

Council deals with Water Bills and Water Issues

By Jim Rudisill

A tougher water billing policy might mean increased penalties for some Columbus Junction water users. The city council agreed during its March 10 meeting to accept a recommendation from its utility committee to impose a \$25 penalty for any user who receives a shut-off notice.

The city now imposes a 10% late charge on any water bill not paid by the 15th of each month. After about 10 days, the city will post shut-off notices at properties where the bill remains unpaid. However, there currently is no additional penalty for receiving the shut-off notice, although there is a \$50 reconnection fee if the water is actually shut off.

During a review of its water policy last month, the council agreed changes were needed to reduce the number of late payment and shut-off notices being sent by city hall staff. Officials said the large number of notices was taking staff time from other necessary duties and suggested the lack of any additional penalty for receiving a shut-off notice contributed to the late payments.

The council's utility committee of Dave Duncan and Phil Kaalberg agreed to look into the problem and presented their recommendation last week.

"We talked about coming up with some fee to discourage our delinquent water bills," Kaalberg told the council.

He said the committee had agreed a primary cause for water users not paying their bill until they received a shut-off notice was the lack of any penalty attached to the notice. Kaalberg said he and Duncan agreed that needed to be changed.

"We think that penalty ought to be \$25," he told the council.

While initial concerns over the time spent by city clerk Julie Heindel to send late notices will not be resolved by the shut-off penalty, the council did agree to strengthen the language in the late notices sent after the 15th of the month. Those notices will now carry a warning about the additional penalty for receiving a shut-off notice, which will continue to be posted around 10 days after the



Pump moving water over the levee from the Fairgrounds

late notices go out.

The 10% late payment assessment that automatically is added to the bill after the 15th and the \$50 reconnection fee for any user whose water is actually shut off by the city will not be changed by the new policy. Heindel said there normally are only about two or three users a month who actually have water shut off.

Mayor Dan Wilson said the new policy would be drawn up and presented to the council for action at a later meeting.

In other action involving city utilities, Kaalberg reported the city's new flood control pump had been installed near the motel. The pump, which has a capacity of moving 5000 gallons of water per minute, is expected to pump water that collects along the east edge of town in that area over the Iowa River levee.

Wilson also reported the city is continuing with efforts to locate funding for upgrading the levee. A federal funding request failed to win

approval for the \$600,000 project several months ago, but Wilson said a second round will soon be held and the city's application remains in the hopper. City officials have discussed the initial effort with several state and federal officials and remain hopeful the latest round provides better news.

In the meantime, Wilson said local officials have started investigating the potential of the city going forward with the upgrade on its own. He said that effort might have a lower price tag because of less red tape and other problems associated with the grant request. He said that information would be presented at a later council meeting.

Wilson also announced the city's \$3.2 million grant request to the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to assist with the relocation of the city's water plant to higher ground was apparently progressing. He said officials from the Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission (SEIRPC) had recently

contacted him to report the application had now been forwarded to EDA officials in Washington, D.C.

Wilson said the SEIRPC officials had indicated this latest step would likely be a formality and were anticipating final approval in a few months. If the EDA grant is eventually awarded, it would be used in conjunction with an earlier \$356,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) award the city received several months ago.

In final action, the council also agreed to investigate a water drainage problem along Flatiron Drive after local resident Jim Gabriel complained about water ponding near the street's intersection with South Hill Avenue. Gabriel said he assisted with removing the water that collected around Georgia Kost's driveway at 413 Flatiron. Officials said the problem might have stemmed from a frozen culvert under Flatiron Drive and other problems, including impacts from a new subdivision to the south.

Search finds Columbus Schools Drug Free

By Deb Bean
Gazette Staff

Tuesday, March 9, Columbus Community School District conducted a drug search using law enforcement dogs trained to identify illegal drugs. There were four dogs involved in the search along with the

Henry County Sheriff's Department, the Washington County Sheriff's Department, the Wapello Police Department, the Iowa Department of Corrections out of Mt. Pleasant, and the Columbus Police Department.

