

Ackley World Journal

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Together at last

Ackley-Eldora EMS merger officially passed by both councils

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Eldora held a second special meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, June 29, and it was mostly to discuss the Eldora-Ackley EMS merger — the same merger that has gone back and forth for half a year. However, the first chapter of the merger is now over, and the Eldora council made it official just two days before the start of the new fiscal year.

In the first half of 2023, the conversation on the merger gained steam, but the behind-the-scenes work had been ongoing by Eldora EMS Director Maile Carter and former Ackley Volunteer Ambulance Service (AVAS) President Joan Frazier for nearly two and a half years.

With the acceptance of an agreement by the Eldora council, it was little surprise that it was met with tears after the lengthy path to get there. The merger will optimize the emergency care coverage

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Meeting on removal of Steamboat Rock Dam scheduled

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Hardin County Conservation, the City of Steamboat Rock, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will host a public meeting at 6:30 p.m., July 13, at the Iowa River Conservation Club Building near Pine Ridge Park.

Restoration activities planned for the Steamboat Rock Dam and Iowa River throughout the town, including public areas owned by the city, county and state will be presented at the meeting.

"After several years of public input, planning and design, a series of new projects will unfold over a few years to provide a safer, healthier river in the area," said Nate Hoogeveen, project manager for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Projects include removing the dam, replacing flathead catfish habitat, improving fishing access, adding small rapids for fishing and tubing, and eventually a new boat ramp, a new lodge, camping amenities, boating access, and parking.

"This \$3 million plus commitment among federal, state, and local governments is the biggest recreation investment at Steamboat Rock in decades," Hoogeveen said. "It will reinvent local

access to the river while enhancing popular activities like fishing, inner tubing, paddling and camping."

The Steamboat Rock Dam will be removed in stages to prevent too much sediment from being flushed downstream while stabilizing river banks upstream. As the dam is removed and banks are stabilized upstream, the project will transform the area into a friendly zone for recreation and habitat for aquatic life such as freshwater mussels and fish.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, under its Fish Passage program is providing \$1 million toward the project. Additionally, Hardin County Supervisors are investing taxpayer funds toward park improvements.

Any person with special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments who wishes to participate in the public meeting should promptly contact the DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov to advise of specific needs.

For more information, contact Wes Wiese, Hardin County Conservation at 641-373-1767 or Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa DNR at 515-205-2486. ●



Perfect for Tubing

BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

The weather last Tuesday afternoon reached nearly 90 degrees with high humidity, making it perfect for spending time in and on the ponds at Prairie Bridges. While other kiddos hit the pool, many of the campers from the park made their way to play in the waters of the park ponds. This family, from Alden, visits the campgrounds at least once a year, and love the many activities available to campers and the public in general. Floating in tubs, spraying each other with water guns, and just water play kept the youngsters busy while the adults stayed on dry ground, basking in the sun on the beach.

A change is in the wings

Beans on Butler to focus on Residents

BECKY SCHIPPER
EDITOR

After five years of operation, Beans on Butler, located in Grand Jivante, is transitioning their business model, turning their focus back to the residents of the facility. The announcement was made July 6 to the Ackley World Journal. Business operations will change focus with the final public event planned for this Saturday, July 15.

"Our goal in opening was to enhance the lives of those living at Grand Jivante by providing access to an onsite coffee shop with specialty coffees and desserts," began Corey DeBerg, CEO/CFO of Grand Jivante. "In addition, we wanted to provide a service to the community."

DeBerg explained that the need to continue to provide for the community diminished with the opening of a second coffee shop in town. The change in operations at Beans on Butler will allow the organization to focus on the residents of the facility once again and as such, they will be changing the way they provide services to the community.

While the doors will close to the community on a day-to-day basis following this Saturday's brunch (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.), Grand Jivante leadership, including Beans manager, Mimi De Wolf, have more than a few ideas which will soon be implemented especially for the community which has supported the mission of Beans on Butler over its history.

