

Another sunless summer??

By John Caarpenter
Gazette Staff

Last summer I heard a television commentator in the Quad Cities describe the continual rainy days as "A Summer without Sun." I may have even used that in a headline in the Gazette sometime during the summer, but it is stacking up to become a similar situation in 2010.

Everyone remembers the flood of 2008 and the economic impact it had on everyone. Clean-up and repair expenses were enormous, and an eventual price tag was determined on the flood. However, years like last summer and this summer also have an economic price, but difficult to determine.

Although area farmers appear to have their crops in, there are losses. Spraying for weeds and insects has been delayed, or even eliminated because of the wet fields. This will certainly have an impact on crop quality. Although rains produce large hay crops, downed hay that is rained on certainly loses feed value.

Area construction companies have felt the economic impact. Even with the current recession, there is work to do in the area, but wet grounds not only gives contractors non-working days, delays always add to expenses and repairs.

But a loss that is difficult to put a price on is potential income from area tourism, activities, and recreation. Certainly every small golf course and swimming pool in the area are feeling the effects of lost revenue. There were a number of events scheduled in the Quad City area this weekend that were either cancelled or the attendance was diminished. This has to be a blow to area restaurants and motels. The Race for the Cure in the Quad Cities



As with all unsettled weather systems, a number of tornadoes were spotted around the county on Monday. No reports of property damage or injuries were reported. Pictured are dangerous clouds north of Columbus Junction that dropped 3.5 inches of rain in 20 minutes on Conesville Monday afternoon.

was cancelled on Saturday. I'm sure some money was still donated, but undoubtedly the amount no way reached the total they were expecting.

The local races experienced a difficult season in 2009, and although some races have been held this year, some were lost. Our local promoters have invested a good deal of time and money in operating the races, and I get a sick feeling in my stomach when I see a rain fall on Fridays. For safety reasons, the track must be dry.

The three area minor league baseball teams rely on attendance. With

new drainage projects and an infield covered by a tarp, it almost has to be raining at game time to call off a game. But the chance of rain will keep people home, even if they have purchased a ticket. This might sound okay, but as any minor league executive will tell you, it's not just the ticket sales that keeps these teams alive, it's concession sales. And if people aren't there, they don't buy hot dogs.

Local high school sports teams have an even more difficult time. Without infield tarps, wet grounds will always cancel games. And a cancelled game means that the kids can't

play, their parents can't watch, and the school can't sell tickets and hot dogs.

So folks, I know that we can't beat Mother Nature. But if 2010 continues on this pace, we can at least help diminish her wrath. Consider attending area events, even if they aren't on your schedule. And if they are, don't let the weather stop you. Take an umbrella, take a rain coat, but most importantly, take yourself and your family. A good time has been planned by the volunteers, and a good time can still be had, in spite of the weather

City Council agrees to lawn mower purchase

By Jim Rudisill

Once they were able to overcome their shock from the \$45,900 price tag, members of the Columbus Junction City Council agreed last week that a new Jacobson mower should be purchased for the city's equipment fleet. Although the council had initially discussed the purchase last month, it delayed any action until its June 9 meeting to give its finance committee time to review a financing plan.

Council member Mark Huston, a member of the committee, told the council last week the mower could be financed, even if the cost was a stunner.

"It's just enough to make you fall off your chair, (but) we can pay for it," he said, explaining the money would need to come from various accounts and possibly be spread over two years.

He also reminded the council what public works staff members Jeff Carey and Fred Lukavsky had reported at last month's meeting. At that time, the two said they each spend around 16 hours a week mowing and did not expect that time to decrease as the city acquired flood buyout lots and implemented beautification efforts along Highway 92.

Carey had also reported that when he first started working for the city mowing was not even mentioned as part of his job duties. Council member Phil Kaalberg told the council last week he agreed the mowing duties would continue to expand.

"Mowing will not go away," he said.

Mayor Dan Wilson also agreed the mowing duties were assuming a greater share of the work load; and based on what he had seen of recent demonstrations and reports from Carey and Lukavsky, estimates the new mower could cut the mowing time in half were reasonable.

Although the council approved the purchase, it did not detail how it would actually finance the new equipment. According to the discussion, the city currently has two John Deere mowers and officials indi-

cated they felt one of the machines could be sold for around \$4000. Huston also suggested money could come from both the city's water and sewer funds, since the new mower would be used for mowing the water tower and the lagoon.

Additional funding might also come from the city's Road Use Tax (RUT), especially since an upcoming payment from the fund for a new street in the New Heritage Village subdivision, would be the last for that work. The RUT funding would be justified because of the Highway 92 beautification work that would occur.

