

School Board tables Superintendent's resignation

By Jim Rudisill

Despite submitting their resignations Monday, Columbus Superintendent Rich Bridenstine and his wife Maureen, who teaches in the district's TAG program, will need to wait until December 6 to learn if the school board will accept them. The two submitted their resignations, along with swimming pool manager Bob Curtis and elementary custodian Shari Schleaf. The board accepted the resignations of Curtis and Schleaf, but tabled action on the Bridenstines after a local citizen urged Bridenstine to change his mind and board members declined to accept the couple's action.

"I would encourage you not to accept Rich and Maureen's resignations at this time," local attorney Steve Sents told the board.

Sents explained the district had been moving forward with critical education programs under Bridenstine's administrative watch and losing him would be disruptive to those efforts.

"The implication to the school district is of grave concern to me," he said.

Bridenstine acknowledged receiving numerous other messages since word of his resignation leaked out, with some telling him he had made the wrong decision.

An initial motion to accept his resignation, but leave the board free to reconsider its action, was defeated. The board then voted to table the action until its first meeting in December. Bridenstine agreed to the delay, but in the meantime, he said he wanted to meet individually with board members to discuss the situation. He stressed those meetings would not be used for any type of negotiations and he viewed them more as a courtesy to the board members. "I don't want you to have any sense that I am driving the cart," he said.

Board member Dan Peters said he is not optimistic Bridenstine would change his mind.

"I don't think you will, but I would like to have the conversa-



School Board tables Superintendent Bridenstine's resignation during Monday's meeting

tions," he said.

Following the meeting, Bridenstine declined to give any specifics about any plans he and his wife would have if they did leave the school district.

"Maureen and I are looking forward to the next adventures in our lives," he said, echoing a statement he made in an earlier resignation announcement emailed to the school staff and others.

Bridenstine has been the district's superintendent for the past 10 years and has been in education for 35 years. His wife has taught for 29 years. If their resignations are eventually accepted, both would remain with the district until their contracts expire next year.

In other action, the board was unable to agree on a school policy that would restrict school activities on Wednesdays and Sundays, after school staff and board members debated four proposals presented by

Bridenstine. After being unable to settle on any favorites among the four, the board agreed to continue discussing them at the December 6 meeting.

Both vo-ag instructor Katie McWhirter and coach Nate Carlson said they were concerned about the proposals, explaining they frequently needed to meet with their students or teams on those days.

"You're taking more control, but the more restrictions you have, the more students (will need to choose)," Carlson said, explaining there would be more conflicts with other activities.

Board member Polly Prior agreed, explaining she favored a policy that had fewer restrictions, but requiring approval from administrators for staff to conduct most activities on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The board did approve the third readings of board policies setting graduation requirements for home-school students who wish to obtain a

Columbus School District degree and voted against offering an early retirement program this year.

In final action, junior/senior high school principal Jeff Maeder presented several graphs showing a wide range of improvement in the percentage of high school students passing their classes. According to the graphs, the percentage of freshmen failing their classes dropped from 66% last fall to only 12% this year. The sophomore rate dropped from 40% in 2009 to 27% in 2010. For juniors the 2010 failing percentage was 20%, almost half of the 39% who failed at least one class in 2009. Those figures were close to the senior class percentages of 36% in 2009 and 20% in 2010.

Maeder also unveiled a discipline rubric that administrators plan to use for students who harass, tease or participate in other bullying or inappropriate behavior. Punishment for offenses could range from written warnings to expulsion.

