

Corps requires additional studies on levee

By Jim Rudisill

A \$600,000 proposal to upgrade the levee that protects the Louisa County Fairgrounds and eastern portions of Columbus Junction will need to have additional studies completed before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) will complete its evaluation, Columbus Junction city officials were told during the regular March 25 city council meeting.

Mayor Dan Wilson outlined the COE's reply to the city's initial project concept, which was submitted several weeks ago by French-Reneker Associates, Fairfield, project engineer for the proposed work. He also reviewed a response to the COE reply that was provided by French-Reneker engineer John Meyer.

According to the COE letter, the city would need to complete several more studies before the Corps would move forward with its overall evaluation of the project. Gene Walsh, project manager for the COE's Rock Island District Enforcement Section, wrote the city must submit a wetland delineation of the proposed construction area, assess archaeological and cultural resources and evaluate if any endangered or protected animal or plant species habitat would be impacted by the proposed work.

In his response to Walsh's letter, Meyer wrote the city had two options.

"The (COE) letter requests a response within 30 days. This response could ask for additional time to compile this information or simply state the City is no longer interested in pursuing the project," Meyer explained in his letter.

He also provided details on the required work and potential costs involved.

"We need to identify the borrow areas, access routes and staging areas to be used for construction. We understand the concept for construction of the major portion would use the farm field to the east as a borrow area. We need to more clearly estimate the project's needs. We anticipate this would require some initial design effort. We feel a reasonable estimate for this to be \$4000 to \$5000," Meyer explained.

"Archaeological assessment would be performed on this disturbed area. This would likely cost from \$5000 to \$10,000," he continued.

"Wetland delineation and habitat assessment would be performed on the disturbed area. This would likely cost \$5000 to \$7000," Meyer wrote.

Costs to complete other studies, such as cultural resources; possible wetland mitigation and archaeological, wetland and habitat assessments on any possible mitigation site could not be determined because it is not known if any of them would occur.

"Cost is impossible to estimate at this time (or would be) dependent upon the location and amount of wetland (or mitigation) required," Meyer summarized in his letter.



Fairground levee requiring additional environmental study

While the possible known costs would be around \$20,000, the unknown costs and any possible additional costs for work that might be required by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, which has not yet responded to the city's initial concept application, could drive that amount higher.

Despite the cost and uncertainty, city officials agreed they wanted to continue pursuing the levee project.

"I'd recommend we write the Corps of Engineers and say we want to take whatever steps are needed to get this done," Wilson told the council, adding he was hoping not all of the studies identified by the COE would need to be completed.

Council member Hal Prior agreed. "I know the cost (from flooding) last summer (was) a lot more than this," he pointed out.

The rest of the council agreed and authorized Wilson to contact the Corps and advise it of the city's desire to move forward with the planning process.

City officials said a grant application for the levee work has already been submitted, but they were unsure of the status of that request.

Wilson did report the city had recently been notified that its grant application to finance the purchase of a water pump had been approved. The city plans to install the equipment near the Columbus Motel to help pump water that flows into the community's lower east end over the levee and into the Iowa River.

Council member Mark Huston also reported another pump near the Casey's store had recently been re-

paired and is operating, although some additional minor work is still needed. That pump also helps move water that flows into the lower east end from the downtown and higher bluffs to the west.

In other action, the council approved a request from a Muscatine implement dealership to install GPS equipment on the city's water tower. The approval for Elder Implement was subject to city attorney Tim Wink revising the original contract with additional language he suggested and the company had accepted. Under the contract, the city would receive a \$500 annual fee from the company to use the tower. The company also would agree any legal or other costs.

Company representatives indicated the equipment would be installed this week.

The city council also agreed to conduct a summer sidewalk program this year. Officials said \$5000 had been budgeted for the work. They also said several applicants who were unable to complete sidewalk repairs last year because of the flooding would be contacted to determine if they are interested in participating this year. Those that are would be placed on a priority list, officials said.

In final action, the council agreed to submit a request to Alliant Energy to install a new streetlight at the corner of Orchard Lane and Colton. The council also agreed to continue to pursue efforts to get lights repaired on the bypass. Officials said the Iowa Department of Transportation was notified two years ago of problems with the lighting, but the state agency has not responded. Huston wondered

if the lights had simply been turned off and never turned back on.