"We'll be available for our events, scheduled for the second and fourth Friday of each month, and of course, we'll continue to be available as a community meeting place," De Wolf explained, not-



BECKY SCHIPPER/ACKLEY WORLD JOURNAL

Mimi De Wolf, Beans on Butler Manager, and Corey DeBerg, CEO/CFO of Grand Jivante, are announcing a change in Beans on Butler. The coffee shop will no longer be open daily to the general public, rather their focus will be on offering special life enrichment for residents of the facility, while still offering special events and a meeting place for various social groups from the community of Ackley.

ing that bridge and card clubs, social clubs, and other meetings will continue to be welcome and held at the location.

Events are already being planned for the community and patrons include trivia nights, vendor nights, and nights to enjoy the patio with your four-legged friends.

While the day-to-day operations will focus on enhancing the lives of residents and their en-

richment, the location will also be available for a small rental fee for graduations, showers, anniversaries, and the like. De Wolf notes that she can be reached directly at 813-447-5475 to schedule private events.

"Mimi can help set up a booked event, or if you want her to serve your event, she can do that too," DeBerg explained.

The planned changes will look vastly dif-

ferent from the public viewpoint, though residents will see improved and increased activities which will focus directly on their needs including monthly coffee groups, weekend activities, happy hour for residents with free drinks and appetizers, and each Wednesday will bring a special lunch for residents of the nursing facility, assisted living, and independent living. ●



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for Ackley, Eldora, and their neighboring communities. But the process wasn't without its trials and tribulations over the past several months.

The concept gained steam over the winter when it was first put on the table for each city's council. In February, Ackley and Eldora started using a dual-page system, adding Ackley into Eldora's coverage area in anticipation of the EMS merger.

The process hit a roadblock in March when the Ackley council had second thoughts and brought the agreement to a revote. The following month, in a vote of 3-2, the Ackley council officially rescinded their interest in the consolidation, leaving what had been the newly named Greenbelt EMS dead in the water.

Albeit, when Ackley returned to the table for the May session, there was a change of heart, and with a few modifications to the original agreement, they resubmitted the merger talk.

Those changes were found to be reasonable and could be boiled down to three major items, as Callaway Morton broke them down. First, the original document said AVAS assets would be bought and transferred to the new EMS service, but Ackley preferred a long-term lease for their equipment instead.

Eldora found that agreeable, but with that, they would "bear the burden of any maintenance, insurance, and ongoing care of those ambulances and that equipment" in the first year at least. But the councilwoman was "confident that the profit we make from the expansion of our territory will offset the expenses here."

The second change to the merger centered on the entities' identities. With the new agreement, Eldora and Ackley would keep their original names — drastically different from a few months ago when Greenbelt EMS had been dubbed the new consolidated force. Though, it wouldn't affect operations; the names would be just that — names. "Each entity will retain its identity," she stated. "The caveat to that is that legally and financially, and in all ways but name, Ackley will no longer have a service effective July 1; everything will be operated under Eldora EMS. And we will not be going through the exercise and the expense of rebranding at this time. So, it will be Eldora EMS."

And as for a third contract difference, the councilwoman contin-

ued, "We wanted an advisory board overseeing this arrangement, and that advisory board will be comprised of people from both Ackley and Eldora as well as EMS team members ... And I think that was a huge addition because the goal of the advisory board is they will meet monthly; they will report to both councils biannually."

The amendments were acceptable in Eldora's opinion. However, a bigger problem was announced during the Thursday meeting. There wasn't time to fastidiously review the new agreement — there was one business day left in fiscal year 2022-23 by the time Eldora met. With that, there were some tradeoffs that the Eldora council accepted, despite the fact that their legal counsel, Erika Allen, was out of the country and had not been able to look over the document which had been created by Seth Schroeder, the Ackley attorney.

"We made our best efforts to get this through the legal counsel," Callaway Morton mentioned. "Our city attorney is out of the country until next week. Others in her firm reviewed this and felt that they did not have enough context and background to really effectively weigh in."

With little time left before the July 1 deadline, the Eldora council did approve the document.

"My vote tonight is to vote this document through, knowing that it is not perfect, knowing and trusting that the advisory board we put in place and that the mayor's nominee to represent this document, move forward in good faith and move forward in due diligence," Callaway Morton declared. She added that the core message behind the agreement remained the same, providing stronger coverage for the residents of Ackley.

"And when I say stronger, I mean you have more qualified people at higher levels of care; you have more people available at various times of the day to take your calls... I know there are problems with this document... But I move we approve this document as is and move forward with nominating our advisory board," she said.

