

Ackley World Journal

VOL. 128 | WEEK 52 | \$1.50



BRITTANY SHAFFER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

The Ackley Council approved pursuing the possibility of AVAS and Eldora EMS services merging. The decision does not make the merge reality, but merely allows both services to continue researching the possibility.

Bold Move

Council approves pursuing merger with Eldora EMS

“I’m coming [to you] with [what] I feel is a viable solution to the problem.”

Joan Frazier
AVAS President

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

Over the past year, Joan Frazier, AVAS president, has been sharing her concerns regarding the future of the service. In a series of articles which began in Dec. of 2021, Frazier explained that the service, like rural communities everywhere, is facing a shortage of volunteers. She has spent part of every day thinking about the impact the service makes on the residents within the AVAS coverage area and how to continue for the community and service area.

Ideally, a crew of 18 to 20 members are needed for the service to continue to run in the manner it has since it began.

“But that’s not what’s happening,” Frazier said in an interview on Dec. 20.

“As of the fall of last year, Ackley’s Volunteer Ambulance Service has only five certified EMTs. They provide basic life support services to Ackley residents, as well as the surrounding rural areas. But providing service has become nearly impossible without sufficient manpower - sufficient numbers of volunteers, to do so.

During their Dec. 14 meeting, Frazier met with the Ackley City Council to consider a vote to approve pursuing a merger of AVAS with Eldora EMS.

“I’m coming with I feel is a viable solution to the problem,” Frazier began. Her appeal: that the coun-

cil be bold, consider the option that she and the two directors have come up with, and make the best decision for the residents of the AVAS service area, including the residents of Ackley.

Frazier has been working with Eldora EMS director, Maile Carter, to discover a way in which to combine the two services while providing more and better coverage in both. Their suggested plan would not only provide Ackley with 24-hour ambulance services but would actually provide advanced life support (paramedics) to the Ackley service area. Both communities, Frazier says, would benefit.

“AVAS has an incredible history, many volunteers have built this strong service and we are appreciative of their efforts,” Frazier began. “The community of Ackley is so supportive of our ambulance service. They give their hard-earned dollars to purchase the equipment we need, and we have great equipment. Unfortunately, what we need most right now is people,” said Frazier. “I do not want to lose our service, but we can no longer provide full-time coverage.”

AVAS is called into service 225 times per year, not enough to staff with a paramedic. Eldora, on the other hand, has 850 runs per year and is on the

AVAS > PAGE 4



Shaking the SNOW GLOBE

PHOTOS BY BECKY SCHIPPER AND STORY BY BRITTANY SHAFFER | ACKLEYWJ@IA.COM

Ackley homeowners worked diligently cleaning up the sidewalks and driveways of their properties, and of fellow neighbors as well. Seen all over town were men and women shoveling and blowing snow to help one another in the spirit of giving and neighborhood.



Thursday morning met Ackley residents with deep snow drifts blown by the high winds. Plow trucks could be found all over town working swiftly to clean up the streets.

Blizzard conditions and bitter cold blasts the area

The last few days before Christmas are always a busy time. People are still working regular jobs, with extra stops for those last-minute gifts, and getting ready to travel to see family for the upcoming holiday. Last week was no different for residents of Central Iowa, but the weather predicted was a little less than expected from what we’ve been used to the past few years for the Christmas season. Christmas 2021 gave us 60-degree weather and sunshine here in Ackley, but for the 2022 holiday, the weather system gave us a completely different forecast.

A storm that was predicted a week before it’s due, calling for an accumulation of 3 to 6 inches over the course of four days, put a stall to the plans of many events. Schools

BLIZZARD > PAGE 4

Building back and looking to make changes

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

As he begins rebuilding the Ackley Police Department, Police Chief Gerry Frick requested the Ackley council members consider residency restrictions for new hires. Frick explained that an individual has shown interest in the position, though currently lives outside city limits.

Mayor Mike Nuss reminded council members that previous chief, Tisharra Miller, had found it difficult to find a home within the city limits, making note that some smaller communities, like Ackley, are adjusting residency requirements to accommodate those from outside their towns as long as those individuals are in town when on duty.

The issue did not appeal to

city leaders, who hesitated to make such a change without knowing the individual would apply, or be accepted into the role.

Clerk Malena Dennis explained that the topic was simply up for discussion and that no decision could be made on the item due to how it appeared on the council’s agenda for the evening.

Also in regard to hiring an officer, Frick asked that the City consider providing a new hiree with the opportunity for growth, suggesting a sergeant position within a two year period.

Council and Frick also discussed an auxiliary position for the department. An auxiliary officer would not have to be run through the law enforcement academy, would not be allowed to carry weapons nor

have the power to make an arrest, though would wear the city uniform.

Conversations will continue as the department continues to grow under Frick.

Also up for discussion was body and car cameras for the department. Frick discovered body cameras in the police department, though to have them activated would impose an excessive cost of nearly \$26,000. Through his research and experience, Frick has found a second company which would be much more reasonable (\$960 would provide for a single camera, licensing and software) for the small department while providing what is required. Council approved the purchase of one camera, and provided Frick with permission to move forward in a bidding process to sell those which were found.

Chief Frick addressed the importance of having working cameras, including that he is currently investigating two sexual assault cases, as well as a child pornography case in which the recording capabilities of a camera would be in the best interest of all involved, including the department.

Concerns about barricades put in place between the Cline and Cline Enterprises building (301 Mitchell) and GNB Bank have become a concern.

Darren Janssen, GNB Bank Regional Manager, explained to the council that elderly customers are having a difficult time getting in and out of the bank and the problem is affecting access to the bank by customers.

