



Armstrong Council breezes through agenda

By Michael Tidemann

The Armstrong City Council made short work of a 17-item agenda, addressing all items within an hour at their Tuesday, May 11 meeting.

Emmet County Sheriff Mike Martens started the meeting off with the monthly sheriff's report in which he noted an average of just over 24 hours of uniformed patrol activity for the previous month, four hours above the 20 hours of contract time with the city. Reports included civil matters as well as an arrest of an individual for driving while revoked, a burglary and a drug complaint.

Martens said he had started serving nuisance abatement letters the previous night, and that one person had already come in to address the problem. Martens said deputies will provide extra coverage for Armstrong's Fourth of July celebration.

Much of the rest of the meeting was taken up with city infrastructure. City Supervisor Troy Leininger said Councilmembers Robb Nutt and Joann Eaton were working out a 28E agreement with the City of Ringsted to share street equipment. Leininger said details have to be worked out with Ringsted Councilmembers Travis Nielsen and Nick Larsen. Nutt suggested City Attorney Dave Stein review the agreement.

Leininger also discussed high water usage with reconstruction of Golf Course Drive, resulting in rusty water complaints from some residents.

"When they (construction workers) open a valve, water's going to move," said Leininger. He suggested residents run their water to rid rust.

Leininger said he had also met with Baren, Inc. of Mountain Lake, Minn., the company slated for street maintenance. Leininger said 30 patching spots were determined and that work would start by the end of the week or the following week.

Recent heavy rains have caused some sewer backups, said Leininger. He said though the city jetter was working to help resolve the problem. Leininger also said pool infrastructure was working and that pool heaters are scheduled for shipping within the next week.

Leininger also said he had received his Grade II water certification and was studying for wastewater certification.

Councilmember Arden Kinnander noted asphalt tearing up on the south

half of Golf Course Drive which was resurfaced last year. He said he had spoken with Beck Engineering about contacting Blacktop Services which did the work.

Leininger also discussed dust suppression on gravel streets and repairs on the payload.

In other business the council:

- Approved a tobacco permit for HiWay Grocery.

- Approved an agreement with Bob's Biffy for dumping waste from the Fourth of July celebration.

- Heard from Kinnander that the sewer sinking CD had matured and the money put into checking.

- Accepted a letter of resignation from Jennifer Leininger as Community Center manager.

- Heard from Kinnander that Veenstra & Kimm Engineering had not yet signed off on a pay order by King Construction on the lagoon project. Kinnander said the city should not pay the \$4,810.61 King bill until approved by the engineer.

- Approved appointment of Cami Moore to the Community Center Board.

- Approved establishing a part-time utility clerk position to assist City Clerk Casey Hoppe when Hoppe is gone.

- Hired Meghan Frye as Community Center custodian and set wages at \$15 an hour.

- Hired Jeni Quinn as Community Center manager at \$20 an hour.

- Approved hiring Caden Walders for mowing and odd jobs.

- Discussed ECCOG transfer station disposal charges. Kinnander said if rates continue to increase the city will have to raise garbage rates. He said he and Leininger had discussed Leininger taking waste directly to the Graettinger landfill.

- Approved a resolution approving \$176,322.09 payment to Beck Excavating Inc. for the Golf Course Drive reconstruction project.

- Approved a resolution approving a contract with Boggess Construction for \$23,902 in concrete street repairs.

- Heard a request by Phil Henriksen for playground equipment replacement. He said while no official vote was taken, the understanding was that the ABC Club would order the equipment and be reimbursed by the city.

- Heard a request from Carol Solberg for removal of a dirt pile on the south end of Golf Course Drive. The council agreed to have Solberg get written authorization from the golf course to remove the dirt pile before the city does the work.

Donors of all blood types are needed, especially those with types O negative, B negative, and A negative. According to the Red Cross, type O negative is the universal blood type that can be safely transfused to anyone, and is often used to treat trauma patients.

For more information or to make an appointment to donate, call Marla Newlin at 712-260-2689 or Krista Mart at 712-260-0523, or sign up online at redcrossblood.org.