City Council begins planning on levee

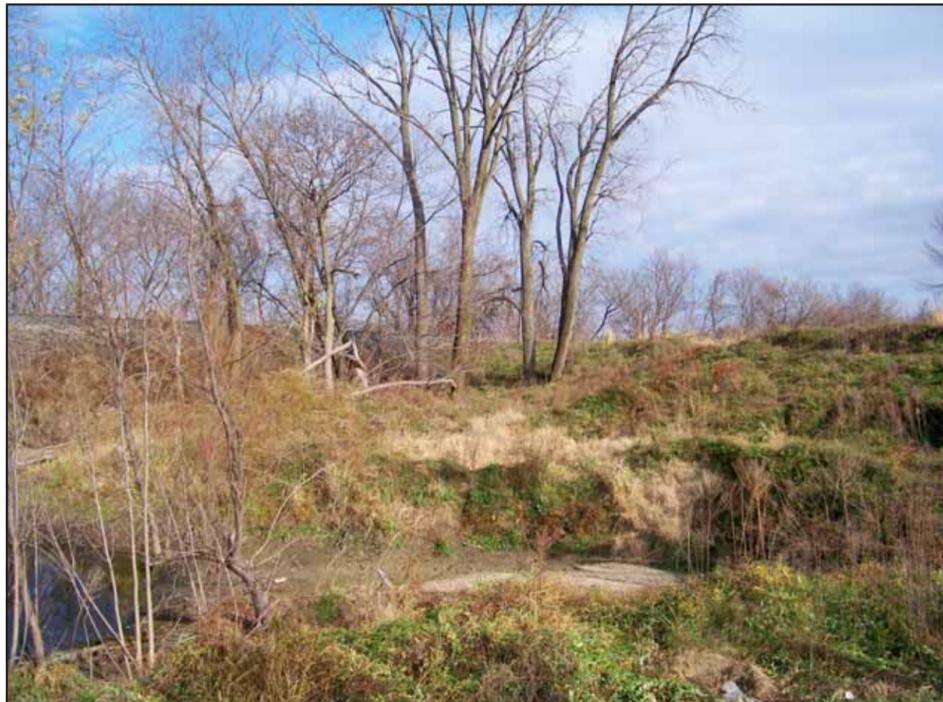
By Jim Rudisill

The official notice of a \$695,000 grant, which will be used to upgrade the Iowa River levee east of the city, has arrived, Mayor Dan Wilson told the city council during its regular November 10th meeting. City officials had unofficially learned several weeks ago about the grant, but official word did not come from Governor Chet Culver's office and other state officials until earlier this month. Wilson said city officials will now meet with engineers from French-Reneker Associates, Fairfield, to begin planning for the improvements.

According to Wilson and other officials, the city hopes to raise the height of the levee to match the height of the nearby railroad track. He estimated some areas of the levee might be raised five or six feet. Although the improved levee will not be certified by the Army Corps of Engineers, Wilson said it will substantially boost flood protection for the community. The improved levee will also provide a platform for the city to drill a new water well as part of its grant-funded water treatment plant relocation project.

In other action, the council agreed to hire Andrew Fry, Letts, as the city's newest police officer. Fry currently works at the Louisa County Jail. Police chief Donnie Orr said Fry will begin his duties November 22. His salary will be \$28,000.

In other law enforcement discussion, Orr said he supported any effort to purchase Tasers for his department. Council member Hal



Height elevation of railroad tracks where new levee will begin.

Prior raised the issue, explaining the devices could help protect officers. "I think it would help keep our officers from getting into trouble," Prior told the council.

"I'm all for it," Orr replied, adding Prior's inquiry was well-timed since the Louisa County Sheriff's Office was planning to hold TASER training in a few weeks.

Orr said he had planned to have his officers attend the training, even though his department did not have the equipment or any policies on

their use. He said developing the policies would be a first step before getting the machines. He said each TASER would cost around \$1,000.

Although officials were unsure where to get the money to buy the equipment, they told Orr to continue investigating and look at including the cost in the police department's budget for next year. Orr also reported his department had recently purchase a new radar device from a \$4,200 state grant. Around \$2,000 of the grant will be

used to help cover overtime costs in the department.

In final action, the council approved the city's 2009-2010 fiscal report and agreed to hold its regular meeting on November 24, even though it's right before Thanksgiving.

