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THE RED OAK Express

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'No secrets' is key to successful marriage, says Greshams

Tess Nelson
 The Red Oak Express

"Everybody said we were too young to get married. I remember the minister's wife even saying we were too young, and our marriage wouldn't last. We are still sticking together, and it'll be 65 years next month," said Katie (Yates) Gresham of Red Oak, reminiscing about her marriage to husband, Cecil more than six decades ago.

The two met when they were both involved in the Red Oak Civil Air Patrol as teens. She wasn't more than 14 and he, a Farragut native, had just learned to drive. Neither of them recalled their first meeting; just that they liked to be around one another.

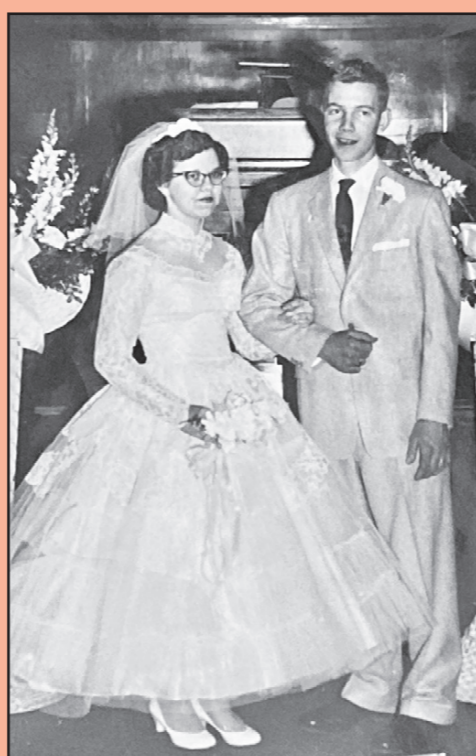
"He and his friend from Shenandoah would come to Red Oak. A friend of mine, Shirley, and I would go out with them; we weren't supposed to," Katie recalled. "One time Shirley and I were supposed to be at church, but we went riding around with the guys. I got home and my dad asked me where I had been. I told him, church. I have two little sisters who went to church. They came home and told my dad I wasn't at church. That was the only time I really ever remember getting in trouble. I never missed church anymore."

After a couple years of dating, Cecil proposed to Katie in his car on Thanksgiving Day, prior to going inside her grandmother's house. The proposal was a surprise, she said, but her answer came quickly.

"I said yes."
 She doesn't recall how much their wedding cost but added she often wonders about that, just out of curiosity.

"We had a nice, church wedding. I'm sure we didn't spend a lot on our wedding; my folks didn't have a lot of money," Katie said.

On March 24, the two wed at the Presbyterian Church in Red Oak. Katie was 17 and Cecil was 19.



Cecil and Katie Gresham have been married for 64 years. They are pictured above on their wedding day. (Photo provided)

"We had a huge snowstorm the day of our wedding. It rained in the morning and was snowing a little in the afternoon. By the time we came out of the church, all the roads were closed," Katie said. "Sixty-five years ago, they couldn't clear off roads like they can now. All the relatives that had come to town for the wedding couldn't go anywhere. My mom ended up having a house full; we couldn't go anywhere. It was awful."

Cecil took a job at the Murphy Calendar Company for 75 cents per hour. He would remain employed there for 44 years, pre-

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Cecil and Katie Gresham have been married for 64 years. They are pictured with a Murphy Calendar Company calendar from the year they were married. (Tess Nelson/Red Oak Express)



Bud and Bev Goddard share a kiss. The couple has been married 63 years. (Photo provided)

The story of us: Bud and Bev Goddard

Nick Johansen
 The Red Oak Express

Numerous couples in and around Montgomery County will be celebrating Valentine's Day Feb. 14. Among those Valentine's Day celebrants are a number of couples who have been married for more than 50 years, including John "Bud" and Bev Goddard, who have been married for more than 63 years, and will celebrate their 64th anniversary in June.

One of the special things about the Goddard's decades of marriage, Bud said, is the fact that the couple met in school.

"I first met Bev while we were in high school in Fulton, South Dakota, so I guess you could say we were high school sweethearts. The thing that stood out to me most about about Bev was that she was very confident," said Bud.

As for Bev, she said there were several things about Bud that made him stand out to her and made her fall in love with him as they were dating.