Fourth of July to be celebrated in Armstrong - July 3-4

Fourth of July is right around the corner and celebration plans have been put in place by the Armstrong Betterment Club. The schedule of events will be published in the June 26 issue.

Festivities will begin on Wednesday, July 3 with the Little Miss/Miss 4th of July contest. It will be held at the community center and begins at 3 p.m. A supper will be held from 4-6 p.m. and will benefit the pageant to cover expenses. Both events are open to the public - come support the contestants and enjoy supper while supporting the program.

Thursday, July 4th, begins with the traditional ecumenical church service in the park at 7 a.m., - bring your chair. Head on down to the high school track for the much loved track meet, beginning at 8 a.m. and is for ages preschool through 6th grade. The day is filled with fun events for everyone and concludes with the fireworks north of town. There's so much to enjoy: car show, vendor fair, soap box derby, big wheel races, inflatables, entertainment, raffle ticket winners and of course, the Parade!

See the poster that is hung around town and printed in next week's paper for all the details!

Supervisors move forward to request Courthouse renovation bids

By Michael Tidemann

The Emmet County Board of Supervisors at their Tuesday, June 11 meeting finalized a request for proposals and agreed to solicit contractor/construction manager bids for the west Courthouse addition project.

The board earlier turned down bids of \$1.7 million and later \$1.9 million for the project. However, after considering a construction-manager-at-risk process, the board this spring secured an architect to work with a contractor who together would design and build the addition within the county's remaining American Rescue Plan Act funds.

Supervisor Tim Schumacher noted

a July 1, 2026, project completion date. He said the board would have 13-45 days to approve a construction manager after advertising. Emmet County Auditor Heidi Goebel said in addition to advertising on the Master Builders of Iowa Website, the board would have to post the notice on the county Website.

After discussion, the board agreed to advertise for a construction manager.

In a separate matter, the board approved claims except a \$2,705 bill from CMBA Architects of Spencer, the firm the county had contracted for design and bidding on the Courthouse addition. Schumacher said CMBA is apparently entering into the construction phase of billing, and recommended not paying the bill at this time, and the board agreed.

moveero staffing contractor faces lawsuit from injured former employee

Local mother of six sues over loss of fingers in machinery accident

by Amy H. Peterson
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Kristine Pietsch of Estherville has filed a lawsuit on behalf of herself and as parent and next friend to five minor children and an adult son, Donte Pietsch against Alliance Staffing, LLC, and employees of moveero in Armstrong individually: Edgar Marquez, Adrian Hagebock, Quentin Sickels, Don Larsen, Michelle Nicoson, Wes Leach, Randy Fehlman, and Ines Capote.

Alliance Staffing, LLC, based in Indiana, employed temporary laborers used by moveero, including Marquez. The lawsuit stems from an incident on May 17, 2022, in which, according to the petition and jury demand filed April 30, Marquez was in his second day of employment at moveero, and Pietsch was training him on a cup pressing machine. Marquez spoke only Spanish and Pietsch spoke only English. Capote worked as an interpreter for the plant.

While showing Marquez how to operate the machine, Pietsch put her hands near the machine to make an adjustment before running a new

cycle. Marquez activated the machine, causing Pietsch's fingers to be stuck in the machine. Once free, she ran to the office for assistance and realized she was missing fingers.

In her petition, Pietsch stated that Alliance Staffing, LLC and moveero were negligent in several areas, including failing to appropriately address communication barriers, failing to observe safety protocols, and activating dangerous machinery and equipment at a time when it's not safe.

Pietsch alleges in her petition that as a result, she has, will, and is suffering medical expenses, physical and mental pain and suffering, loss of full mind and body, disfigurement, lost wages and earning capacity, and other damages. Pietsch requests judgment against Alliance, Marquez and her other co-workers at moveero in an amount that will fully, fairly, and adequately compensate her for injuries and damages, together with interest, as well as damages for her children's loss of consortium with her due to the pain medication and other treatments she has and will undergo for her injuries.