Kaalberg said the Iowa Department of Transportation had not been doing a good job with that work and efforts to beautify the city's entrances would add more mowing demands on the staff.

Council member Dave Duncan acknowledged the equipment cost was a shock, but said if the staff felt the cost benefit was positive he favored the purchase.

"If you guys say it's going to pay for itself, then it's not a bad idea," he said.

Following the decision to purchase the machine from a Des Moines dealer, Wilson said the finance committee and city staff would review the costs and potential revenue and provide a payment plan at a later meeting.

In other action, the council approved the second readings and waived the third and final readings of two ordinance amendments that clarify sidewalk maintenance and other responsibilities of property owners. Under the amendments, the owner of any lot or parcel who fails to remove snow, ice and accumulations from sidewalks; or fails to maintain sidewalks shall be liable to any person injured because of that failure. The amendment would also maintain the owner's responsibility regardless if the city takes or fails to take any action to maintain or clear a sidewalk.

In final action, the council received an update on nearly \$4 million in grants awarded to the city to

relocate its water treatment plant, which was flooded in 2008. Wilson said city officials recently met with regional planning representatives and officials of the U.S. Economic Development Administration to discuss the grants and begin the administrative grant processing. Wilson said it is likely bidding for the project would not begin until next spring.

He said the immediate steps the city hopes to accomplish soon are to purchase the property; acquire any additional needed easements, such as from the fairgrounds; and obtain the required permits. If those developments occur as planned, then the spring bidding was possible, Wilson explained.

The combination of grant funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Community Development Block Program is expected to leave only a small amount

of local funding needed for the project, officials said.

"It's about a \$4 million (project), but how it affects our budget should be minimal because most of it will be pass through," Wilson said.

Kaalberg suggested since the project's timing might also be a benefit to the community. He reminded the council the city had been considering adding another water well and this might be a good time to revive that idea. He said even if the city had to fund it, it could possibly be rolled into the relocation project and be more cost effective. Huston also said it might be a good time to consider relocating the fire station, which also was flooded in 2008.

The council also approved hiring Brett Michaels, 26, Mason City, as the city's newest police officer. He replaces Joe Reid, who resigned earlier this year.

Bio-Energy crops research at Spring Field Day on June 24

Bio-Energy Crops Research Featured at Spring Field Day on June 24

The annual spring field day for the Iowa State University Southeast Iowa Research Farm near Crawfordsville will be on June 24, with tours beginning at 1:00 p.m. Iowa State University Extension provides research-based information and education to help people make better decisions, in their personal, community and professional lives. One of the features on the tour will be Dr. Emily Heaton's presentation on "Research on Miscanthus and Other Crops for Cellulosic Ethanol." Dr. Heaton is an ISU agronomist whose research has focused on perennial energy crops. "There could be new opportunities for Iowa farmers to grow perennial crops, such as switch grass, for fuel in the near future," according to Jim Fawcett, ISU Extension Field Agronomist.

Also highlighted on the tour will be "Crop Season Review & Soil Drainage Research Results" by Kevin Van Dee, farm superintendent, and Matt Helmers, ISU Extension Ag Engineer; "Cover Crops & Nitrogen Management" by John Sawyer, ISU Extension Agronomist; and "New Developments in Soybean Aphid Management" by Erin Hodgson, ISU Extension Entomologist.

Certified Crop Advisor continuing education credits will be available for attending the event. Those wishing to obtain additional CCA credits can come at 8:30 a.m. for a morning training session with a focus on soil drainage. The credit fee for Certified Crop Advisors is \$50.00 (or \$25 for the afternoon only) and includes lunch. There is no fee for the afternoon tours. A lunch will be available at noon for \$8. Please register by June 22 for the morning CCA session and the noon lunch by calling the Johnson County Extension Office at 319-337-2145.

To reach the farm, follow U.S. Highway 218 one and three quarters miles south of Crawfordsville, then two miles east on county road G-62, then three quarters mile north. Signs will be posted to guide you to the event.

Briefly -

Community Club to meet

The Columbus Community Club will meet this Thursday at Noon at the Senior Center.

CCIC to meet

CCIC will be held at the Columbus City City Hall on June 22, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. Dorothy Diller will be hostess.

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, on Wednesday, June 23, 2010 at 9:30 a.m.

2010 County Fair Dates set

The dates for the 2010 Louisa County Fair are: July 24 - Parade and Fair Kickoff; and Fair - dates July 26-31. Dates for the Iowa State Fair are August 12-22.

