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Consider your Christmas Shopping in CJ

Who are these two people and what are they doing? They are John Carpenter, editor of the Gazette, and Mary Wilson, features editor, and they are ready to go shopping! Where? Right here in Columbus Junction! There's no better place!

John and Mary will be arriving at businesses in Columbus Junction with their clipboard and camera looking for items that locals can buy for Christmas gifts. This is the year of "Shop Small", which means shop locally and patronize the small stores instead of the big chain stores. You might be surprised what we find, and hopefully you can do a lot of shopping close to home.

John and Mary plan to visit as many businesses as possible over the next few weeks, but if any business person wants a special week or wants to make sure his/her business is covered, call the Gazette at 728-2413.

As a kick-off to our campaign, we want to remind you that several businesses are holding an open house this Saturday, November 19th and some are offering discount coupons, free gifts, and refreshments. They are Plants and Things, the Pride of Iowa Market Place, and a Holiday Vendor Fair at the American Legion



in Columbus Junction. Other downtown stores will also be open that day. Top your day off by attending the Wine Tasting at Two River's Lodge

at the Circle of Pride Rodeo. There is an entry fee here, but you taste several wines, there is food, and you can maybe find that special wine to

give as a gift. Think Columbus Junction for your holiday shopping, and John and Mary will try to give you some great ideas!

Veterans' Day celebrated throughout the County



Numerous Veterans' Day activities were celebrated throughout the county last week. Pictured above left are veterans who attended the annual Roundy Elementary Veterans' Day program. At right is Ed Bayne serving as Master of Ceremonies at the Veterans' Day memorial celebrated at the new Veterans' Memorial on the courthouse grounds. A large crowd was on hand to honor our veterans of all wars.



School Board discusses plans for capital improvements

By Jim Rudisill

Design work for several major capital improvement projects approved earlier this year by the Columbus School Board will continue to be developed by local resident Al Bohling, a design team leader for Shive-Hattery Architecture-Engineering, Inc. Bohling told the board during a November 8 public meeting he felt the preliminary plans should be completed over the next six to eight weeks and would include cost estimates and a construction schedule. That would make the plans ready for the board's regular meeting on December 19.

The projects were initially presented by Bohling in May following meetings by a long-range planning committee. The board approved the plans on June 6. The approved plans included land acquisition; an outreach building, which would be jointly financed and used by the school district and the Muscatine Community College; a wrestling facility; a practice gym; and possibly a realignment of a student pick-up site and roadway at the Roundy Elementary Building.

Voters eventually approved a new revenue purpose statement that allowed the district to borrow on the one-penny state sales tax devoted to school infrastructure projects. However, in discussions leading up to that vote, Superintendent Rich Bridenstine acknowledged there was strong opposition to the proposed land acquisition and that portion of the project was dropped.

Bridenstine said last week that based on discussions with Bohling, the school should budget around \$4.7 million for the work. The school board earlier this year agreed to cap its borrowing on the project at \$6.2 million, although its actual borrowing limit is around \$8 million. Dis-

trict officials had said earlier around \$700,000 in state sales tax revenue comes to the district annually.

Since a cushion would exist between the budgeted costs and the borrowing cap, Bridenstine dropped a "bombshell" for the board to consider at last week's meeting. He pointed out the current junior high building was constructed in 1918 and he asked the board to consider how long that building would continue to be used. "Will it be ... five years - 10 years - more than 10 years?" he asked.

He said depending on how long the building is used, it could be worthwhile to consider using the additional borrowing and replace the building's current boiler system with a new heating system. "Money is cheap right now," Bridenstine said, adding the current system could have five to 10 years of life left.

He suggested if the district intended to continue using the junior high building for another 20 years, installing a new system now could be economical. "We have time to think about that," board chair Marsha Gerot said.

Meanwhile, the effort to have the plans ready for the December 19 meeting will continue. "There's a lot of interest by the district to have some construction in spring or early summer and that's an appropriate schedule," Bohling told the council last week. He said work on soil borings and topographic mapping had been completed, which should pave the way to complete the preliminary site planning by the December meeting. "Also, we'll have an understanding of a schedule," he told the group.

While that portion of the report pleased the board, there was less certainty on whether or not the board should hire a project manager for the improvements. Bridenstine said several companies that provide that ser-

vices had contacted him about their services. "There's a niche for these groups," Bridenstine said, explaining when he first arrived at Columbus construction on the Roundy Elementary building was just finishing and he had been a little overwhelmed.

He said the next big project he was involved with, the geothermal installation, had gone well because the general contractor had acted as a project manager. "You're going to have a change in superintendents," Bridenstine reminded the board, explaining the new superintendent would inherit the same situation he had with the elementary building.

However, he also pointed out Bohling had assured school officials he would remain involved and had recommended against hiring a new project management firm, explaining Shive-Hattery could handle both the design work and oversee construction. "I have found the best team to get something done is the smallest team. I think it's just another layer," Bohling said.

Bohling also reported he would soon be relinquishing his leadership position at Shive-Hattery, but will remain on the company's staff and continue to work with the Columbus school projects. "I think this is our job to see construction goes well," he told the board. Board members agreed. "I think it's a no-brainer we stay with Al and Shive-Hattery. We trust them," Sandy Martin said.

Bohling said with that decision made he would anticipate a survey and geotechnical crew arriving in the next couple of weeks to begin work that could then be used for developing preliminary plans. "We'll ... expect the board to give approval in December for final plans," he said.

In other action, the board agreed to ask recruiting services to submit proposals for conducting a superin-

tendent search for the district. Bridenstine submitted his resignation last month, effective at the end of the 2011 school year. Initially when the idea of using a service had been suggested, board members had balked because of the potential \$20,000 cost. However at last week's meeting, more services had reported their fees and officials said the cost now could range from \$6000 to \$13,000.