"Bud was tall, dark, and handsome, but most of all, he was very polite," Bev commented.

After graduating, Bud said it wasn't long before he popped the question and they became husband and wife.

"While Bev didn't go to college, I did go to South Dakota State University in Brookings for a year, and then Bev and I got married," commented Bud.

The Goddards were married June 2, 1958. The ceremony was a smaller affair, with few guests.

"It was a very small ceremony, just a justice of the peace and both of our parents. We didn't have the funds for a big wedding. My dad was a baker by trade, and a farmer. He made our wedding cake, and we had our wedding reception on the farm for immediate family," Bud explained.

Bev added that due to the size of the ceremony, there were some comments made about the potential longevity of their marriage.

"We were told it would never last, and here we are, still together 63 years later. The comments were made mainly because we weren't having a big wedding. But as Bud said, we just didn't have the money for a large wedding, and neither did our parents," Bev stated.

The Goddards lived in Montgomery County for a number of years, then moved to Florida for 14 years before returning to the Southwest Iowa area to be nearer to family. The couple currently resides



The Goddards enjoy a dance together. (Photo provided)

in Villisca, with a winter home in Punta Gorda, Florida, and overall, have lived in the area quite awhile.

"We moved from South Dakota on Thanksgiving Day in 1971. I was transferred here with Nachurs Plant Food Company to build and manage the fertilizer plant here in Red Oak. I was with Nachurs for about six years in Red Oak before we started our own fertilizer plant," Bud explained.

There are a number of things, Bud said, that have helped the couple grow and stay together for all these years.

"We have worked through all of our trials and tribulations, but also it comes down to us actually respecting each other," Bud said.

Bev agreed with Bud's comments, and said the couple has thrived through respect and patience.

Bud turned over the fertilizer business to his son in 1996, while still farming, and then he retired from

GODDARD, Page 2A



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Blomstedt announces Family YMCA retirement

Staff Report

Montgomery County Family YMCA Executive Director John Blomstedt will retire from the YMCA and conclude his 22-year career at the YMCA, effective April 1. Blomstedt has served as executive director the past four and one half years.

"I am extremely grateful for the opportunity that Nick Zimmer, my predecessor, and the YMCA's Program Committee gave me in February 2000 to become the full-time program director," Blomstedt said. "The



Blomstedt

past 22 years have seemed to fly by, and I cannot thank the YMCA staff, members, volunteers, donors, and program participants enough for their support over that time. I especially want to thank the YMCA's board of directors for their guidance in my role as executive director. It reminds me of what my son, J.C., said after I'd had the job for about six months - 'Dad, you've found your calling.'"

Blomstedt said he is most proud of seeing the YMCA through the COVID-19 pandemic, from the facility being forced to close to the gradual reopening of the facility, as one of his biggest accomplishments.

"Second, I would say is the involvement with Live Well Montgomery County in looking for better ways to serve the Montgomery County communities, such as the Mobile Food Pantry. The final thing I would say is still being called "Coach John" by youth that I coached during the various programs I oversaw as a program director/operations manager," said Blomstedt.

Upon retirement, John and



Shalters

his wife, Debra, who is retiring after 35 years as a Red Oak High School science teacher this spring, plan to remain in Red Oak.

"We're looking forward to doing some traveling and visiting relatives and friends across the United States. Maybe I'll be able to get to the 15 major league ball parks I haven't seen yet. Also, I'm sure we'll stay involved with the YMCA in some aspect while also continuing to volunteer with other community organizations," Blomstedt said.

Carrie Shalters will serve as the new Executive Director, effective April 2. Shalters currently serves

as Membership Director and Customer Service Manager at the Montgomery County Family YMCA, a position she has held since August 2017. She has more than 15 years of experience in small business management prior to signing on as Membership Director at the Montgomery County Family YMCA.

"I am grateful for the opportunity the Montgomery County Family YMCA Board of Directors has given me to lead an organization that is so important to Red Oak and Montgomery County. I am thankful for John Blomstedt giving me the opportunity as Membership Director and for mentoring me through the process of becoming Executive Director," said Carrie Shalters. "The Montgomery County Family YMCA has been an important part of my life for the last 15 years, beginning as a fitness instructor and lifeguard and most recently in my role as the Membership Director for the past four-and-a-half years. I am excited to continue working with the wonderful staff, board of directors, members, volun-

teers and donors and to lead the YMCA into the future."