In an interview with a workers compensation investigator, Pietsch was observed to have had both of

Merrill applies for bond reduction as trial delayed again

Trial delayed until September for former Armstrong police officer Craig Merrill

by Amy H. Peterson
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Last week, we reported that on the eve of its opening day, the trial of former Armstrong police officer Craig Merrill was delayed due to a stay issued by the court.

On Friday, June 7, the Supreme Court of Iowa issued an order denying the writ of certiorari and motion to stay the district court proceedings. The petition was filed by the State of Iowa attorney general's office against the Iowa District Court for Emmet County, and was centered on payment for an unbiased expert to comb through Merrill's emails to determine which ones were attorney work-product and which ones should be turned over to the state for their use in Merrill's prosecution. While the Iowa Supreme Court denied the stay of trial, district court judge Jeff Neary set a status hearing for Aug. 30 via Zoom and set a new trial date for Sept. 10 at the Clay County courthouse in Spencer.

Monday, Merrill filed a petition for a reduction in bond. Merrill was arrested in Feb. 2021 along with other Armstrong city officials. Bond was set

at \$41,000 cash only. Merrill's mother, Jean Merrill, paid the bond. Merrill stated in his petition that three-and-one-half-years on, the absence of the money from his mother's account is a financial burden for the Merrill family. Merrill stated he is not a flight risk as his wife and children are residents of Armstrong and his work and life are here, and that a more appropriate bond would be \$5,000 with the remainder returned to his mother at this time. Zachary Miller from the state attorney general's office has resisted Merrill's petition.

Merrill is charged with ongoing criminal conduct, unlawful activity, theft in the first degree, assault while displaying a dangerous weapon, and nonfelonious misconduct while in office. All defendants are considered not guilty until convicted in a court of law.

Purchase your ABC 4th of July Raffle Tickets at Local Businesses!

Win great prizes - many donated by local businesses.

Goebel stresses election integrity

By Michael Tidemann

Emmet County Auditor Heidi Goebel defended the Emmet County Auditor's Office at Tuesday's Emmet County Board of Supervisors meeting, saying a supervisor had cast a "shade" on her office on social media.

Goebel did not name a specific supervisor nor the social media platform on which the event occurred. Goebel said she would be willing to personally pay for election process training for the person in question.

"You have to trust the election process in Emmet County. You have to trust the election process in Iowa," Goebel said.

Goebel said the social media post occurred five days before the June 4 primary election.

her hands bandaged completely and had lost the use of them. Pietsch told the interviewer that on the date of the incident after her fingers had been crushed in the machine, she told Leach, the manager, that her fingers were off and needed to go to the hospital. Pietsch described herself as being in a state of trying to realize and understand that she no longer had fingers.

Pietsch is represented by Benjamin P. Long, Blake Gibney and Pressley Henningsen at RSH Legal in Cedar Rapids.

The defendants were granted an extension of time to secure attorneys and provide an answer to the petition by Judge John M. Sandy.

Blood Drive on June 26th

Armstrong will host a community blood drive with the American Red Cross on Wednesday, June 26 from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Armstrong Community Center.

Community members are urged to donate blood to help ensure that patients in local hospitals have a supply of blood ready and waiting before an emergency occurs. There is no better feeling than knowing your blood donation may give someone a second chance at life.

Active shooter drill tests North Union School

By Michael Tidemann

It can happen anywhere, even in Perry, Iowa, for example. And minutes can mean a lifetime - many lifetimes.

North Union School in Armstrong was the site as well for an active shooter drill Wednesday, June 12. Law enforcement and EMS personnel from throughout several counties made a combined response to the drill which left 29 "victims" who, fortunately, were able to pack up and go home after the drill.

Response time was delayed seven minutes until the first assistance arrived. Longer delays applied to other agencies, depending on their travel distance from Armstrong.

Emmet County Emergency Management Director Travis Sheridan spent three months planning the exercise.

"I think the drill went really well," said Sheridan, adding that the response for volunteer agencies to take part was so good that some had to be turned away.