"I look at it from a long-term perspective," Councilman Jerry Kramer added in, citing potential future dangers to the community's public safety. "If we don't approve it, we run the risk that I don't think we should take in telling them, 'No, we're not going to sign it,' whether it's two weeks from now or whatever."

"I, for one, am definitely for it, even though I would love to have an attorney look at it ... I think that the risk is worth the reward," he concluded.

In a sense, as Callaway Morton described, it could be boiled down to a lesser-of-two-evil option: Either do it without legal review or don't do it at all. But she was steadfast in her belief in all the council members' abilities and intentions. "I am confident that we can do without legal approval," she affirmed. "We are all smart, educated folks, and none of us want to set ourselves up to fail. And this document doesn't really set us up to fail in any way. It just isn't as perfect as we would all like it to be. And I'm willing to forego that and vote yes to sign it tonight."

So with that, despite some reservations on the underexamined legal draft, the go-ahead was unanimously passed by the Eldora council, approving the Eldora-Ackley EMS merger.

While coverage for Ackley will continue much as it has since February, with Eldora being paged for calls in the community, the formation of an advisory board becomes the next step for the merged service. Still, there are many 'behind the scenes' aspects which must be addressed, licensing protocol and insurance for the Ackley rigs, pre-employment screenings for former AVAS members who wish to serve on the joint venture as well as getting those individuals on the Eldora insurance policies, and of course, notification to dispatch on paging out for calls in Ackley.

Ackley will also need to begin looking into options for providing living quarters for paramedics of the service, whether that be a renovation of the current building or another option. It should be noted that funding provided through the 2020 GO bond cannot be used to rent a location for quarters.

The City of Ackley still holds funding from the 2020 GO Bond in the amount of \$336,000. Those funds had been slated for the construction of a new AVAS shed. The amount was not close to the single bid for construction of a new building for the service received in April of 2022 at \$491,000. Bid specifications sent out at the time did not include completion of the office area for the shed, leaving studded walls and without electrical and plumbing to that area. Those expenses were estimated to be an additional amount between \$100,000 and \$200,000 for completion. ●

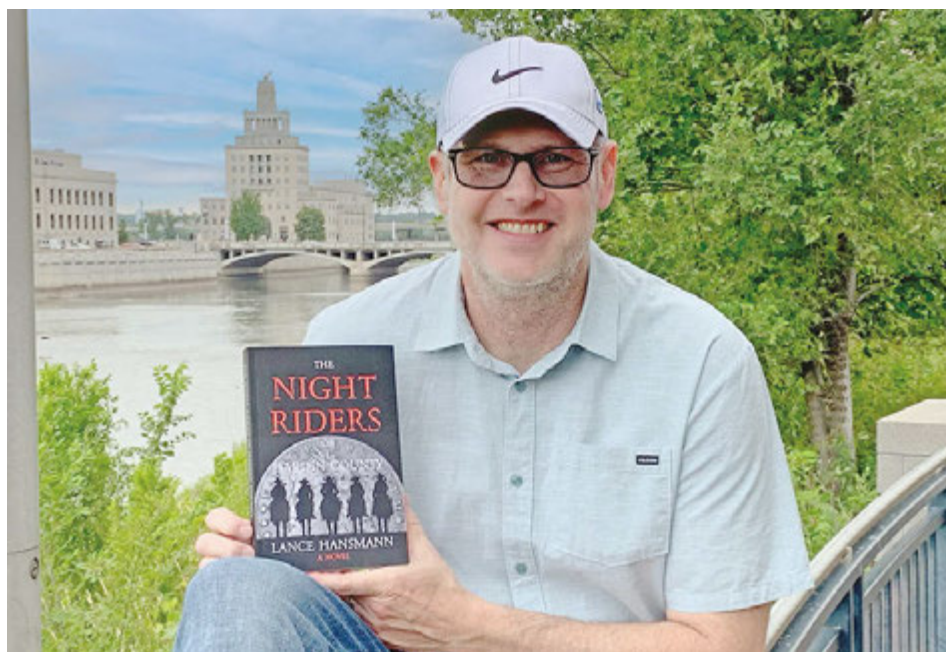


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Steamboat Rock native Lance Hansmann brought a new light onto the legend of the Rainsbarger gang's infamous crimes. Hansmann is holding a book signing on Saturday, Aug. 19.