Shalters received her Bachelor of Science degree from Bellevue University in 2013. She has also run her own medical transcription business for the past three years and prior to that worked with her husband in run-

ning his heating and air conditioning business. Carrie graduated from Griswold Community High School and lives in Red Oak with her husband, Larry. The couple has two children, Hannah and Andrew.

Courthouse bell rings once again

Nick Johansen
The Red Oak Express

The Montgomery County courthouse clock tower has been given new life.

For several years, the clock tower remained silent, as the cost for repairs to the bell striker to make it functional were outside of the county's budget. In September of 2021, Lois Pratt with the Monday Club made the offer to the supervisors to pay for the entire cost of the repairs through their organization.

Also in September, the supervisors approved a bid from Americlock, Inc. of St. Louis, Mo., for the replacement of the hardware at \$4,200, and \$2,700 for labor.

Maintenance supervisor Dan Wright met with the supervisors at its Feb. 1, meeting and advised them that the work on the bell striker had finally been completed.

"The clock now strikes on the hour from seven in the morning to seven in the evening, but the times can be adjusted," Wright said. While that portion of the project was in the books, Wright said Americlock was intending to get him new quotes for other work.

"While they were up there, they told me that the clock that we have up there is kind of on its last legs. They are going to get me some prices on restoring it, and a quote on a centralized automatic master clock," commented Wright.

The centralized automatic master, Wright explained, would make certain things easier in the long run.

"We could do everything from the ground level. We wouldn't even have to go up there and change the clock, it would all be run from the computer," Wright stated.

Supervisor Randy Cooper, who coordinated the initial Monday Club investment for replacing the bell striker, said there might be more funding available.

"I talked with Lois Pratt about the clock, and they said if anything else came up, she said to contact them, so I think they would be willing to further help us out," Cooper advised.

Cooper also said he'd heard praise for Wright's ability to find a new motor for the clock, as the company that did the repairs had been unable to locate one themselves.

Supervisor Donna Robinson confirmed that the clock striking between 7 a.m. and p.m. was the way it was set, and could be reprogrammed. Wright said it could be, if needed.

"Inside, there's a little mini-computer. You can change it to strike



After several years of silence, the bell at the Montgomery County Courthouse is sounding again. (File photo)

if there was a funeral, and there are all sorts of different settings for it. I also demonstrated the settings for our IT director, Jim Scott, so Jim also knows how to program it," Wright explained.

Due to the wintertime being darker, Robinson said she understood the need for the clock to cease chiming at 7 p.m., but felt that maybe in the warmer months the clock could be reprogrammed to strike from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Wright said all the supervisors needed to do was let him know the different time for the clock to chime, and it could be changed at any time.

GRESHAM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

ty much until the doors closed. He then worked at Pamida and Shopko for an additional 18 years. The couple had three boys, Dennis, Gary, and Roger, who died in a car accident when he was 17.

"We grew up with our kids," Katie said. "We did a lot of camping and fishing."

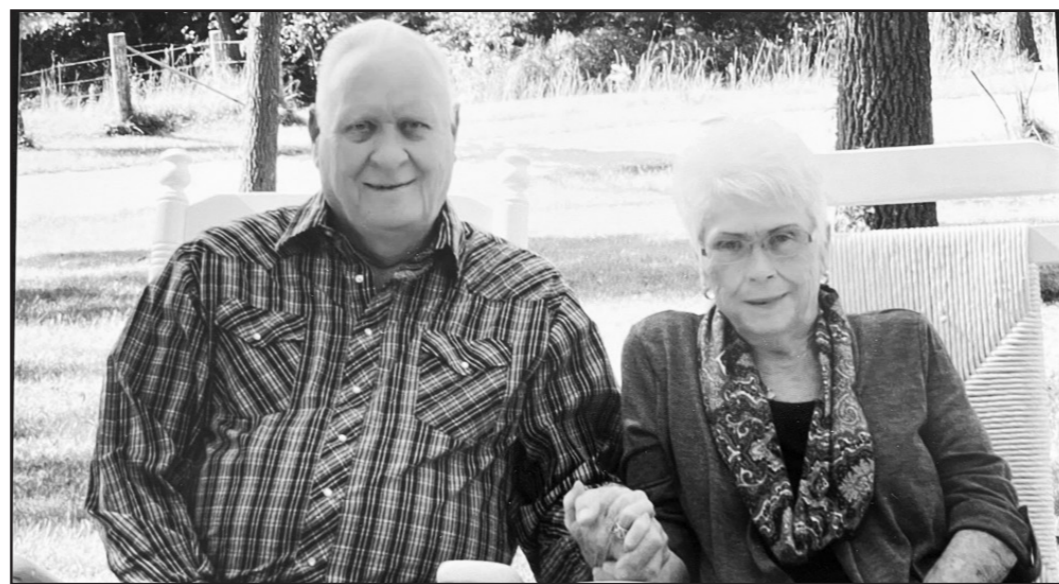
When it comes to marriage advice, the Greshams agree communication is key.

