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Cindy Johns returns to Eldora Council

BY JOE BENEDICT | jbenedict@iafalls.com

On Tuesday the newest members of the Eldora City Council, Aaron Budweg and Greg Priske, along with new Mayor Dave Dunn, participated in their first meeting of the year. There were only four Council members to start the meeting. One seat has been empty since Dave Mitchell was hired as city administrator and resigned his Council seat late last year.

The first order of business Tuesday was to fill that seat. When Mitchell resigned, Dunn said, there wasn't enough time to get the seat on the ballot or to ask additional candidates to turn in nomination papers for it.



Johns

The Council could have called for a special election, which is what Budweg would have preferred. He made a motion to hold a special election to fill the seat. The motion died when no one on the Council seconded it.

Council Member Melody Hoy then made a motion that former Council member Cindy Johns be appointed to the empty seat. Priske seconded the motion.

"It seems logical, as Cindy was the next highest vote getter," Dunn said.

Council member Bob Johns agreed. He said even though Johns didn't win the seat on election night, if the seat had been on the ballot, she would be the winner. Johns, who was running for re-election, came in third with 280 votes, behind Priske with 291 and Budweg with 410.

Hoy said she thinks the system works best when they have a full five-member council. Waiting for a special election pushes back when the council would be whole again.

The vote passed three votes to one, with Budweg voting no.

Dunn asked Mitchell if Johns could be sworn in immediately. At first, Mitchell said that could be done shortly, but the rest of the Council asked why she couldn't be sworn in then and take her seat for the rest of the meeting. Mitchell administered the oath of office to Johns and she took her seat with the Council.

The public can still call for a special election by petitioning the city. A petition has to have signatures totaling at least 10 percent of the number of people who voted in the last regular city election, but not less than 10 signatures. There were 623 votes cast in the 2017 city election in Eldora, meaning at least 62 people would have to sign a petition to have a special election. ■

Boards' message to sups: Calkins is vital resource

Granzow requests information about nature area

BY JUSTIN ITES | ites@iafalls.com

As the challenge of managing a county budget grows, the Hardin County Board of Supervisors reached out this week to several area boards to discuss Calkins Nature Area. The supervisors said they want to get a clearer picture of those groups' contributions to Calkins, which is a popular Hardin County attraction.

The supervisors participated in a joint meeting Tuesday with members of the boards of Hardin County Conservation, Friends of Calkins, the Ellsworth Community College Foundation and the Ellsworth College Trustees.

Jim Gillespie - a member of both the ECC Board of Trustees and Friends of Calkins boards - led the group of 30-plus attendees through the meeting.

The people who spoke focused on a theme: Calkins Nature Area is too valuable a county asset to consider reducing the funding it gets from the county.

Calkins Interpretive Park Manager Chris Barber said he's amazed by the facility's growth in the last five years.

"We've added 1,500 square feet to our museum," Barber said. "That was to accommodate the collection many of you have heard about: Native American and natural history artifacts. That was a half-million-dollar project when you calculate in the addition to building, obtaining the collection and donation, having it appraised, having the state archaeologist catalogue and inventory everything and installing the new educational exhibits. I'm proud to say we've been able to raise funds for that. And other than staff time, there's no public funds or taxpayer dollars that have gone into that project."

Barber added that while county funding pays Calkins' employees, who take on day-to-day operations, grants and donations from individuals and community organizations (like Friends of Calkins) provide educational opportunities for the public.

Over the past year, Calkins Interpretive Assistant Davis Horton has provided more than 100 educational programs for area schools and community groups.

Gillespie asked Supervisor



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Calkins Nature Area staff offer free educational programming throughout the year. That includes an annual butterfly-tagging event in September. The staff also visit area schools to speak about the butterfly migration.



Fundraisers like the Bluegrass and Barbecue event (pictured above), which was hosted by Friends of Calkins, raise money for the facility.



In recent years, Calkins staff and volunteers (pictured above) have been preparing to expand the museum's display of artifacts.

Lance Granzow what the supervisors hoped to accomplish with Tuesday's meeting.

