

FIELD

Continued from page 1

director Todd Heck suggested there were problems when the board discussed the proposed agreement. “The athletic field is not where we want it to be,” Zuniga said.

Zuniga said she had talked with the school’s attorney earlier in the day and indicated a key requirement for the district was to develop a scope of work for the company.

Heck agreed and distributed copies of a contractor registration form and a scope of work document he suggested needed to be incorporated into any agreement.

The packet included reasons why a scope of work is essential and a template of a scope of work for Iowa school districts. A scope of work aims to:

- Establish clear expectations,
- Promote accountability and efficiency,
- Provide legal protection,
- Ensure quality and success and
- Manage resources effectively

Following the meeting, Heck provided copies of Krafka’s previous quotes. According to those quotes and previous reports, the board approved a \$50,000 laser grade and seeding project at its April 28 meeting and a \$70,000 irrigation system proposal at a March 24 meeting with the company.

Prior to those approvals, the board had also accepted a \$76,500 engineering agreement with Beck Engineering, Inc., of Spirit Lake and a \$352,333 bid from Triple B Construction of Wilton for drainage, excavation, fencing and related work on the field.

According to the information Heck provided, the total project costs now total \$558,281. If the board eventually approves the \$80,000 maintenance proposal from Krafka, the total cost will increase to \$638,281.

In other action

- The board approved several hires and resignations. Among the new hires were Hannah DeWolf, mentor teacher; Tom McGehearty, mentor teacher; Tamela Olson-Riley, long-term ESL sub; Tammy Blakley, L2 Special Education

(SPED) high school associate; and Merari Lagunas, Jumpstart associate.

- Resignations accepted were Wendy Watson, Building Leadership Team member and mentor teacher; Nicole Kitchen, mentor teacher; and Michelle Tolub, mentor teacher.
- The board also accepted a \$53,027 bid from Mincer Ford of Columbus Junction for a 2026 Ford F250 pickup with snow blade. Phillips indicated that, with the vehicle purchase, he and other school staff should be able to handle most snow removal, although he did acknowledge that outside help might be needed for large storms.
- The board also approved the first reading of several updated board policies.
- Three out-of-state travel requests were also approved. These included a request from the FFA to attend its national convention in Indianapolis, IN from Oct. 28 to Nov. 1; another from the Family Consumer Science and Work-Based Learning to go to Moline, Illinois, for Junior Achievement on Dec. 16; and a third from the Special Education Strat 2 program to travel to Rock Island, Illinois, on Dec. 14 to attend a Circa 21 Dinner Playhouse presentation of “White Christmas.”
- The board also agreed to provide influenza shots for staff and to pay for any not covered by insurance.
- A \$155,464 allowable growth and supplement aid request to the School Budget Review Committee to cover the district’s negative special education balance from the previous year was also approved by the board.
- The board also welcomed newly appointed member Darin Mapel, who took his oath of office on Sept. 2.
- The administrative staff also provided updates either in person or through a written report.

In his written report, activity director Michael Aragon reported Homecoming was shaping up to be a success. He said broad community partnerships were helping to make a memorable event.

In her report, director of learning Liz Goodwin said the district’s Professional Learning Communities were active, with

team focusing on prioritizing standards, aligning assessments and planning interventions.

While Phillips had already provided some updates on buildings and grounds, he also reported that a backlog of work orders had been significantly reduced. He told the board the transportation and nutrition services had been operating well and said technology upgrades were being continued.

Elementary principal Cassie Stewart said there had been a strong start to school at Roundy. She also reported new and renewed efforts to meet the student needs; and using fall testing assessments to plan interventions.

A similar focus on testing, assessments and intervention is happening at the secondary level, principal Paul Kissell said. The K-12 evaluation cycles have been streamlined; and attendance policies have been updated to meet new state standards, he said.

In his report, Superintendent Michael Volk said a structural assessment of the middle school had recently been completed by Raker Rhodes Engineering and a comprehensive report would be issued in the coming weeks. He also highlighted the work of the District Leadership Team, which is establishing clear goals, norms and professional development priorities.

- In final action, the board met with teacher Tessa Pugh, Louisa County Conservation Board Naturalist Lana Artz-McComb and Sam Hollingsworth of Prairie Roots Landscaping in Burlington, to discuss a proposal to transform the high school courtyard into an ecologically beneficial garden space.

According to the group’s proposal, a footpath and outdoor classroom with space to seat up to 20 students would be constructed in the area, which would be planted to a variety of prairie plants and other vegetation.

The proposal cost of \$45,714 will hopefully be covered by volunteer labor, funding assistance from the Louisa County Soil and Water Commission and grants, the three explained.

The board did not take any action on the proposal.

Survey: Iowa pheasant population at 20-year high

CONTRIBUTED REPORT
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Iowa’s statewide pheasant population is at a 20-year high, and state wildlife experts are forecasting a banner year for hunters.

“The mild winter really put us over the top this year,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “Our adult hen survival was excellent; our adult rooster survival was excellent. That really drove the population increase.”

Bogenschutz coordinates the annual August roadside survey of small game populations, covering 225 30-mile routes. The 2025 survey counted more pheasants, quail, cottontail rabbits and partridge than last year. The survey results are available online by clicking the 100 Years of Pheasant Hunting graphic at www.iowadnr.gov/pheasantsurvey.

“Chick survival wasn’t as good as last year, but we had so many more nests that it offset the drop in the number of chicks per hen,”

he said. Statewide, staff reported 1,038 pheasant broods, which is 338 more than last year.

“We had an early hatch which is good because the nesting season got wet later and that may have impacted chick survival or re-nesting efforts,” Bogenschutz said.

The statewide average of 28 birds per route is the highest since 2005. Regionally, the northwest region was the highest since 2005; northeast region was the highest since 1998; west central similar to last year; east central highest since 2007; south central highest since 2017; and southeast, highest since 2020.

Bogenschutz said if hunter participation is similar to 2023, the pheasant harvest could be in the 600,000-700,000 range.

“Last year was a decent year for pheasant hunting. 2023 was a good year for pheasant hunting. This year could be excellent,” he said.

The Iowa DNR and Pheasants Forever are celebrating 100 years of pheasant hunting in the Hawkeye State. The first season was held Oct. 20-22, 1925, when 13 counties in north central Iowa were opened to pheasant hunting. Hunters were allowed a three-rooster limit, for a half-day of hunting. An estimated 75,000 hunters participated.

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