"Be honest. No secrets. You also have to work together," Katie said. "There will be good and there will be bad, but you go through it, together."

The duo has done quite a bit of traveling of their lifetime together. They have been to 48 states, with the exception of North Dakota and Michigan. Their favorite place to have visited was Alaska.

"We are spontaneous. We aren't planners," Katie said. "Looking back, we are so thankful we traveled when we could."

In addition to two sons, the couple has nine grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.



Bud and Bev Goddard will celebrate 64 years of marriage this summer. (Photo provided)

GODDARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

he turned 80. The couple has three children, Randy, who is married to Denise, who lives in Red Oak; Deb and her husband Mike Hover, who live west of Fort Dodge; and Pam, who married Todd Hansen and who lives west of Minneapolis, Minn. The Goddards also have 11 grandchildren, and 22 great-grandchildren, with another on the way.

Bud and Bev's favorite aspects of their marriage might

be surprising to some. "There are a lot of happy memories, but hunting, camping, and dancing are probably the things that we've most enjoyed," Bud explained.

After being married for 63 years, Bud had some advice for new couples who are just starting out.

"My advice to them would be to work hard and do your best; it's that simple," Bud commented.

Bev also had some advice for couples who are just beginning their marital journey.

"Always put your cards on the table, the good, and the bad, and see what falls halfway in-between, right or wrong," Bev advised.

After being together for so many years, Bud said he and Bev are looking forward to many more.

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Adams updates supervisors on MCDC happenings

Nick Johansen
The Red Oak Express

The Montgomery County Development Corporation is sharing some of the big things happening in the county. At a recent meeting of the Montgomery County Board of Supervisors, MCDC Board President Ann Carder and MCDC executive director Steve Adams expressed their appreciation to the supervisors for allowing two supervisors to also serve on the MCDC Board, stating it was important to have their input. Carder said she was also grateful for the financial support.

Carder said the reason for the visit was to give the supervisors an update on what what recently been going on in the county.

"I know you get quick summaries from Randy Cooper and Mike Olson, who serve on our board, but we felt you might like something more detailed, as we have some great things going on," Carder said.

Adams said he had conversed with Carder about his optimism going forward, and Adams said he expected great things.

"I told her I'm not just blowing smoke, I really think that 2022 is going to be a really big year for us. Since I took over in late April, and officially started in July, we've had seven small business consults, and we've had two new businesses start, one new business acquisition, and two business relocations, though I don't take the credit for all of that," Adams explained.

Adams also shared an update on the vacant K-Mart building, which has remained unoccupied for quite some time.

"We did have four business leads, and they were all willing to take a look at the building and engage in multiple tours. The building's owner has also made several improvements to the building, waterline work, and work to the parking lot," Adams advised. "We still have one very active prospect on that building, and I am hoping to know in

the next few weeks whether they want to move forward. They don't want to use the whole building, just the back portion of it."

If that proceeds, Adams said the retail frontage would still be available, and they had a prospect for that as well.

"We had actually been recruiting one retailer who was very interested in the space, but they said, quite honestly, it was too big, and they only wanted half of it also. So depending on what happens with this prospect, we may go back and revisit that other retail prospect to see if they wish to use the retail frontage," commented Adams.

Adams also said there were two new housing developers that had been invited to Red Oak, and had toured the town. Also, MCDC recently was approved to receive a Rural Housing Readiness Assessment grant, which would provide \$10,000 towards a housing assessment in the community.

Interest had also been expressed in the purchase of the vacant Bancroft and Webster buildings.

