



Inside:
Special Olympics
Emmet County honors
partners

Page 2A



Inside:
ELC's Owen Larson becomes third
player in school history to reach
1,000 points

Page 1B

Council OK's LABOR AGREEMENT WITH POLICE, CITY EMPLOYEES

City also raises firefighter compensation

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

At Monday evening's city council meeting, city administrator Penny Clayton addressed the process of snow removal throughout the city.

"By the time they finish the complete process: cul de sacs, intersections, pushing back from the intersections, it can take two weeks," Clayton said. When the weather warms and conditions are slushy, the plows can only grab the products of wintery mix so much at a time, Clayton added.

Other council members echoed the sentiment, commenting on the long hours city

employees were working to clear the roads.

Clayton also commented on a plow vs. car collision that took place last week. A plow slid on a patch of ice on North 6th Street and unable to redirect, slid into a parked car.

The council passed resolutions approving pay increases and other changes to police officer and city employee compensation packages.

The city negotiated with the police department through its representatives from AFSCME (Association of Federal, State, County and Municipal Employees) Council 61 as well as Sgt. Matthew Reineke,

president of the police labor relations unit, and Adam Swihart, chief negotiator, for the following: a wage increase of \$1/hr for each step of police service (starting, one, three and seven years, promotions to detective and sergeant) plus an increase in all wages by 4%. Police Chief Brent Shatto said a change in language to "New patrolmen with state academy certification shall start at the step commensurate with their experience and corresponding vacation leave as determined by the Chief," gives the Estherville department more flexibility in hiring officers.

Turn to CITY, Page 3A



ELC fourth grader is cancer free

Estherville Lincoln Central fourth grader Dawson Sifrit was made an honorary captain of the football team last fall. Last Friday, Coach Ryan Rezac and members of the football team celebrated his final chemotherapy treatment at halftime of the ELC vs. Spirit Lake boys' basketball game. Above, the football players lift Sifrit up in front of the ELC crowd.

Photo by David Swartz

VFW board honors Haukoos for his years of service

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

Wednesday, Jan. 11, the board of the Veterans of Foreign Wars honored Gene Haukoos for his years of service.

The proclamation for the honor states, "...this is a very sad day for the VFW board, American Legion, and people of the community."

Haukoos, who served as a hospitalist in the Navy during the Vietnam War, has continued his community service as much as possible. Haukoos has battled health issues for several years and has previously retired from the city council and other service posts.

The VFW and American Legion wanted to thank Haukoos, stating, "Gene, you have been such a pillar of the Community with all your ideas, your hard work, your willingness to help so many people, and giving of your time." The proclamation cited Haukoos' big role in facing challenges and changing things over the years.

Back in 2014, the VFW received a visit from the IRS over payment of unpaid employment taxes. In 2015, the board realized their choices



Gene Haukoos, right, was honored for his years of service to the VFW and the community. At left is Gene's wife, Avis.

Photo by Amy H. Peterson

Turn to HAUKOOS, Page 3A

Hats off to Peterson Point

Community came together to make Christmas at the Farm happen

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

About 40 people gathered at Wallingford Community Center on Saturday night to celebrate the successes of Christmas at the Farm, which was held Dec. 10 at Brugjeld-Peterson Historic Farmstead near High Lake, and Glaedelig Jul - a concert and confection fundraiser held the weekend before at Ingham Lake Bible Camp.

Peterson Point board member Glenn Henriksen introduced what he called The Hat Game, in which participants chose from a smorgasbord of hats, donned one, then were paired up to quiz each other on the next lines of a selected song, poem or quote. The multi-generational game resulted in laughter, confusion, and some hiding behind their hats.

Turn to PETERSON, Page 3A



Leah Brenner, above right, finds a hat in the abundance of choices for the Hat Game Saturday at the Wallingford Community Center.

It was Kathy Graves' birthday. Among those singing to her: Marty Hand, Daisy Brenner, Tom Inman, Rhonda Hand, birthday girl Kathy Graves, Lisa Hansen, and Glenn Henriksen.

Photos by Amy H. Peterson

Supervisors seek tech director

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

The Emmet County Board of Supervisors had a short agenda Tuesday morning ahead of budget meetings and other time-consuming events happening in the coming days. The supervisors reviewed the Emmet County Recorder's quarterly report and set two public hearings: one for a deed exchange for Ingham-Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp on Jan. 24 at 9:20 a.m. The deed transfer involves a clarification of land ownership boundaries between the camp and a neighbor, not any significant new land included in the camp or the neighbor's sections.

The other public hearing will be Feb. 7 at 10 a.m. relating to land south of Estherville in

Peters Minor Subdivision about an easement for cell phone towers and infrastructure.

Now on information technology for the county: Lisa Rosburg served as IT manager for the county until her appointment earlier this month as Emmet County Treasurer. The IT manager position is now open. Lisa Rosburg and Barb Bohm are finalizing a job description and application, which will soon be available on the county website: <https://emmetcounty.iowa.gov/employment/>

The next meeting of the Emmet County Board of Supervisors will be Tuesday, Jan. 24 at 9 a.m. in the board room of the Emmet County courthouse.



