief executive officer to suspend that commercial inspection ... until you all have an opportunity to meet with the commercial property owners."

INSPECTION | 2A

Sheriff requests supervisors to open union contracts to address employee wages

Halferty says it is important to retain good workers in all departments

By Christopher Braunschweig
Newton News

Jasper County Sheriff John Halferty requested the board of supervisors on March 7 to consider opening union contracts for negotiations in order to raise wages of county employees — whether they are in the union or not — which he

hopes will retain workers not only in his department but in every department.

"I believe in recruiting good people but I believe even more in retaining our employees. I've lost six jail staff in the last few months. They like working here but their main reason is pay," he said. "Again,



Halferty

WAGES | 2A

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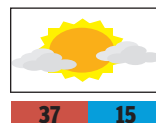
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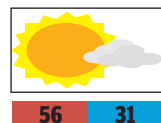
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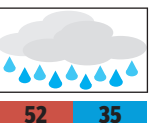
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