"We've had six meetings, lots of tours of the building, and a DNR representative came down to talk to us about asbestos abatement, removal, and remediation, and the DNR will be working with us moving forward on those two properties. We've had developers tour the buildings, and we've got some real good opportunities. I think in 2022 we'll see some very significant progress there," said Adams.

Adams also said there were two industries that were looking at possible expansions, which he said was very good news.

"Both these businesses came to me a few weeks after I started, and after having done this for more than 30 years, the normal average is one every two to three years. The fact that I had two approach me in a matter of a few weeks is unheard of," Adams stated. "These expansions will start in 2022 and run into 2024, so they won't happen immediately, but we're looking at 80,000 square feet in new construction between both businesses, and the total of the projects



Adams

will be \$10 million to \$12 million, with the potential of up to \$30 million in reinvestment, and it will also create 50 new jobs."

Adams also shared the results of the latest business retention and expansion surveys, and said all shared similar priorities.

"Their top priorities are labor, which we can't find, supply chain issues, a lack of available and affordable housing, which is preventing employees from coming into the county. Three of the manufacturers said they are also looking at continuous shift manufacturing this year, and they are concerned about having overnight child care available. That's just more or less a heads-up, but I

feel we need to be on the front side of it, rather than the back side," Adams said.

Adams said so far he's been involved in 1,300 calls, emails, and text messages since he started the job, and doesn't seem to run out of people to talk to.

"I'm super optimistic about where we are moving forward, and I think there are some wonderful opportunities with business expansions and housing," Adams commented.

Carder closed the presentation with her appreciation for being allowed to speak before the supervisors, and said that she and Adams were always available if the supervisors had further questions.

Supervisors begin steps to finalize 2022-23 fiscal year budget

Nick Johansen
The Red Oak Express

The Montgomery County Board of Supervisors is preparing to finalize the upcoming 2022-23 fiscal year budget.

At the regular Montgomery County Board of Supervisors meeting Feb. 1, one of the action items on the agenda was overall budget discussions with all departments, and to set additional budget work sessions, if necessary.

County Auditor Stephanie Burke said the overall budget worked up thus far had been submitted for approval by the supervisors.

"I made the suggested changes and I have submitted everything for your review, and so it's in your hands now. If you want to schedule any additional budget work sessions, you'll need to do it soon," Burke advised.

However, Burke said that if the supervisors were satisfied with the levy rates, and department expenses and revenue, she simply needed the green light to move forward.

Supervisor Donna Robinson asked Supervisor's Chair Mark Peterson and Supervisor Mike Olson, who were attending the meeting through Zoom, whether they had any issues with the current budget as proposed. Olson said he had no complaints.

"I have looked at the proposal. I don't think there's anything else we can change; if there is, I haven't seen anything," Olson said.

Supervisors Chair Mark Peterson was in agreement that he saw no issues with the budget pro-



Montgomery County Supervisors Randy Cooper and Charla Schmid at the Feb. 1 meeting. (Nick Johansen/Red Oak Express)

posal.

Supervisor Charla Schmid said she hadn't had time to look at the proposal completely, but she would agree with what the majority decided, and would finish reviewing the proposal.

Robinson asked if all of the proposed changes discussed at the final work session had been

included, and Burke confirmed that all the changes had been made. The majority of the changes had to do with salary increases.

Schmid asked if they did not schedule another budget meeting, if it meant the proposal was being accepted. Burke said if the supervisors were satisfied, there were additional steps she would proceed

with.

"Basically, I would go into the Department of Management and plug in everything. And we have some time. If something were to drastically change, it can be changed. A public hearing will be set to approve the maximum property tax dollars levied, and then we would set another public hearing for the budget itself in March.

Robinson explained the maximum property tax dollars levied was simply the maximum the county could spend, it did not mean the county would.

"We didn't use to have this step, but a few years ago, in some of the larger counties, their levy saw a 10% or even a 14% increase with very little input from the public on those changes," Robinson explained. "The Iowa Legislature came back and said all the counties needed to do this extra step so the public could review the changes, and voice their opinions, before finalizing their budgets."

Based on the comments, Robinson said it appeared that no further work sessions were necessary, and that the supervisors were comfortable with the budget where it was at.

"I feel we put a lot of time into this, and putting it together, and reviewed all the numbers submitted by all the different departments," stated Robinson.

The supervisors agreed that no further budget work sessions were needed at this time.