The council also learned representatives of Keep America Beautiful and Keep Iowa Beautiful would be in town during the first week of May. Economic Development Committee member Tim Wink, who is working with volunteers to beautify the Highway 92 entrances into the city, said housing would be needed for a couple of nights for the representatives. Wink said the representatives were looking forward to meeting with community residents and leaders.

Community Development Center Executive Director Mallory Smith also presented a monthly report on the center's activities to the council. Smith reported several portions of the Horizons Project were progressing, with the Leadership Plenty effort to be completed soon. She said the project has been approved for \$1500 in August and another \$8500 in the spring for projects to be determined, once plans for its use have been completed. She told the council members if they had any proposed project, now would be a good time to become involved.

Smith also said planning was continuing on this year's farmers market. She said a pre-market would be held April 24 at the American Legion with bedding plants and other limited items. That would be followed by the regular season, which is scheduled from May 15 to October 9. Smith also reported on ESL classes, Immersion Weekends, United Fund, Community Gardens, LIFE Microlending and Litter Cleanup.

Briefly -

Alumni Banquet scheduled

Mark your calendar now for the Columbus-Cotter-Conesville Alumni Banquet, June 13th. Due to cancellation of last year's banquet because of the flood, we will be honoring two 50-year (1958 and 1959) and two 25-year (1983 and 1984) classes. If you'd like to be involved in planning the banquet, contact Jerry Bell or Jim Howell.

Cooks sought for Taste of Wapello

WAPELLO - Louisa County Habitat For Humanity is seeking local cooks to make or bake tasty treats for a new type of fundraiser. Habitat members plan to have area restaurants and deli's, as well as local cooks serving 50 or more items to taste from 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Saturday, April 4, at the Briggs Civic Center. If you like to cook and want to be a part of this event, call Lois Wanfalt at 319-729-2773. This occasion is replacing the annual auction Habitat has held for several years however there will be a silent auction during the tasting hours. Tickets will be for sale soon.

Easter Egg Hunt scheduled

The Columbus Junction Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Saturday, April 11th at 1:00 p.m., at the Chautauqua Park. Ages 0-10 are welcome to attend. Anybody interested in donating candy or money, please contact Lisa at 319-750-0801.

FFA Banquet Scheduled

The Columbus FFA Annual Parent/Member Banquet will be Wednesday, April 8th, starting at 6:00 p.m. in the high school student center. All members, their parents, and supporters are welcome to attend. Please bring a dish to pass, as the meat, table service, and drink will be provided. Following the meal, a program will take place in the auditorium recognizing members' achievements from the past year, awarding degrees, and installing the new officer team. Afterwards, the newly formed Columbus FFA Alumni will hold a brief meeting and anyone interested in what the alumni will do, is welcome to attend. In addition, they will have a jar to collect money to help offset the cost of the 14 Columbus FFA members attending the Iowa FFA Leadership Conference in Des Moines. Questions? Please call Miss Lewis at 728-2231 x 3621.

Letts Firemen Fish Fry

The Letts Firemen will be holding a fish and chicken fry on Saturday, April 4th with serving from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. Adults \$8, Children \$3.50.

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, April 1, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

Conesville School Reunion

It's time to start planning the 2009 Conesville School Reunion. Mark your calendar for May 23, 2009, 12:00 noon. Last year was the 50th reunion of the last class (1958) to graduate from Conesville High School. We thought it a good time to discontinue the event but when it was brought to a vote the response was, why would we quit????? Why ~ because to continue WE NEED HELP!!! This reunion doesn't just happen. It takes a lot of planning and work from willing people to help with invitations, programs, menu and many other things that need to be done. If you are a Conesville graduate, was a student or teacher, spouse of a graduate or have any interest in the school or Conesville Community we want to get you involved. We always have a good time and don't want you to think it is all work and no play because that is not the way it is. It just takes many hands to pull it off. Please call Fran @ 319-728-2139 or Rose @ 319-728-2027 if you would be willing to get involved. We will be meeting soon and need some new ideas and your input for another successful party.

Congregate Meals seeks volunteers

The Congregate Mealsite is looking for volunteers to help with the delivery of our Home Delivered Meals. Please call Barbara at 319-728-2412, Monday-Friday between the hours of 9:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Etude Club Meeting and Spring Show

The regular monthly meeting and Spring Show rehearsal for Etude Club will be held on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, at 7 p.m., in the United Methodist Church of Columbus Junction. Marilyn Kilpatrick is hostess.