By 3:15 p.m., 15 minutes after the first reports came in and eight minutes after police arrival, the shooter was deceased.

Outgoing Emmet County Conservation Board Director Eric Anderson noted a good response time, but said ambulance positioning could have been better. He also said ambulance crews arrived before the

suspect was confirmed deceased. Anderson also noted more than once there were no armed personnel at a school entrance. Anderson said though the tactical team worked together well, calling it "overall, a very, very good exercise."

The dispatch evaluator noted not all radio communication channels were working, but, again, that the exercise overall went well.

Sheridan noted upward communication redundancies are in place. "Someone's always testing that 911 call," he said. He noted though that Wallingford Ambulance had not been paged.

Another evaluator said law enforcement needs to tell dispatch they're on the scene. Multiple officers were repeating themselves.

The EMS evaluator called the drill

"overall pretty good." It was difficult though to consolidate all EMS services together, and he suggested someone take charge of EMS personnel. He said crews did a good job of getting equipment into the building. "I think they triaged well," he said.

"I think the exercise went really well," agreed Emmet County Sheriff Mike Martens.

"This is a training we hope to never have to use, but necessary that we take a proactive approach of being prepared," said Kossuth County Sheriff Roger Fisher.



Nurse Taylor Davis aided one of the young victims.



Emmet County deputies helped a victim.



Emmet Co. Deputy Justin Schultes briefed "victims" before the exercise.



Officers emerged from the North Union School office to search for the shooter.

Active Shooter - Continued on page 3



Spilled Ink

By Clinton J. Davis

My 8th Father's Day was one of my favorites. Each winter I tell Hartley that we will be sure to go fishing in the summer time. Then summer rolls around and we don't find the time to do it. The last couple of weeks he had been asking to go. So Father's Day morning I decided to pack up the truck and head to Ingham Lake. I knew storms had just been through and the wind was high so the likely hood of us catching something off the dock was fairly low.

We stood on the dock casting our poles for nearly three hours before giving up. We didn't catch a thing but it was fun watching him on the dock with a pole in his hand. I promised him we would go again in the next week. I made that promise before looking at the forecast. Now I am hoping some of these storms hold off so we can go fishing in the evening or in the morning this next weekend. He really wants to catch fish. The last couple times him and I have been fishing we had bad luck and didn't catch a single fish.

I really enjoyed that time with Hartley. Some day I will get that opportunity with Calvin. Had Cal been with, I would have had to have been jumping in the lake to either retrieve a pole or him. I love my little Calvin, or Rooster as we like to call him at home due to his early rising tendencies. He is a different breed though. Later in the day we decided to go to Grill and Chill to get some ice cream. While there we stopped and ate with Kurt and Luanne Bjorklund at their golf cart. After about ten minutes Calvin pulled his pants to his ankles while standing on the cart and started peeing on the parking lot.

Fortunately Richard and Phyllis McKean were parked on the side Cal was facing. So most people couldn't see. But the McKean and Bjorklunds got a kick out of that. That is how we potty trained him to be fair. He wasn't wanting to pee on the toilet at home but he would at daycare. So when it was time to go to the bathroom we would send him out the back door, only Jerry Ulrich's field would see, to go to the bathroom. I'm thinking he now thinks that going outside to pee is normal behavior. For most men it is, but not in a crowded parking lot. That's a lesson he can't understand at this age yet. Besides, we all laughed and so he laughed as well. Now I am sure he made a game of it. I wouldn't trade either of my boys for the world.

So far we have been able to get all of the little league games in, even with a couple of showers during some boys and girls games. With as much rain as we have gotten in 2024 I think we are lucky to get this many games in. Again, today's weather looks like a chance of rain. Hopefully we can skirt past the storms again and play. Please watch the Armstrong Little League Facebook page for timely updates. We will try to get as many games in as possible. Some may play and some may get canceled. Hopefully all games will be played again this week. Pork Patties are on the menu this week. We are hoping to have brisket sandwiches next week to end the year. Be sure to stop down. You're welcome to get food and leave but I would encourage you to stay and be entertained by the youth of the area.

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