The final action item was to set the public hearing date of Feb. 22 at 8:45 a.m. for the FY 2022-23 total maximum property tax dollars levied. The supervisors approved that public hearing date and time.

BBB warns of fake COVID tests and face masks

As the U.S. government begins distributing COVID tests and face masks, Americans can be assured of the return of an old scammer trick: crooks masking themselves as official websites.

"They've done it repeatedly with other government agencies and programs, from Social Security to Medicare to the IRS. Your Better Business Bureau (BBB) warns new initiatives such as the recently announced programs to give out free COVID tests and facemasks will bring masquerading scammers out yet again. Their goal is the acquisition of your private information to steal your identity and your money.

"It's disgusting that these bad actors continue to leverage this worldwide crisis for their own economic gain," said BBB President and CEO Jim Hegarty. "Unfortunately, scams have grown in frequency throughout the pandemic, so we're doing our utmost to urge consumers to be cautious."

When you do an online search or respond to an ad regarding free tests or facemasks, you could find yourself directed to a website that looks official. Scammers may have duplicated the look—complete with graphics and logos—of a real government website. There will be a link that you are urged to click on to request your own test or facemask.

Clicking on the link could take you to a form that requests a Social Security number or Medicare ID. It may also want you to submit a credit card num-



ber to "pay for shipping." The real page, however, will not ask for such information. This is a sign of a scam.

The operational details of the distribution of the N95 facemasks are still being developed. Early reporting indicates the masks will be available three-to-a-person at pharmacies and community health centers. There is not yet an indication of distribution through the mail. The program is expected to be in operation by early February.

Tests, however, will be mailed out to those who go to covidtest.gov, or to special.usps.com/test kits, and request them. The current plan is four free tests per household. If a household needs more than four and has private insurance, they can either have the insurance provider pay for them at the time of purchase or get reimbursed by submitting a claim to the insurer. You may get up to eight tests per covered individual per month from private insurers.

Here are BBB's tips for checking the legitimacy of a website:

- Domain name—Scammers choose domain names as close to the real thing as possible. They may swap two letters or use a slight misspelling. So read carefully for the exact, correct spelling.

- Tricky subdomains—Look at the spelling of the subdomain name. A favorite trick of scammers is to use a different one (from the legitimate one) in hopes you will not notice.

- Only your name and address are requested by the real websites. The government program is free and requires no payment from you, even for shipping. No insurance details or Social Security numbers are required.

Take advantage of the new free test and mask programs from the government but be smart about the process. Don't fall into the traps that are certainly going to be set by scammers trying to rip you off. For more answers to questions, you may about the free test and mask initiatives, call BBB at (800) 856-2417 or visit the website at BBB.org.

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Education a key focus of discussion of first legislative coffee of 2022

Nick Johansen
The Red Oak Express

Around 25 area residents attended the first legislative coffee event of the year at the Montgomery County Family YMCA Saturday, Feb. 5.

State Sen. Mark Costello and State Rep. David Sieck were both in attendance, and announced this year would be their last for legislative coffees in Montgomery County, as both would no longer serve the county in 2023, due to redistricting.

The event included a lengthy question and answer session, which focused heavily on education. In his opening remarks, Costello said supplemental state aid was being considered at either 2.5% or 3% for the upcoming year.

Red Oak Superintendent Ron Lorenz questioned whether that number was accurate, as the information he had been presented was different.

"The governor did indeed propose a 2.5% increase, the Iowa Senate proposed a 2.25% increase, and the Iowa House proposed a 2.5% increase. So I'm trying to find where 3% is in this, because it sounds more like its going to be between 2.25% and 2.5%," Lorenz said.

Costello said he was going by information from last week, and wasn't aware the House had proposed a 2.5% increase.

Lorenz further stated he was looking for help from the two lawmakers, because 2.5% wasn't enough.

"A few years ago, the legislature changed collective bargaining, so our settlements for our teachers [have] to be the lesser of the Consumer Price Index, or 3%. This year, the CPI is moving towards 7%, so we are going to have to settle at 3% with our teachers, by law," advised Lorenz. "You're going to give us, at best, 2.5% in supplement-

tal state aid. That's been the trend, and I can't do that math. And that's just for this year, that doesn't cover the lowball numbers we've gotten from the years before. I just don't understand how that's sustainable."

Sieck said part of the reasoning for the 2.5% number was due to COVID-19 relief funds.