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Beaver and Nicoson join Corridor board

KILR and moveero executives join two more new members of Iowa Lakes Corridor

The Iowa Lakes Corridor Development Corporation (Corridor) recently welcomed four new board members for 2023: Matt Beaver, Owner at KILR Radio; Mike Koenecke, Owner/Farm Manager at Cotton Grave Farm Management; Michelle Nicoson, Human Resource Manager at moveero, Inc.; and Ebony Rahe, President and Managing Partner at Williams & Company.

Koenecke, Nicoson and Rahe were voted by membership to new three-year terms on the board starting January 1, 2023. Beaver was appointed by the board to fulfill the remainder of former board member Roger Jacobson's term. The new members will add their leadership experience and guidance to the Board of Directors as the Corridor continues to help the region's businesses thrive and to ensure its residents enjoy an active and rewarding quality of life.

Electric Cooperative; Scott Berglund, Safco Products; Walter DeBock, Tyson Foods; Keith Deitering, Bank Midwest; Tim Fairchild, Dickinson County Board of Supervisors; John Pluth, Emmet County Board of Supervisors; Mike Porsch, City of Storm Lake; Nate Wittmaack, Ranco Fertiliservice, Inc.; and Donavon Wunschel, City of Spencer.

April trial date set for Christensen postconviction relief

Family member located bullet hole in building where alleged fight took place

BY AMY H. PETERSON
STAFF WRITER

Lee Samuel Christensen is back in court after filing an application for post-conviction relief on the last possible date, July 14, 2022. The matter is scheduled for trial on April 11, 2023.

the building to determine its maintenance and repair needs. "The physical evidence consists of a bullet hole through the roof of a farm building in Estherville, Iowa, where Thomas Bortvit was shot and killed. It is [Christensen's] belief that the bullet creating the hole was fired from the handgun used in the shooting of Thomas Bortvit, and that the shot creating the hole occurred during a fight between Applicant and Bortvit," Christensen states in his petition.

In his petition, Christensen requests a new trial based on newly discovered evidence he says supports his view of the crime for which he was convicted. Christensen was convicted of second degree murder in the shooting death of Thomas Bortvit, and sentenced on Dec. 21, 2016. On April 18, 2018, the Iowa Court of Appeals reversed and remanded Christensen's conviction. The matter was preparing for a retrial when on June 7, 2019, the state's request for further review from the Iowa Supreme Court was granted, and the court vacated the Court of Appeals decision and affirmed the Iowa District Court in Emmet County's conviction of second degree murder. Christensen has been serving his sentence at Anamosa State Penitentiary in Anamosa, Iowa, and filed his petition from Jones County, where the penitentiary is located.

The Iowa Supreme Court issued a Proscendo July 15, 2019. A Proscendo is an order from the court to comply with the current court orders as no further action will be coming from the highest available court. Christensen states in his petition that new physical evidence consists of a bullet hole in the roof of a farm building, discovered in early 2022 when Lee Christensen's uncle, Steve Christensen, was examining

Christensen said the bullet hole in the roof supports his position that the shooting occurred during a fight with Bortvit in which Bortvit was trying to take control of the gun. During the 2016 trial, state investigators testified that Bortvit's DNA was found on the handle of the gun. Christensen said the shooting "stemmed from an argument between [Christensen] and Bortvit during which [Christensen] became extremely angry and shot Bortvit in the heat of passion," and that the new evidence should establish his guilt for, "at most, voluntary manslaughter."

The state's answer, filed by Emmet County Attorney Melanie Summers Bauler and Tyler Buller, who was at the time an assistant attorney general for the state of Iowa, denies that Christensen is entitled to any relief, and asks the court to dismiss the case. The state's answer cites Christensen's confession to killing Bortvit, the physical evidence, and the fact that a jury found Christensen guilty of second-degree murder.



Joe Klingbeil and Marty Hand paired up for a hat game. Photo by Amy H. Peterson



The hat game was a hit. Stacie Berg-Nelson, Nancy Brenner, and Stacie Inman all played the game. Photo by Amy H. Peterson

The event included a real smorgasboard, or buffet. The board members brought an astounding amount of food to the board (table) with roast pork, Swedish (or Norwegian or Danish) meatballs, and a confection with ham inside a potato that only Scandinavians could concoct. Among the prizes given in the raffle were a recipe for lefse, a commemorative plate of Peterson Point, and more. "We're back at it," board

member Kathy Graves said of the board continuing to raise funds and plan events to restore the historic farmstead. The next major event is a summer picnic in late July with Norwegian visitors who plan to visit the farmstead as part of their tour of the upper Midwest. Brugjeld-Peterson Historic Farmstead has a Facebook page where the board posts updates and photos.

Other returning board members include: Past Chair Doug Benjamin, Northwest Bank; Vice Chair Dr. Brian Lenzmeier, Buena Vista University; Treasurer Timothy McCollough, Iowa Lakes

Iowa Lakes Jazz Choir and Show Choir Festival schedule released

The Iowa Lakes Community College Music Department announces the performance schedule for the 2023 Jazz Choir and Show Choir Festival. The event is open to the public to watch free of charge and will be held January 24, 25, and 26, 2023, at the Janice K. Lund Performing Arts Center on the Estherville Campus.