SR native tells historic local tale

BY TAYLOR NOHREBERG
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The story of the Rainsbarger brothers as Steamboat Rock's most notorious criminals has survived since 1885 and is one of the most tangled legal stories Hardin County faced during this time. Lance Hansmann, a native to Steamboat Rock and someone who grew up with retellings of the infamous story, has written the 138-year-old murder mystery in a new light — one that may clear the Rainsbarger name for good.

In Hansmann's new historical fiction novel published on June 16, 2023, "The Night Riders of Hardin County," the Rainsbarger brothers are known for their acts of horse thievery and counterfeiting, but the tale becomes more complex as Hansmann digs deeper into the mystery.

"I heard about the legend of the Rainsbarger gang as a kid growing up in Steamboat Rock," said Hansmann. "There were always little different versions of the story, but the most common was that they were this transient family with five brothers who were horse thieves, bank robbers, counterfeiters, and murderers that terrorized Hardin County."

After Hansmann and his wife moved from California back to Steamboat Rock in 2015 for a change of pace, one meeting with resident Mildred Griffin "changed everything" of what he thought he knew. Griffin happens to be the great-granddaughter of Martha Rainsbarger-Johns, the sister of the gang of five brothers.

"When she told me what she knew about her family and how she believed the Rainsbarger's were wrongly persecuted and run out of the coun-

ty ... you can't talk to her and not love her," Hansmann said. "I knew at that point I had to find a way to write the story for her."

Before the book was in the works, Hansmann, a self-proclaimed history junkie, dedicated his time to finding out the truth and how people acted, spoke, and survived back then.

"If I was going to tell a different history, I wanted it to be true to the era, true to the events that actually happened," he said. "Most importantly, I wanted it to be true to the people who lived back then and their [descendants], some of whom I went to school with."

To stay true to his intentions, Hansmann scoured over hundreds of newspaper articles from almost every paper in Hardin County from the mid-1800s to the 1920s, searched through family trees to find information about the characters he was going to portray, and read notarized personal testimonies from Griffin's ancestors.

"Her [Griffin's] family had documents that were gathered in the early 1900s as evidence to submit to the governor for the pardon of the Rainsbarger brothers," said Hansmann.

Comparing the testimonies to what ran in newspapers, some matched and some did not, giving Hansmann the impression that one narrative was being pushed to readers of the time.

"The reason I wrote the book is that I believe there is reasonable proof that shows that not only were the Rainsbargers not the bad guys, but the actual bad guys were people nobody would suspect," he said.

Hansmann was faced with countless rabbit holes and roadblocks during his time researching, saying he'd often find himself reading more into newspapers even after finding what he needed. Using the benefit of hindsight, he would often go back months later to look at papers and see what sto-

rylines matched and what didn't quite make sense. Months of newspapers were missing from archives at times too.

"I love research and discovery, and every night it seemed I learned something new, big or small," he said. "In my mind, my objective with this was to be as clear and as close as I could to what the characters were."

"I got hooked on the story in the sense that I wanted to know more."

The decision to create a historical fiction novel instead of nonfiction was because he wished to show the brutality of the era and the struggles Iowans went through in the past. Another reason was because the history of the Rainsbarger gang was set in stone with many books written of the late 18th century; the novel was a new way to tell the story.

Hansmann is still focused on changing the narrative of the Rainsbarger mystery. The writer is currently working on a script for a short "The Night Riders of Hardin County" TV series.

"Writing this book reinforced my belief that Hardin County is a perfect backdrop for storytelling, so my plan is to craft stories about ordinary people in extraordinary situations that we can all relate to right here in our backyard on the Iowa River," he said.

The next book features a man who struggles with PTSD after returning home from the Vietnam War and the effect it has on his family.

"The Night Riders of Hardin County" is available for purchase on Amazon and Barnes & Noble and is currently being recorded for Audible (to be released at a later date).

A book signing will also be held Saturday, Aug. 19, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Steamboat Rock Historical Society with a chapter reading and a Q&A session.

"The objective for me was to write it for Steamboat and for Mildred [Griffin] and her family," he added. ●

Christmas in July

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