"Iowa schools, right now, are sitting on \$786 million. And while the uses are limited, it can be used in certain instances which would allow schools to shift the money around. Also, we're proposing an extra \$20 million that will be available as part of supplemental state aid, but it won't be built into the aid every year. It's to supplement for some of the extra costs this year due to inflation," Sieck explained.

Lorenz said the Omnibus Education bill, and vouchers were among the things that were adding to the stress of teachers, and the district itself, and was driving teachers to leave the education field.

"There are all sorts of requirements being imposed that I have no idea how I can possibly input if they're passed," Lorenz stated.

Costello wasn't clear how vouchers were affecting local schools. Lorenz said it had to do with the shifting of public school money to private schools.

"You're taking the big pot of money and telling the taxpayers that you're giving money to private schools that don't have the same requirements or rules as public schools," commented Lorenz.

Costello replied that so far, that funding hadn't been taken yet, and the public schools were getting funding alternatives.

"You're going to get extra money from the Rural School Fund, and not all districts are going to lose money for private schools," Costello advised.

Lorenz disagreed, and said



State Sen. Mark Costello, left, and State Rep. David Sieck listen to comments from Red Oak superintendent Ron Lorenz during the legislative coffee Feb. 5. (Nick Johansen/The Red Oak Express)

the Rural School fund only applied to districts that were 500 students or less.

"We talk about these programs, and try to say they're innocuous things, but when you start getting into the details, that's going to hurt Red Oak, and Shenandoah, and Clarinda, because you're taking the money allocated for public schools and decreasing that by sending it to private schools," Lorenz said.

Costello countered that districts that had no students moving to private schools would not be affected. Lorenz disagreed.

"If you have \$100 million dollars divided by 100 schools, just to do easy math, and then you add 50 private schools and start dividing that amount by 150 schools, that decreases the amount," Lorenz commented.

Sieck said his understanding was that the private school funding would be split in bigger towns that don't have education opportunities, and in his district, there were no parochial schools at all.

"My understanding is, if the pot of money that the Iowa gives the school is \$5,000 per student, \$2,200 would follow that kid wherever he goes, but the school will get the rest of that \$5,000, even though the kid is no longer going to the school. This is just a rough number, and we're not gutting the community schools,

and I'll only support the bill if it's not going to hurt our public schools," Sieck explained.

Lorenz said there was one important thing he wanted both Sieck and Costello to do before they signed the bill over vouchers.

"Look at this bill critically, before you sign off on party lines. Talk to your colleagues about this, and the devil's in the details," stated Lorenz.

Lorenz added he would also welcome the opportunity to sit down with Costello and review the bill and discuss it with him.

Costello asked for clarification about what restrictions were

being put on districts that were causing stress.

Lorenz brought up legislation involving "transparency and state standards."

"Districts must post all curriculum and syllabus on the district's website, materials sorted by grade, the titles of all textbooks, books, and other instructional materials, cameras in the classrooms, and I'm not even talking about Sen. Jake Chapman

mouthed off about a sinister conspiracy, and that teachers are intentionally promoting pornography," Lorenz said. "You're talking about a couple of districts in Des Moines that may have a problem, so deal with those districts, don't task these ridiculous things that apply to every district. Why don't we trust boards to implement policies that are right for their community, rather than the legislature dictating these things to us? I just feel like we have a lot of representatives in Des Moines that don't have a clue what goes on here."

Sieck made it clear that there has to be a threshold vote to get things through.

"All these things being proposed have not been vetted or gone through both chambers, and will probably never happen," said Sieck.

The next legislative coffee will be at 8 a.m. on March 5, at the YMCA in Red Oak.

New fiber possibility for the City of Red Oak

Nick Johansen
The Red Oak Express

Farmers Mutual Telephone Company CEO Kevin Cabbage now believes there's a strong chance to bring high speed fiber optic broadband service from FMTC to the Red Oak community at no cost to the city.

Speaking before the Red Oak City Council during its regular meeting Monday night, Cabbage said the business plan was to bring fiber to the premises, with a goal of consumer broadband affordability, and due to the sometimes long turnaround in fiber investment recovery, FMTC seeks funding opportunities from the local, state, or federal level.

To date, FMTC has applied for, and been the recipient of, two USDA Reconnect awards.