OABCIG Jazz Choir "Purple" 12:15 p.m.
OABCIG Jazz Choir "Black" 12:55 p.m.
West Lyon "Wildcat Jazz" 1:35 p.m.
North Union Middle School "Sound In Motion" 2:15 p.m.

Algona Middle School 8:40 a.m.
Hartley-Melvin-Sanborn Jazz 9:20 a.m.
Algona "Scarlet Midnight" 10:00 a.m.
Sioux Central "Rebel Singers" 10:40 a.m.
Alta-Aurelia "Audacity" 11:20 a.m.
Spencer "Pieces of Jazz" 12:15 p.m.
Cherokee "Washington High Jazz" 12:55 p.m.
Spencer "Chromatic Jazz" 1:35 p.m.
Harris-Lake Park Vocal Jazz 2:15 p.m.
Sioux Falls Jefferson "Independence" 2:55 p.m.
Sioux Falls Jefferson "Declaration" 3:35 p.m.

The Jazz Choir and Show Choir Festival is purely for educational purposes, but two outstanding clinicians will be on deck to help the choirs. Clay Blackman (Omaha, Neb.), the show choir clinician, and Dr. Kurt Runestad (Crete, Neb.), the Jazz choir clinician, will help the choirs prepare for upcoming competitions and performances by providing on-stage feedback.

January 25 - Performance Schedule
ELC Show Choir 8:20 a.m.
Spirit Lake "Sonic Boom" 9:00 a.m.
Emmetsburg "High Voltage" 9:40 a.m.
Spirit Lake "Music Factory" 10:20 a.m.
Sheldon "Impact" 11:00 a.m.
Sibley-Ocheyedan "Nightsounds" 11:55 a.m.
Sheldon "Vocal Fusion" 12:35 p.m.
Emmetsburg "5 Island Jazz" 1:15 p.m.
Spirit Lake "Lake Effect" 1:55 p.m.
ELC Jazz Choir 2:35 p.m.

January 26 - Performance Schedule
Okoboji "Boji Voices" 8:00 a.m.

January 24 - Performance Schedule
Graettinger-Terrill Middle School 8:40 a.m.
Pocahontas "Showstoppers" 9:20 a.m.
North Union High School "Kinetic Fusion" 10:00 a.m.
Carroll "Swingsations" 10:40 a.m.
Ruthven-Ayrshire Middle School 11:20 a.m.

Please visit the Iowa Lakes Music Department Facebook page for the most up-to-date schedule, as last minute changes do occur occasionally. For more information, please contact Brett Fuelberth, Vocal Music Professor, at (712) 330-1145 or bfuelberth@iowalakes.edu.

CITY, Continued from Page 1A

Nick Danner of the Estherville Public Works labor relations department negotiated for a \$1 per hour wage increase and 4% increase in wages for all city employee members not on probation. All wage increases are effective with the start of the city's fiscal year, July 1, 2023. Fire Chief Travis Sheridan addressed the council on firefighter compensation. Currently, firefighters are compensated \$15/hr for fire calls, trainings, and other duties necessary to the department. That rate should be increased to \$15.50 to encourage competent personnel to continue in those capacities. Sheridan said, "Many of our ladies and gentlemen serving have a job paying \$20 and more per hour, and use their vacation and sick

time to come out to a fire call." Firefighter training also requires numerous hours for continuing education and training for new certifications. The council passed a resolution raising firefighter hourly compensation to \$15.50 per hour as well as officer compensation of \$955/yr for lieutenant, \$1,185/yr for captain, \$1,960/yr for assistant chief, and \$3,825 per year for chief, all increases of less than \$150 per year. The council also presented the funds reviewed from the Saturday, Jan. 7 budget hearing. Council members Roy Gage, Julie Clark, and Brandon Carlin are on the finance committee. City staff members Penny Clayton, Beth Burton, Greg VanLangen, Brent Shatto, Tony Hanson and

Travis Sheridan also attended with mayor Kenny Billings. The budgets reviewed included police and forfeiture fund, trust and agency, fire, housing inspection and misc. public safety, airport and airport revolving, library, parks & recreation, swimming pool, cemetery, and miscellaneous culture and recreation, Excel Estherville LOSST and revolving funds, miscellaneous health, social services, community and economic development, public works activities, miscellaneous requests, general fund revenue, emergency levy, self-funded insurance, and miscellaneous funds. The council also approved an increase in the daily fee for

HAUKOOS, Continued from Page 1A

were to close the VFW or to change the image of the VFW. In changing the image, the VFW borrowed \$50,000, received a grant and donations. The board chose to downsize the building and moved the bar to make the VFW a more friendly atmosphere. The board cited Haukoos for his role in changing the hall name to honor Staff Sgt Steven Blass. The community room was changed to the honor room and displays the names of every person from Emmet County who made the ultimate sacrifice for the nation. Haukoos' ultimate contribution came in 2022 when the Estherville VFW post became an All-State Post, and also the number one post in the nation for community activities, volunteer hours, and money in-

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