Gerot said she had talked with the school's attorney and the attorney's recommendation was to use a service. "They will bring in the most qualified," she told the board.

Board secretary Tanya Purdy also said she had contacted local districts that had used a service and also had recruited superintendents on their own. She said Eric Small, board secretary at Wapello, had said he would not recommend it for any board that did not have members who had already gone through the process. "It's a big time commitment," she said.

"I would like to see what's available," Martin said. Purdy said she would contact companies and request proposals from each.

Board members are expected to review the proposals at the December meeting and then make a final selection of a service. The board will also need to fill the building and grounds, transportation and athletic director positions. Dan Vogeler submitted his resignation effective in December. Bridenstine submitted a recommendation to use existing staff members to fill separate portions of Vogeler's position and then decide next year how the division of responsibilities worked. A final decision on Bridenstine's recommendation is expected at the board's November 21 regular meeting.

In final action, the board held a closed session to discuss student discipline.

Briefly -

Community Club to meet

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

L-M Youth League Trivia Night

The L-M Youth League will hold a Trivia Night HOSTED BY TONY TONE FROM B100 on Friday, NOVEMBER 18th. The event is being held at the new Letts Community Building. Online registration is open at www.L-Myouthleague.com. The cost is \$65/table with a maximum of eight players per team. Players must be at least 16 years old. Concessions will be available. Prizes awarded to winning team. Doors open at 6 pm with trivia starting at 7 pm. Register today!

Pleasant Grove Christmas Program

Mark your Calendars: The Pleasant Grove Community Church is having a special Christmas program, Sunday evening, December 4th. The high school kids of the First Baptist Church of Silvis, Illinois will be here to present to us "Christ-myths". It is a puppet program about all the different myths that are out there in the "world" about Christmas and concludes with the Christian message. It is appropriate for young and old. The church will have a potluck meal at 5:00 p.m. and the program at 6:00. Please bring a dish to pass, we look forward to seeing neighbors and friends.

Sheriff Dodgeball Tournament

On Saturday, December 3, 2011, the Louisa County Sheriff's Patrol will hold its first annual Dodgeball Tournament, at the L-M High School Gym at 10:00 a.m. The cost is \$25 per team. Teams are 4 players, at least one female per team. Players must be 16-years-old or older. To register a team, contact Lindsay or Lisa in dispatch at 319-523-4371 or email louisa_county_dispatch@yahoo.com. Please have your team registered by November 1st. Prize for winning team. Will also have a 50/50 raffle. Concession stand will be open. Tournament will be double elimination.

Wine Tasting at Two Rivers Lodge

Let the Wining begin! Two Rivers Lodge is hosting a wine and microbeer tasting on Saturday, November 19, 2011 at 6 p.m. The cost is \$20 per person, which gets you several wine and beer samples plus food and fun. The entertainment will be Kirk Hittner, an acoustic guitar player. Please R.S.V.P. by November 17, 2011 by calling 319-726-5322 or 319-725-6180. Must be 21 years old to attend. The Two Rivers Lodge is located at the Circle of Pride Rodeo Grounds, south of Conesville on Highway 70.

Sidewalk improvement on City Council Agenda

By Jim Rudisill

After two failed efforts, Columbus Junction city officials are hoping their third effort to obtain state funding for sidewalk improvements will be more successful. The city council agreed during its November 9 meeting to submit an \$87,000 grant application to the Iowa Department of Transportation's (DOT) Safe Routes to School Program.

If the grant is approved, officials said it would help finance a sidewalk from Roundy Elementary to Colton Street. The project would also include additional landscaping and street work, Mayor Dan Wilson said.

"We've tried a couple of times and nothing has been awarded," Wilson said. He explained that even though the sidewalk would benefit school children and go across school grounds, under the program guidelines, the city must be the applicant.

During previous discussions officials said the city's development of a sidewalk development and maintenance plan could help the latest application. Council member Dave Duncan, who is also a member of the Columbus School Board, said he had not seen anything in the application that would conflict with other school ground improvement projects the school board is investigating. Wilson said the grant program would not require any match from the city.

Officials said if the grant is approved, the new sidewalk will provide a better access for elementary students. "It would definitely be a safer route," Duncan told the council.

Later in the meeting, council member Mark Huston also provided an update on the city's continuing sidewalk improvement projects. Huston said the city crew installing sidewalks had recently completed the new stretch going towards Columbus City. He said the plan now, until weather shuts the projects down, will be to replace or repair the sections at the north end of Colton Street. Next year's projects will include sections on the Main Street hill and areas of Locust Street.

In other action, the council approved the city's FY 2011 annual financial report and approved a new liquor license for the Las Palmas restaurant. The restaurant is being located in the former Tequila Bar, which Wilson said had been a problem area in the past. He said restaurant owner Anna Hernandez had assured him the new business would not operate as a bar. Council member Bernabe Rodriquez said he had also talked with Hernandez and been assured she planned to operate the business as a restaurant.

Wilson also reported all the permit applications for the city's efforts to upgrade the Iowa River levee and relocate the city's water treatment plant had now been signed and submitted to state and federal regulatory agencies.

He also reported a wetland mitigation report had been completed and submitted to the Corps of Engineers. "We're kind of in a holding pattern right now, (but) hopefully it's part of the process to get formal approval," Wilson said. He said engineers continue to plan for a spring bid letting on the work, although officials are unsure how long it will be before the agencies sign the documents.

Mark your calendars for Family Night in C.J. Wednesday, December 7th from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. "Your Best Gift is Giving"