Legislative Forum scheduled

A Legislative Forum will be held on Saturday, April 4, 2009, with Senator Tom Courtney and Representative Tom Sands at the State Bank of Wapello Community Room from 11:15 AM to 12:15 PM.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will hold a Special Meeting/Budget Workshop #3 Public Hearing on Monday, April 6, 2009, at 6:30 p.m., at the Roundy Elementary Library, 1212 Colton Street, Columbus Junction, IA 52738.

Parent Forum scheduled

There will be a second Parent Forum for parents of students in grades 6-12, on Thursday, April 2, in the High School Student Center. The meeting will begin at 6:45 p.m. This is a follow-up meeting to the one held on March 9. The purpose of the forum is to gain a stronger link between parents and school staff at the secondary level, to the benefit of our students' education. All parents of secondary students are welcome.

Youth Center open

Are you a 7-12 grader and need a place to hang out? A Youth Center is now open on Wednesday from 3:30-5:00 p.m., at the United Methodist Church. A pool table, ping-pong table, the Internet, foos ball table, movies on a big screen, a dodge ball tournament, and more will be available. Come join us this Wednesday.

Wapello School Alumni Banquet

Last Call. Are you interested in having an all school alumni banquet in 2010? Come to the meeting in the Ambulance Barn in Wapello on Tuesday, April 14th, 2009 at 6:30 P.M. If there are not enough in attendance at the meeting there will not be an All School Alumni Banquet in 2010.

Wapello Firemen Fish Fry

Wapello Fire and Rescue, Inc., will hold a fish and chicken fry at the Wapello Fire Station, on April 4th. Serving starts 5:00 p.m. A FREE WILL DONATION will be accepted.

Habitat For Humanity dedicates 10th home in County

Friends, family and volunteers gathered at the recently completed Habitat home located at 1303 6th Street in Fredonia Sunday, March 29. Edith Osorio and her three children helped welcome people to their new home. Pastor Al Coffin started the dedication with prayer and Jason Collier read scripture from Ephesians and Matthew. Phyllis Small lead the group in songs blessing the home. Barb Beeding read verse consecrating the home, and Paula Buckman read a litany of thanksgiving. Jason Collier presented the family with a bible engraved with the family's name. Ruth Yakle, president of LCHH, presented the house keys to the family. Edith Osorio expressed her heart-felt thanks to God and to all the volun-

teers who helped make this dream a reality for her family. Pastor Faye Fedlam gave a litany of dedication, and Pastor Al Coffin gave a closing prayer.

Jeff Everett was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year for the hundreds of hours he has given to the building of the home. Four other volunteers, Jason Collier, Pam Grim, Joyce Kisner, and Mark Shear, were recognized with the "Pitch-In" Award. Visitors enjoyed refreshments and toured the home following the ceremony.

Pictured are Edith Osorio and children, Gustavo, Damaris and Edith receive keys to their new home from Habitat President, Ruth Yakle. A gift of a Bible is held by daughter Damaris.



Louisa Builders Network to be unveiled next week

Attention Louisa County Building sector, an upcoming LouisaBuildersNetwork.com unveiling is set for April 6th at 6:30 p.m. The date is set and will inform all building sector related entrepreneurs, companies, firms, and individuals, on who, what, why, and how this network was created for the Louisa County building sector.

The meeting will be held at the Louisa County Conservation Board located north of Wapello, 12635

County Rd G56, Wapello, Iowa 52653. This meeting will provide the tour of the website and some features that are still to come within 1 - 2 months for contractors and Louisa County residents.

To find a local contractor or to learn more about the network, visit www.LouisaBuildersNetwork.com. Computers for public use can be found in all Louisa County libraries. In addition, printed copies of the list are available by calling 319-457-

0077.

Funding for LouisaBuildersNetwork.com has been provided by grants from Community Foundation of Louisa County and Alliant Energy. Louisa Development Group is a member-supported economic development and marketing organization serving Louisa County, Iowa. Memberships are available at several levels. For more information go to www.LouisaDevelopmentGroup.org or call 319-457-0077.

WWII Honor Tour Update

To date nearly \$18,000 has been collected for the next WWII Honor Tour. Contributions can still be made by contacting Sam Bell at Community Bank, 229 Main St., Columbus Jct., IA, 52738 or Butch Buster, 707 Buchanan St., Wapello, IA 52653. Thank you to everyone who has helped so far.