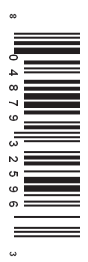




MFL MarMac holds its prom, page 9

Workshop focuses on mental health in Clayton County, page 2



# North Iowa Clayton County TIMES-REGISTER

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## Monona to put airport up for sale

By Audrey Posten

The Monona City Council, at its April 17 regular meeting, approved putting the Monona Municipal Airport up for sale. The idea has been broached multiple times over the past few years, as the airport board has worked to improve its finances amid declining use of the space. When the airport was last discussed at a February meeting, it was noted that just one airplane—which belongs to the air—  
See MONONA, page 3

## Elkader attempts to solve its housing crisis

By Willis Patenaude

Over the last two decades, and possibly even longer, housing has been an issue in the city of Elkader, so much so that numerous studies have been done looking for an answer on how to solve the problem. Just last year, the Clayton County Development Group (CCDG), in partnership with Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission, completed the latest Clayton County Housing Study (CCHS). In addition to that, the city of Elkader, after being awarded a grant late last year, recently participated in the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Community and Economic Development's Rural Housing Readiness Assessment (RHRA). Phase one of that assessment, which required completion of a short survey by residents, wrapped up April 17. According to the press release, it will "provide input for the Housing Steering Committee's spring strategic planning sessions. During these sessions, an action plan will be created to address Elkader's housing needs with the goal of ensuring that current residents  
See HOUSING, page 7



The communities of Marquette and McGregor are bracing for what the National Weather Service (NWS) projects will be the second-highest crest of the Mississippi River at McGregor. The river hit major flood stage of 22 feet (pictured here) on Monday, April 24, and will continue to rise to 24.2 feet on Saturday, April 29. In Marquette on Monday, Canadian Pacific Railway worked to raise the height of the tracks as flood water inched closer. (Photos by Audrey Posten)

## Marquette and McGregor brace for near-record flooding

By Audrey Posten

The communities of Marquette and McGregor are bracing for what the National Weather Service (NWS) projects will be the second-highest crest of the Mississippi River at McGregor. The river hit major flood stage of 22 feet on Monday, April 24, and will continue to rise to 24.2 feet on Saturday, April 29. The NWS graph then shows the water level holding around 24 feet into May 1, before slowly receding. By reaching 22 feet, the Mississippi surpassed the third-highest height of 21.98 feet set in April 1993. A crest of 24.2 feet would eclipse the current number two of 23.75 feet set in April 2001. The record of 25.38 feet is from April 1965. NWS attributed this spring's enhanced flooding to unseasonably deep snowpack across northern parts of the region, coupled with a rapid warm-up in early April that led to rapid melting. NWS said McGregor had a 70 to 90 percent chance of exceeding 2001 flood levels due to the nearby confluence of the Wisconsin River.

On Monday, Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds issued a disaster proclamation for 10 counties in response to flooding along the Mississippi River. In addition to Clayton, the governor's proclamation allows state resources to be utilized to respond to and recover from the effects of flooding in Allamakee, Clinton, Des Moines, Dubuque, Jackson, Lee, Louisa, Muscatine and Scott counties. Reynolds also instructed the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) to activate the State Emergency Operations Center in Johnston in order to coordinate the state's response activities. HSEMD is working with county emergency management, state and federal partners to monitor conditions and provide resources to areas impacted by flooding. Clayton County Emergency Management Coordinator Sarah Moser has been helping cities find or request resources that are needed for flood protection measures. "We are getting items in place  
See FLOODING, page 8



MFL MarMac student and McGregor Hook and Ladder volunteer Eric Grady hefts a sandbag onto a pallet during sandbag filling operations in Marquette on April 21.

## FLOODING, from page 1

Mississippi River flooding has overtaken Big Buoy's Tiki Bar in McGregor. A Hesco barrier spans the riverfront for protection, and on Tuesday was going to be expanded to B Street, closing off South McGregor. See more photos on the North Iowa Times Facebook page and at [www.times-register.com](http://www.times-register.com). (Photos by Audrey Posten)



where they are needed or staging nearby. Cities and fire departments have been encouraged to ensure their resources (pumps, generators, sandbagging machine, etc.) are operating properly so they can be utilized. I will talk through a city's plan with them to make sure there aren't gaps and address gaps that do exist. I'm compiling information and disseminating it for situational awareness," Moser explained.

Marquette and McGregor city workers were preparing for flooding prior to the river hitting the minor flood stage of 16 feet early last week. Pumps were placed by mid-week, and crews began erecting flood walls and taking other protective measures.

