

The Oskaloosa

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House on wheels rolls out of Pella

DONALD A. PROMNITZ
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

ALBIA — Mobile homes are nothing new, but the one that rolled through Pella Tuesday morning was a bit different.

The 1,800-square-foot house was brought from Pella to its settling point on North E Street off Iowa Highway 5 in Albia, a 40-mile journey. The house was originally used by Pella Regional Medical Center as a living quarters for traveling doctors and nurses.

It was acquired by Ed Simpson, who's been moving houses out of Pella for 24 years. These houses are in turn rented out by Simpson. And since the housing market is often limited in small towns, he's taken the initiative of bringing the houses to the market.

"The first four houses I moved out of Pella were 2001 were from Pella Corp. ... and since then, the hospital got my name and since then, they've given me 20-something houses to get them out of there," Simpson said.

"They find me. They give me houses," Simpson added. "They've given me \$7-8 million worth of houses."

The task was undertaken by Goodwin House Moving in Washington, headed by Chris Reighard. It can be novel to see a house rolling through town, but for Reighard and his team, it's business as usual, though a lot of planning has to go into a job.

"We move houses every day," Reighard said. "It takes us a week to do a job."

"[It takes] a lot of coordination. Power companies, cable, TV, police, just city sign crews to take signs down, light poles, all that kind of stuff to get it out town," Reighard said. "So just a lot of coordination."

Roads were closed off in the house's route in Pella to make way starting at 9 a.m., and a trail of road closures followed all the way to Albia. The house arrived at around 3:30 p.m. as school was letting out, with buses having to find an alternate route.

"To get out of Pella, you have to have 22 signatures. Everybody has to sign off on it. And then I moved through four power companies, and the only power company that charged was Mid-American (Energy)," Simpson said. "Apparently, Warren Buffett needs another new car or something."

This is Simpson's 35th house that



Donald A. Promnitz | The Herald

A house previously used by Pella Regional Medical Center was brought to Albia Tuesday. The house's owner, Ed Simpson, will rent the house out.

See **HOUSE** on 2



Jeff Wilford | The Herald

People gather to look at placards depicting elements of the proposed 2025 Downtown Master Plan for Oskaloosa Thursday at Penn Central Mall.

Public gets a look at proposed downtown master plan

JEFF WILFORD
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — What would make Oskaloosa's downtown more inviting, more attractive, more user friendly?

A team of University of Iowa graduate students presented some possible answers to these questions at an open house Thursday night for the Downtown Master Plan they are creating for the city.

The open house gave residents a chance to see, and give feedback on, their ideas for Oskaloosa.

Maybe it's incorporating bike lanes into the streets. Or improved signage to help people find their way. Better sidewalks and crosswalks might help. Pocket parks — small spaces with innovative playground equipment for kids — and creative public seating were other ideas.

"I think a lot of it comes to, what does the community want?" said Shawn Christ, Oskaloosa's development service director. "This is kind of a start for us, you know. This gives us things, ideas to work from and from this you can take and put into budgeting, or apply for grants."

The students displayed their proposed master plan — at least the design component of it — illustrated across seven placards in center court at Penn Central Mall. In it, they aimed to provide solutions to challenges they identified, such as how to better connect William Penn University to the downtown.

People who attended could vote on the ideas presented by putting a blue or green sticker next to ones they liked, or a pink or red sticker next to the ones they didn't.

Pat Sodak, a member of the city's

See **PLAN** on 2

Mahaska County lowers its portion of tax bill

JEFF WILFORD
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — Mahaska County is asking for \$500,000 less in property taxes for the coming fiscal year. Even so, people at a public hearing on the county's tax levy Monday night complained that taxes are too high.

Despite the planned reduction in tax revenue, some property owners could see their tax bill go up because of changes to their property's valuation.

Milton Hubbard told supervisors that high property taxes have made he and his wife think about moving away.

"I understand that the county's

See **TAX** on 3

U.S. House Dems say NOAA cuts will harm weather forecasting

JACOB FISCHLER
STATES NEWSROOM

Democrats on the U.S. House Natural Resources Committee and a panel of experts on Wednesday blasted the Trump administration's reduction to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's budget and workforce, citing consequences for everyday weather data, national security and affected industries.

Virtually every American interacts with NOAA's weather data, which supplies forecasting services across the country.

The agency's climate and oceanic research supports the U.S. Navy's operations and even the commercial fishing industry — described during the forum as having "a love-hate relationship" with the agency

See **CUTS** on 3

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WEATHER

Today:
▲ High of 48, ▼ Low of 27
Partly sunny

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Osky baseball going to Wrigley Field.

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