At approximately 8:30 AM, the students were told that we were go-

ing to be on lockdown. Students were held in their 1st period class until the search was over. The dogs sniffed student lockers, the girls and boys locker rooms, and the school parking lot. A search of the elementary also occurred.

The dogs did identify four lock-

ers and a few cars as possible concerns. With cooperation from the students and further investigation of the lockers and cars, there was no positive identification of any illegal drugs found in any of their buildings.

Congratulations Columbus Community School staff and students.

Victory Christian Center helps Ambulance Base

By Carmen Lawrence
Gazette Staff

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010, Pastor Michael McAfee and the Victory Christian Center (VCC) Church of Columbus Junction came through once again for the Louisa County Ambulance base. The McAfee family (Michael, Jolene, Matthew, and Morgan) arranged for the Christian rock band, Esterlyn, from Idaho to perform at 7 p.m., at the CCHS Auditorium to raise charitable funds for the town's EMT group.

Last year, VCC held its first annual EMS Service during National EMS Week. The held worship service (dedicated to the area EMTs), brought the ambulance in for the congregation to see, held a raffle, and had a hot dog cookout. The money raised from that event provided the ambulance base with trauma bags, stethoscopes, and I.V. warmers. VCC plans to hold its second annual EMT Service this coming May and it will be open to the public.

But this year in February, VCC thought of a new way to help our local ambulance service out. "My son, Matthew (who is a drummer and does some marketing for Esterlyn Band) approached me with the idea to get the band to come here to Iowa and perform during a fundraising event," said Pastor McAfee. "We had been thinking about doing something for them (EMTs) for a while now, and it just worked out that way." It is estimated that a crowd of



between 175-185 people came to the concert. Both the Columbus Junction State Bank and Community Bank donated money toward the event, and the school donated the use of the auditorium. Including the banks' donations, ticket sales, and other private donations, over \$1,500.00 was raised for the Louisa County Ambulance

base. When asked why they decided to help out the ambulance base, Pastor McAfee stated, "They need the money. We (the Columbus Junction area) would be hard pressed if the ambulance base weren't around."

It also helps that for the past three years, Pastor McAfee has worked as

an EMTB for the ambulance base. He truly practices what he preaches at VCC. Michael McAfee and VCC Church are the epitome of 'doing unto others,' and his Christian, charitable example should be admired by all - it is a certainty that the Louisa County Ambulance does.

Briefly -

Potato Supper in Columbus City

The Columbus City United Methodist Church will hold a potato supper on Saturday, March 20, from 5-7 p.m. at the Columbus City Masonic Lodge. A delicious variety of toppings will be available to choose from along with a variety of salads and desserts. A free will offering will be accepted. Bring the whole family. Good food - good fellowship.

CCIC to meet

C.C.I.C. will meet on Tuesday, March 23rd, at the Columbus City city hall at 7:30 p.m. Esther Timmons is hostess.

Potluck at Colonial Manor

Colonial Manor of Columbus Community (814 Springer Avenue) is celebrating 35 years! They want to share this special event with their residents, families and community, today, Wednesday, March 17, 2010, at 12:00 noon, in the dining room for a potluck lunch. They will supply the chicken, roll and drink. Table service will also be provided. They ask that you bring a dish to share. Everyone is welcome! Piano music will be by Mark Moore.

Cub Scout pancake supper

The Cub Scout Pack 54 will hold an all-you-can-eat pancake supper with whole hog sausage and scrambled eggs on Tuesday, March 30, 2010 from 5-8 p.m., at the L-M Elementary School off Highway 61. The Cub Scouts will be doing all of the serving themselves. Cost is \$5.00 for 7th grade through adult; \$3.00 K-6th grade and seniors; Pre-school students are free.