Contractors from McGregor's Main Street construction project helped the city crew place sand-filled Hesco barriers at the riverfront.

"Not only did they have more equipment and manpower to offer, they've done this before for other communities," said the city of McGregor in an April 22 statement. "As this work was being done, the Army Corps of Engineers was here and indicated that McGregor has done a nice job of preparing. In addition to getting the flood walls in place, the manholes are plugged and all pumps have been activated and are being monitored around the clock. Our sewer system is working very hard and is keeping up right now. If residents and businesses can take measures to reduce water consumption until flood waters recede, this will be very helpful."

Marquette has a foot-by-foot operations manual that dates back to flooding in 2011. Mayor Steve Weipert credited long-time public works director Jason Sullivan for the organiza-

tion.

"He knows exactly when and where. Every year the water comes up, and every year we take out our plans and follow them. That's the biggest thing. We've been through it before. We have plans," Weipert said.

The cities also instructed residents near their riverfronts and in low-lying areas to begin moving valuables to higher locations, plugging floor drains and making sure sump pumps were in good working condition.

Sandbags were being filled by mid-week thanks to an automatic sandbagger provided by McGregor Hook & Ladder Co. No. 1. Sand was dumped into the top of the machine by a loader, then, by activating a foot pedal, as many as four people at once could pour sand into bags. This made the process more efficient than at previous flood events.

"They can whip them out pretty darn quick," said fire chief Tom Sauer.

On April 21, city workers, firefighters, local and county law enforcement, residents, Luana Savings Bank employees, staff and students from New Frontier School in Prairie du Chien and around 100 students and staff from MFL MarMac came together to

fill sandbags in Marquette.

"It's a wonderful thing," said Weipert of the support. "We'll have our sandbagging done easily today."

Volunteers also came out in force in McGregor the following day.

According to Weipert, "Where there are splits in the dike, there will be a lot of sandbags in there. They put in rock barriers, but you're going to have to seal around the sides. Manhole covers are another big issue. Then, of course, these dikes are old. They leak. We will have people walking dikes at night, and wherever there's a wet spot and it's getting mushy, then the sand bags will fill that in."

By Sunday, those sandbags were being put to use in Marquette, as city workers, firefighters and other volunteers reinforced barriers at the riverfront and next to the city shop and Mar-Mac police station off B45/Pleasant Ridge Road.

It's been a similar situation in McGregor.

Said the city, "As we continue to monitor the flooding situation, we are adding more reinforcements to the flood wall barriers, and monitoring pumps and the levees around the clock. As part of these efforts, the flood wall will be expanded across B Street by Viserion Grain [Tuesday, April 25],

"We don't want to scare anybody, but we do want everybody prepared," Weipert said. "The protocol if we're going to have people moving out or not would be how well the dikes are working. If we're afraid a dike is going to go, people are going to go."

On Monday, the road at the intersection of Highway 76 and Anti-Monopoly Street, at Casino Queen Marquette, was built up in anticipation of rising water.

If it should need to be closed, "Then the evacuation road on the bench will be opened to residents only," said Sauer.

Also on Monday, Casino Queen Marquette announced it will temporarily close for the safety of guests and team members. And, as the nearby railroad became inundated with flood water, Canadian Pacific Railway continued days-long efforts to raise the tracks at least a foot so trains could continue to operate.

Other road closures are anticipated in Marquette. According to the city, Highway 76 just north of Effigy Mounds National Monument would likely be closed Tuesday, April 25, then in Marquette soon after.

Due to the influx of local and transient vehicular traffic on the temporary flood prone one-lane Pleas-

ant Ridge Road, near the intersection of Pleasant Drive, after consultation with the Clayton County Engineer's Office and the Mar-Mac Police Department, the city of Marquette also authorized the closure of Pleasant Ridge Road within the corporate limits of Marquette.

"The involved entities are aware of the inconvenience this may cause local and nearby motorists, but, due to the increasing rise of the Mississippi River and vehicular traffic, the temporary gravel one-lane road is prone to increasing deterioration," said a press release.

On April 25, Clayton County Secondary Roads was to begin establishing a Pleasant Ridge Road (B45) detour and placing advance signage. U.S. Highway 18 vehicular traffic is encouraged to follow the Iowa Department of Transportation's signed detour.

Weipert is thankful Marquette and McGregor have had some time to prepare for major flooding. But adaptability will be key.

"It's kind of like being in a game show. You don't know what's going to happen," he said.

Added Sauer, "We're preparing for the worst. We haven't seen water like this since 2001."



McGregor Hook and Ladder's automatic sandbagger has made filling sandbags quicker and more efficient compared to previous floods/



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