“I don’t like the situation but it appears that the City is the only one with the means....

though it may be a dead end,” Janssen said. “I don’t know of a solution, but it can’t be here in five years, there’s too many potential issues.”

City leaders chose to, and have already moved the barricades to allow for bank access in a single lane from First Avenue to the drive up. No parking will be allowed.

Don Moore, Clapsaddle Garber Associates, reported to the council that there has been no progress on the liner at the city’s sewer plant since the last meeting.

Progress, though small, was made on the splash pad project with AAA Construction on site to make the minor accomplishments.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Ackley Council is set for Jan. 11, 2023, in council chambers. ●



AVAS > CONT'D

edge of two staffed paramedic crews. "I believe merging – and by merging I mean we merge crews under a new name and do business under the new name, with a single service director," Frazier said. Each city would maintain their own building, pay their own utilities, provide sleeping quarters for the crew and pay their own insurance. Everything else – rigs, paperwork and supplies – would all be merged. Frazier estimates that with a three-year commitment to the merger, by the third year, the service would be self-sufficient. "Ackley gets 24/7 coverage in our community and Eldora has more runs which is good financially," Frazier said.

"Our AVAS crew wants to run. With this new model, those who want to continue, can," she explained.

Both crews, Carter said, are open-minded. She and Frazier have visited with the Ackley Board of Directors, Ackley Medical Center and Grand Jivante. All are thrilled at what the proposal could provide the AVAS service area.

Frazier says the two directors would like to see the merger become effective as of July 1, 2023, and wants a three-year commitment toward the new service. Fifteen rural Iowa services have shut down in the last two years and Frazier does not want to see the Ackley service become a statistic.

"It's scary and different, but I'm encouraged by this model. I believe it's a viable option," Frazier told the council. "I want to continue looking into this option and be transparent, be able to go into this with our eyes wide open."

Approval by both the Ackley and Eldora councils would allow the two services to begin working on details to the option of merging, as well as gain input from residents of both communities and service areas.

"Our goal is to have 24-hour ambulance coverage in both Ackley and Eldora. We are looking at two paramedic-level crews in Eldora and one in Ackley," said Carter. "Between the crews, we could staff Ackley at the paramedic level. One thing we don't have in Ackley right now though, is sleep quarters."

A contract would be drawn up, and equipment would be transferred to the City of Eldora. To ensure both communities would have a safety net in case things don't turn out as planned, the contract would be revisited after three years. If either party wanted out of the contract, equipment and supplies could be returned to Ackley for a nominal fee.

Frazier has worked with both the city and local individuals to find a suitable location to construct a building which could house the ambulances and crew in Ackley. That search has continued for over a year, without success.

"Without sleeping quarters for the crews, the paramedic level may be limited to daytime hours until the service can find another arrangement," Frazier explains.

With the unanimous vote to pursue looking into the merger, the City of Ackley has put their faith into further exploration toward a merger. That support means an opportunity for question/answer sessions in both Eldora and Ackley so residents can delve into it and come to an informed conclusion.

Mayor Mike Nuss feels that the fact that Frazier and her crew are trying to do whatever it takes to maintain services in the community while providing the highest level of service possible, is a major plus for Ackley and its residents. ●



PHOTOS BY BRITTANY SHAFFER AND BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

The falling snow Wednesday night was just the start of the winter storm that blasted most of the state with blizzard conditions and dangerously low wind chills over multiple days heading into the holiday weekend.



A blue jay takes refuge from the strong winds during the blizzard which began Thursday. The bird managed to enjoy black oil sunflower seeds set out for its benefit as the storm wound up.



The fire bell, located at the Ackley Fire Station, was an excellent representation of the amount of snow we had gotten last Wednesday evening. The snow collected around the bell's rim, and the boots and cross, in its wake to bury the town in powder.



Temperatures plummeted as the winds increased Thursday. These horses huddled together in their shelter to stay warm.

BLIZZARD > CONT'D

began cancelling activities, sports events, and classes for an early start to their Christmas break; travel plans began earlier than expected, others postponed, and shops and services closed in preparation for what

weathermen coined as "A storm that could quickly turn deadly."

As if the snow wasn't enough, the winds, predicted at 40 miles an hour with gusts upward of 50 mph, along with the frigid wind chills expected to plunge down into the nega-

tive 40s, called for caution on all fronts.

The winter storm warning was issued on Tuesday to allow for what could be the biggest storm of the year. Residents took the warning seriously and filled vehicles, LP tanks and refrigerators to withstand the

storm. Though the accumulation of snow wasn't entirely drastic, well under a foot for central Iowa, the prediction of 50-mile gusts and sub-zero temperatures was enough for residents to prepare themselves for a good old-fashioned, paralyzing blizzard. ●

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Happy Anniversary

A card shower is being held to honor the **60TH ANNIVERSARY** of John L. Stoppelmoor and Karen (Muller) Stoppelmoor.

Their family includes children: Melinda Stoppelmoor of Prairie Village, KS; Marianna Stoppelmoor-Schultz (deceased); Margaret (Nick) Crosthwaite of Fulton, IL; Micheal (Betty Jo) Stoppelmoor of Grand Meadow, MN; and Mark Stoppelmoor of Ackley, IA; grandchildren: Kyle (Brittany), Nichole, and Kody Crosthwaite; and Ciara and Sammi Jo Stoppelmoor; and great-grandchild: Ivy Jane Crosthwaite.

Cards may be sent to: 702 Franklin, Ackley, IA 50601.

The couple were married on January 5, 1963, at St. John's United Church of Christ in Ackley. They are retired from farming in the Clarksville and Ackley area.

HELP WANTED

ZiesCo Farms is looking for someone with a **Class A CDL** to haul grain. Ability to travel out of state preferred.

ZiesCo Farms
(641) 373-7658
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