Farmers' Market this Friday

The Columbus Junction Farmers' Market is held Fridays from 4:30 to 6:30 pm through October 8 at the American Legion parking lot, 99 Second St., Columbus Junction. The market features regional vendors selling Iowa-grown produce, plants, baked goods, eggs, snacks, crafts and more. Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, IFMNP/WIC checks, Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition checks and Louisa Bucks are welcome. Buy local and taste the difference! Free wine sampling hosted by Ardon Creek winery of Letts June 18th.

FFA Alumni to meet

The Columbus FFA Alumni Association will meet today at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 16th at Craig and Brenda Wilson's house. Items of discussion will be the tractor ride and the Louisa County Fair.

25th Anniversary at Grandview Church

Pastor and Karen Erickson's 25th year at Grandview Community Bible Church will be celebrated on June 20, 2010. 9:15 a.m. is the fellowship time of coffee and donuts. 10 a.m. - worship. Potluck provided by the church to follow. All are welcome to join us.

Coffee fellowship at Hope Bible Church

The Hope Bible Church Coffee Fellowship will resume on Friday the 18th.

Vision support group to meet

The Louisa County Vision Support meeting will meet on Thursday, June 17th. The meeting will take place in the east room of the Corner Market (340 North Main), from 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.. This meeting will celebrate the Iowa Dept. for the Blind's 30th anniversary of the Independent Living Program. Please come and help us celebrate. For more information contact Lois Richers at 527-2630.

LDG to hold annual meeting

The Louisa Development Group plans its Annual Meeting for Tuesday, June 29. The meeting will be held at the Morning Sun Community Center, and will begin at 6 p.m. Rand Fisher, President of Iowa Area Development Group, will be the featured speaker. An Iowa smoked pork chop dinner, with all the trimmings, will be served. Tickets are \$20 per person. Those attending are asked to RSVP to ldg@louisacomm.net (or call 319-523-2371) by June 23.

Roundy Library open for summer

Every Wednesday through the end of July, the Roundy Elementary library will be open from 9:00 a.m.-12:30p.m. Kids can come in to check out books or sit and read.

School Board to meet

The Board of Education for the Columbus Community School District will be holding a public meeting on Monday, June 21, 2010, at 6:30 p.m., in the Roundy Elementary School Library.

Community potluck at Senior Center

The Columbus Senior Center is hosting a community potluck dinner on Thursday, June 24th, 2010 at Noon. Please come and bring a covered dish. Table service, drinks and meat will be provided. Call 319-728-8905 and leave a message if you can attend. Come have an afternoon of good food and community fellowship.

Shellbark Club to meet

The Shellbark Club will meet on Thursday, June 17th at 10:45 a.m. at the Spring Run Church. We will car pool to 61 Chop House in Mediapolis for an 11:30 a.m. lunch.

Embroidery Club to meet

The Embroidery Club will meet June 22nd from 6:30 to 9:00 pm to work on Brazilian Embroidery. This meeting is held in OUR SHOP, 106 Main Street, Suite 100, Columbus Junction. Anyone is welcome, just bring your sewing and come stitch with us. In July we will have instruction on needle tating on July 5th at 6:30 - 9:00 and July 7th at 1:00 to 4:00. Please register for these classes by calling Carol at 319-728-5648.

Blood Drive in Wapello

The University of Iowa DeGowin Blood Center along with UI Health Care Wapello will be conducting a blood drive from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Friday, June 25, 2010 at the Wapello Ambulance Barn, 400 US 61 S. To schedule a time to donate, call UI Health Care Wapello at 319-523-8205. Walk-ins welcome! Donors who last gave blood on or before April 30, 2010 are eligible. Donors must be in general good health, be cold and flu symptom free for 5 days, weigh at least 110 lbs and bring a photo ID. Donors must be 17 years of age to donate, 16 with an approved UI DeGowin consent form. Blood donation is a safe and simple and only takes about 1 hour. The need for blood remains high during the summer months and it is especially critical to maintain an adequate blood supply before the long July 4th weekend. Each week the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics uses approximately 600 blood products. Blood collected by the UI DeGowin Blood Center is for use by patients at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. If you have questions concerning your eligibility please call the UI DeGowin Blood Center at 319-356-2058.

Rees Family reunion scheduled

The annual John A. Rees reunion will be held at noon on Saturday, June 19, 2010 at Marr Park, west of Ainsworth, in the first shelter for a potluck meal. Officers are President, Tyler Rees; Vice President, Jay Greene; Secretary-Treasurer, Sharon Rees; and Historian, Richard Arthur. Table Committee is Michelle Rees, Chair; Kay Davis and Rita Luers.