

Supervisors narrow search for EMS home

Board to vote on its purchase next week

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Keokuk residents just had their first weekend without services at Blessing Health and with ambulance transports being taken to Fort Madison, Burlington, or Carthage, Ill. facilities.

Blessing Hospital in Keokuk closed its doors at 7 a.m. Saturday, and stopped taking patients at 7 a.m. Friday. Hospital officials

"It went better than I expected. We do have a new holes in the schedule here and there for a few hours. It actually went fairly well."

EMS Director Dennis Cosby told Lee County Supervisors at their meeting Monday.

Cosby said he is having to pay more overtime because not all of the nine additional EMS staff have been hired, however he says he has a number of applicants to consider.



Seyb

To house that personnel and two ambulances at Keokuk, supervisors have been eying property in the city. Supervisor Chairman Matt Pflug said the building at 3437 Main St. across from Arby's and between Midwest Honda and a veterinary clinic looks the most promising.

The property is owned by Fort Madison businessman Eric Freitag and is available for \$200,000. He said while renovations will be



Fedler

needed to accommodate the EMS vehicles and staff needs, other sites he and Supervisor Garry Seyb Jr. toured were more expensive, not immediately available, and would involve higher renovation costs.

Pflug said he was told by Freitag that if the county buys the property, he would grant crews access to the building before the sale is finalized.

Seyb said the county will likely be looking at spending about \$1.1 million on

SEE EMS, PAGE 3

A train shed story

Vogel gives presentation at depot

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It is the only turtle back train shed left in the country, but Neal Vogel, of Restoric, LLC, hopes simply by making that statement, he will find out if that is, in fact the case.

Vogel gave a presentation on the restoration of the canopy in front of the Keokuk Union Depot on Sunday and said he knows railroad enthusiasts and by saying it's the last one, if there are more out there, he knows they will prove him wrong.

He would not be upset by that, because he enjoys learning about the structures and the restoration project in Keokuk, provided a lot of learning opportunities.

There used to be many of the corrugated steel train canopies across the



JOE BENEDICT/EDITOR@DAILYGATE.COM

Neal Vogel of Restoric, LLC, shows a before photo of the Keokuk Union Depot Train Shed or canopy at a presentation about the restoration held at the depot on Sunday.

country, but as things were refurbished or modernized and as passenger train service died out in the 1960s, they started to disappear.

Vogel is originally from Keokuk and showed a photo

of the depot from the late 1970s to early 1980s.

"This is how I remember the train station when I was little," he said. "This is how most of you probably remember it."

A lot of the changes came to the Keokuk depot in a remodel in 1949. That's when it had the central tower cut

SEE CANOPY, PAGE 12

Residents pray for return of ER services to Keokuk

Event held at closed facility

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Derek Olsen, pastor at New Testament Christian Church in Keokuk said 300 people showed up on Sunday for a prayer event at the now-closed Keokuk hospital.

Olson reported on social media that 15 churches were represented at the event, which was advertised online as a chance come out and pray for our community. Residents arrived and were welcomed to the event.

Several prayers were led. One by Kevin Hardcastle with a prayer for the community, Dana Jurgens led a prayer for first responders and Adam Johnson a prayer

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CHRIS MILLS/MISSISSIPPI VALLEY PUBLISHING

Several prayers were said at the hospital building on Sunday as an event was held which had 15 churches represented.



HAMILTON

Hamilton elementary names its students of the week.

P7



NEW MEMBER

Warsaw School Board has new member.

INSIDE TODAY

NOTABLE



Nalani Proctor and friends are the next performers at the Grand Theatre. Read about that on page 9 today.

DEATHS

William E. Heller, 99, Keokuk: Page 5
Jacob Fett, 44, Hillsboro, Iowa: Page 5
Dorothy A. Stuckwisch, 91, Warsaw, Ill.: Page 5

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PRAYER: Group gathers at hospital

FROM PAGE 1

for the workforce.

Those participating circled the hospital with more prayers said.

The information passed out as people arrived said the gathering was because the hospital was closing and the city needs an emergency room. There were several suggestions for prayers.

They asked for "God to move in the midst of chaos and concern of the hospital closing," and "to move quickly and boldly to bring an ER to Keokuk.

There also were prayers for the workers to find a new workplace.

Many have had different emotions about the hospital closing, the flyer said. There's been everything from sadness, anger, frustration and apathy.

State Senator Jeff Reichman was at the event. He is one that can work in Des Moines to move laws towards being able to have a standalone ER.

"Well, We've known this hospital has been struggling for a dozen years now, - The administration was under Unity Point lost

millions of dollars. They were losing \$275,000 a month. And then Blessing took over as an M.O.U., with them Unity Point, just wiping out the debt just to have them please take it. You know, it's been a tough situation. There has been some legislation passed at the federal level that's made health care difficult. And, but everything's gone up substantially you know, in the last decade, couple of decades, decade and a half. And it's just been tough on everybody."

The hospital closed on Friday.



PHOTO BY NEAL VOGEL

The canopy, or train shed as it's also called, is seen lit up at the Keokuk Union Depot after the completion of the restoration of the structure.

CANOPY: Presentation shows progress

FROM PAGE 1

down and had green asphalt shingles added. He said it's easy to forget after a few years of having something restored, what it looked like before the restoration.

That's where the documentation of the train shed came in. He showed several photos of the process.

The audience seemed surprised at some of the before and after photos shown during the presentation. Vogel said the train shed was in rough shape when they started.

They had to recast some of the footings. Vogel said they tried to do that as locally as possible, but just needing three, they could not get the numbers to work out. He ended up finding a company in Alabama to do the work. Vogel drove down there, the molds were created and the parts and molds brought back to Keokuk.

Vogel said maybe if somewhere else is restoring one of these in the future, they can sell them the molds (Or maybe rent them out at least.)

There were a lot of local volunteers that helped out with the project, Vogel said. One was helping him run his slide presentation on Sunday, Damon Cackley. Vogel said Cackley and the C shift from the Keokuk Fire Department all did a lot of work on the project.

The roof of the train shed is made from corrugated iron. Vogel said that is a versatile but inexpensive building material that got its start in the 1840s. Once a galvanization process was invented, it made it even more of a commodity. It being used for the roof of the structure helped it survive the last 130 years.

The depot was built in 1891 by the architectural firm Burnham and Root. John Root was the designer and Burnham was more on the business side, Vogel said. Root died before the station was completed, so Vogel said the Keokuk depot may have been his last design.

There was one rendering that showed

the edge of a brick canopy instead of what was built. It is not known whether Root's untimely death changed the plans for the canopy, but that is a possibility.

The canopy may have been built by Detroit Bridge and Iron Works. That's not 100% known as yet, but it looks very similar to other designs done by that company around the same time

Vogel mentioned the lighting in the train shed a few times, it is different than what was there originally, without a shade to reflect the light downward. He said the canopy is more of a sculpture now than a functional canopy to protect train passengers from the weather, so he wanted something that would illuminate more of the structure.

He encouraged everyone to check it out at night.

The depot continues to get grants for further restoration projects. Up next is some work to brick and stone around the building.

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