Briefly -

Benefit set for Gary Hamilton

Gomer was diagnosed the middle of August 2010 with cancer of the lymph node and tonsil, after extensive dental surgery, he is currently undergoing radiation and chemotherapy at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City, Iowa. A benefit will be held on Sunday, November 21, 2010 at the Main Bar located on the Circle of Pride Rodeo Grounds three miles south of Conesville on Hwy. 70. Doors open at noon and will end at 8:00 p.m. Food will be served starting at 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Bake sale, 50/50 drawing, and a general raffle, along with a silent auction from 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Music by DJ "Hambone". 12 years of age and up \$10.00 at the door, under 12 years of age \$5.00 at the door. For more information or to donate call Becky Johns 319-725-6612 evenings or Mary Singleton 319-725-4271

Community Club to sponsor Blood Drive

Columbus Junction Blood Drive, sponsored by the Community Club today, Wednesday, November 17th from 1:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion Hall, 99 2nd street, Columbus Junction. To donate call Kirsten Shellabarger at 319-728-2414. Walk-ins welcome! Donors who last gave blood on or before September 22, 2010 are eligible. Blood donation is a safe, simple procedure that only takes about an hour. Donors must be at least 16 years old, in good health, and weigh at least 110 pounds. A blood donor card or photo I.D. is required to donate; 16-year-old donors must present a signed parental consent form, available from the Blood Center or for download from www.bloodcenter.org. Controlled high blood pressure and diabetics are acceptable. Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center is the exclusive blood provider to Washington County Hospital and Clinics, VA Hospital, and Mercy Iowa City, Iowa City.

Coffee and Cake at Colonial Estates

Please join us at Colonial Estates Assisted Living for coffee and homemade coffee cake. Thursday November 18th at 8:00 a.m. Please contact Sarah with any questions 319-728-2276. Colonial Estates, 815 Colonial Lane, Columbus Junction, Iowa.

Fine Wine and Good Food at Two Rivers' Lodge

Enjoy fine wine and good food with a touch of Thanksgiving music by Mark Moss. Saturday, November 20th, 2010, hours are 6:00 p.m. - 9 p.m. at the Two River's Lodge (formerly the Main Bar at the Circle of Pride Rodeo Grounds) Hwy 70 south, Conesville, Iowa. Cost \$20.00 per person at the door, ALL wine samples and food are free. Please RSVP by November 18, 2010 by calling 319-726-5322 or 319-725-6180. Must be 21 years old to attend.

Conservation Scholarships available

Louisa County residents who are studying or have plans to study toward a career in a natural resources field are invited to apply for the William J. Paris Conservation Scholarship. The scholarship is open to 2011 graduates, those already in college and non-traditional students. Applications for this \$500 annual scholarship for the 2011-12 academic year will be taken now through January 15, 2011. The recipient will be announced at the end of February at the Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation annual auction. Scholarship applications are available from Tri-Rivers Conservation Foundation by emailing tri-rivers@lccb.org, calling 319-527-4530 or visiting www.tri-rivers.org.

Holiday Garbage Pick-up schedule

Rueckert Sanitation routes scheduled for Thanksgiving Day (November 25, 2010) will be picked up on Wednesday, November 24. All customers should have their solid waste set outside for early Wednesday morning pick-up.

Visual Support Group to meet

The Louisa County Visual Support Group will meet on Thursday, November 18th at 1 p.m. in the East Room of the Corner Market, Wapello, Iowa. Dr. Mark Mather will be our guest speaker. Bring any questions or concerns about your eyes and he will answer them. For more information contact Lois Richers at 319-537-2630.

City announces temporary street closing

Starting the week of November 15th, 2010 Second Street from Locust Street to Toddtown will be closed periodically during the day due to construction of a new railroad bridge on Monkey Run. This project will take several weeks to complete.

Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark club will meet Thursday November 18th at 11:30 a.m. at Butch's we will meet at Spring Run Church to car pool. Please let Judy W. know if you are going by November 16th.

United Methodist Soup Dinner

Come one, come all - All You Can Eat soup dinner. Chili and potato soup, veggies and desserts at the United Methodist Church, 2nd Street, Columbus Junction. We'll see you Sunday, December 5, 2010 at 11:45 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. Good will offering.

Community Club to meet

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

Be sure to mark your calendars for
December 1st - Family Night in downtown
Columbus Junction