"In round one, there was \$650 million available, and to be eligible you had to be in an area that had worse than 10 mg down and one mg up internet connection. If anyone had more than that, they were considered served, and ineligible for funding," explained Cabbage.

Cabbage said rural areas of Red Oak were deemed eligible, and they received a \$6.5 million award that was 50% grant and 50% loan.

The second round was a \$4.8 million award for rural Clarinda and Bedford that FMTC received, and work was underway in those communities for fiber optic internet as well.

Cabbage said the reason for his Red Oak Council visit was that the community was now a potential candidate to receive USDA Reconnect funding.

"Applications are due Feb. 22, and what's different with this round is that there is a scoring mechanism against other applications," Cabbage said. "Among the scoring mechanisms are rurality, affordability, net neutrality, and wholesale services. We think that we will score very highly in those areas. Also, the criteria now is 100 mg down and 20 mg up, which does make



FMTC CEO Kevin Cabbage discusses new potential for fiber in Red Oak during the regular city council meeting Feb. 7. (Nick Johansen/The Red Oak Express)

the City of Red Oak eligible for the program. We feel we have a good opportunity to receive this funding."

Cabbage outlined the amount of funding they'd be seeking for the Red Oak Community for fiber optics.

"We've outlined 2,894 houses and business that we could connect up to, and about 54 miles of fiber is what we'd be putting in the ground, and we'd be looking at a cost of \$14.7 million," Cabbage explained.

The application was limited to one, at a total of \$50 million, and they were also applying for funding for projects in Clarinda, Bedford, and Gravity, at a total cost of nearly \$37 million.

"The risk here is that there is only \$250 million available, and our application is nearly 15% of that. But we feel we have a good opportunity of securing that, and I'm not sure when the next time will be for us to apply for this amount of funding. But I'm making it clear, we are taking a risk," commented Cabbage.

Another reason for Cabbage's visit was to determine whether the city would assist in overages.

"By the time we get the funding and get these things out for bid, we're looking at a cost increase of 10% to 15%, and while we could build that into the application, we're putting further risk on the acceptance of the application, so my question

to the council to consider is, if we were awarded the grant, and the bids came over at 5%, would the city help us with the overage amount so we can keep the project going. That's not an answer we're seeking now, and hopefully that is not the case, because it's always been our goal to get this accomplished without seeking money from anywhere else," Cabbage stated.

Even if awarded, construction and would not begin until at least 2023.

No action was taken by the council at the meeting, and Cabbage's presentation was for information only.

RED OAK GRAND THEATRE

THIS WEEK'S MOVIES

FEBRUARY 11-12

FEB. 12 @ 2 pm

SPECIAL MATINEE

THEATRE #1 capacity is 182

SING 2

Can the all star cast prepare to launch a huge show? One problem-they have to find and persuade a huge rock star to join them. Rated-PG

THEATRE #2 capacity is 107

AMERICAN UNDER DOG

The true story of Kurt Warner who over comes years of setbacks to become a champion. **FREE MOVIE** sponsored by the Crossroads Community Church. Rated-PG

FEB. 13 SPECIAL SHOWING

OF THE BIG GAME!

NO REGULAR MOVIE SHOWING FEB. 13

SHOWTIMES

FRI, SAT & SUN 7 PM

SUN MATINEE 2 PM

ALL TICKETS \$2.00

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315 E. Reed St., Red Oak | 712-623-2290

STOP IN WED. FEB 9TH

Galentines Night

Merchandise Specials

Thursday Feb. 10 @ 7 PM

FREE Red Oak Grand Theatre

VALENTINES DAY Cards & Gifts!

Surprise Your Sweetie!

Special Delivery Roller-Skating Pup

Feel all that EXTRA LOVE?

Essex Community School

OPEN HOUSE!

Thursday, February 17

5:00 PM-7:00 PM

All SW Iowa invited to attend!

US News & World Report
Best Elementary School 2022!

Southwest Iowa Reader's Choice
Best High School 2021!

Makerspace Showcase:

- CNC Laser Engraver
- Vinyl & 3D Printing
- Survival/Fishing
- Digital Green Screen

Create Code to Solve Puzzles

- Construction & CNA Programs
- Farm School
- SCUBA Club
- Fine Arts Display

Free Pasta Meal Served!

Win a gift card or Johnson Locker Meat Bundle drawing at 6:30!

SPORTS BETTING PROBLEM?

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