Empowerment Board to meet

The Des Moines/Louisa County Caring CommUNITY Empowerment Board will be meeting at the First Presbyterian Church, 801 Middle Street, Mediapolis, IA, today, Wednesday, March 17, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

Saturday Afternoon with Chocolate

Louisa County Habitat for Humanity will host "Saturday Afternoon With Chocolate," our annual fundraiser, on Saturday, March 27, from 1:30 to 3:30 at the Wapello Briggs Center. We are planning to have about 30 chocolate items, including cakes, candies, pies, ice cream, and other chocolate desserts. These will also include sugar free items. The cost will be \$8 for adults, and \$4 for children 10 and younger. Please plan to come and bring a friend(s) to help us build another house in Louisa County. PLEASE COME AND HAVE A TASTE WITH US TO ENJOY THE CHOCOLATE! Also, come to visit and for getting new ideas to take home with you.

Coffee Fellowship at Hope Bible

Hope Bible Church will be hosting a Morning Coffee Fellowship. There is no charge for this fellowship opportunity. The Morning Coffee Fellowship will meet in the church basement on Fridays from 8:30-10:30 a.m. Our church ladies look forward to providing a place for you to fellowship and encourage one another. Hope to see you there!

Visual Support Group to meet

The Louisa County Visual Support Group will meet today, Wednesday, March 17th at 1 o'clock in the East Room of Corner Market (340 North 2nd Street) in Wapello. The speaker will be from Serve Outdoor America. This is an organization that helps those with all kinds of handicaps to continue doing many outdoor activities. For further information contact Lois Richers at 1-319-527-2630

Conesville Firemen Fish Fry

The Conesville Firement will be holding a Fish and Wing Fry at the Conesville Fire Station on Saturday, march 20th from 5:00 p.m. to ???. Adults are \$8.00 and 12 and under is \$4.00. Everyone is invited to come and enjoy a great time with great food. All proceeds are used to help finance equipment and activities for the Conesville Firemen. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Post Prom Committee to meet

Attention parents of juniors at CCHS: Post prom committee will meet today, Wednesday, March 17th at 6:30 p.m. at the high school. Please come and help plan the post prom party. Questions: call Linda Pierce 319-728-7483.

School Board to hold budget meeting

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will hold a Special Meeting/Budget Workshop II on Monday, March 22, 2010, at 6:30 p.m., at the Roundy Elementary Library.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, March 18th at 11:30 a.m. at the 92 Roadhouse in Columbus Junction.

Two Rivers' Lodge wine tasting

The Two Rivers' Lodge (formerly the "Main Bar" at the Circle of Pride Rodeo Grounds - Highway 70, south of Conesville, Iowa) will be hosting a wine and hors d'oeuvre tasting on Saturday, March 27, 2010, from 6-9 p.m. The event is open to the public, but you must be 21 years old to attend. The cost will be \$20.00. Please R.S.V.P. by Wednesday, March 24th, by calling 319-726-5322 or 319-725-6180. Come join this evening of fun and celebration of spring, good spirits and fine wine.

SpotLight at Victory Christian Center

Need an evening out with your family? How does a FREE evening out with the family sound for good, clean entertainment with area talent? Bring yourself and the family to Victory Christian Center, 122 Ninth St., Columbus Junction, on Saturday, March 20, 2010 at 6 p.m., as they host "SpotLight," a local talent show. This year's line up includes drama, vocal, instrumental and comedic talent. It's family entertainment at its best and it is FREE. If you would like more information, you may contact Jolene McAfee at 319-728-5720 or www.vccjunction.org.

Roundy prepares for Kindergarten

Will your child be old enough to attend school at Roundy Elementary, Columbus Junction, Iowa this fall? Roundy Elementary is preparing for Kindergarten - If your child was born before September 15, 2005 and is not currently enrolled in the Columbus Preschool Program, KFC Preschool, or the Great Beginnings Preschool Program, please call the school at 319-728-6218.

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center. 2101 dues are now due.