"I would like to do this annually, if we could," Granzow said. "I'm really impressed with the turnout. I want to know more about what everyone else contributes as well. From our side, dealing with Wes (Wiese, conservation director) and the budget. We put a lot of money in, and increases are catching us fast. As budgets increase every year we are looking for more support elsewhere

and what we can do to make this thing bigger and support itself.

"We just did an increase in wages (of \$26,000) just in this place alone," Granzow added, referring to a pay increase for the employees at Calkins Nature Area. The increases were approved by the supervisors after a job study revealed that 12 county employees - five of whom work in the Conservation Department - were being under-compensated for the jobs they were doing.

CALKINS ... P2

Hardin County hit hard by the flu this year

BY SARA KONRAD BARANOWSKI | skonrad@iafalls.com

Health officials have a warning for the public: beware influenza this year. The illness - often called the flu (not to be confused with intestinal flu) - is making people sick this winter. And it's happening earlier than past years, and in greater numbers.

Last week, Hansen Family Hospital announced that it was implementing a Level Two Visitation Policy. The level is determined by the percent of influenza tests that come back positive. It restricts who can visit the hospital to minimize hospital patients' exposure to people who may have influenza.

Jill Schafer, the hospital's inpatient director who is also in charge of infection control, said last week that on Tuesday, Jan. 2, the HFH emergency department and the Iowa Falls Clinic administered 17 influenza tests, and 13 came back positive. By this week, those numbers had grown. On Tuesday, the hospital advanced to a Level Three Visitation Policy.

"They said this year was going to be bad and I believe it now," said Schafer.

In total, the hospital has tested 84 people for influenza since Jan. 1. Of those, 49 tests have been positive for either Influenza A or Influenza B. But while the number of people who've tested positive for influenza is high, Schafer said none of the hospital's inpatients have been confirmed to have influenza (although Schafer reported one possible case this week). And the Level Three Visitation Policy aims to keep it that way.

The hospital has never been at a Level Three Visitation Policy, so it requires education of the public. The following restrictions are now in place:

- Patients in the OB department can only



SARA KONRAD BARANOWSKI/TIMES CITIZEN

Last week, Hansen Family Hospital implemented a Level Two Visitation Policy due to the number of positive influenza tests in the emergency department and clinic. This week, it moved up to a Level Three Visitation Policy - a first for the hospital.

be visited by a significant other (no grandparents or siblings). If there is no significant other, one person can accompany the mother.

- Patients seeking treatment in the emergency room are asked to take just one person with them.
 - Hospital visitors who have respiratory or influenza-like symptoms are restricted, and only significant others/parents of patients are allowed in the hospital.
 - Visitors under the age of 18 cannot enter the hospital.
- Schafer said patients of all ages are still

able to seek treatment in the Iowa Falls Clinic, which is located inside the front door of the hospital. The visitor restrictions are in place for the hospital, including departments like inpatient, OB and emergency services.

"We don't want the flu in the inpatient department," Schafer said.

Statewide, six influenza deaths had been reported as of last week, and the Iowa Department of Public Health is advising hand-washing and other precautions to prevent the spread of the illness. The flu vaccine is also still available, and while it may not be 100 percent effective in preventing influenza,

Flu Shots

The flu shot, while not 100 percent effective in preventing influenza, can reduce the severity of the illness. The flu shot can be obtained from several places in Hardin County, including the following:

- Ackley Medical Center:** 641-847-2625
- Greenbelt Home Care (in-home shots are available):** 641-939-8444
- Iowa Falls Clinic:** 641-648-7100
- McFarland Clinic:** 641-648-2586 in Iowa Falls; 641-939-7160 in Eldora

Schafer said it can make a difference in the severity of illness if a person gets influenza.

If you are feeling ill and experiencing symptoms of influenza - a fever, stuffy nose, cough and body aches - call a doctor's office to speak with a nurse or to make an appointment to be seen. Schafer said the hospital's phone nurse can advise patients who have questions about their symptoms.

And, she said, be vigilant about preventative measures.

"Wash your hands and cover your cough," Schafer advised. "I don't think we've peaked yet." ■