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Pella moves forward with rec center

DONALD A. PROMNITZ
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

PELLA — The city will move forward with its indoor recreational facility following a 5-0 vote at Tuesday's city council meeting.

Councilmember Lynn Branderhorst was overseas on a planned trip and absent from the meeting.

Approval for the 78,000-square-foot indoor rec center, located

northwest of Pella Sports Park, came after nearly three-and-a-half hours of deliberation by city council, and from hearing presentations on funding and feasibility, as well as community support.

The center has an estimated cost of over \$35.1 million, much of which will be paid with the local option sales and service tax. However, Bob Zylstra, head of the nonprofit Pella Rec, said that his organization has

\$16 million in pledges from private donors.

"We're prepared to sign a 28E agreement with the City of Pella ... we're going to finance those private pledges," he said. "We've already made agreements with Marion County Bank. They're going to collateralize the cash flow with these pledges."

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Herald file photo

A rendering of Pella's proposed indoor recreation center.



Photos by Jeff Wilford | The Herald

Students crowd around the cross section of a honeybee hive at the Mahaska County Farm Bureau's Ag Day Thursday, at the Southern Iowa Fairgrounds.

Area third-graders learn about agriculture at Ag Day

JEFF WILFORD
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — Students crowded around the sheep while Tom Stodghill sheared it with clippers Thursday at the Southern Iowa Fairgrounds. Once he had a section sheared, he invited students to touch the sheep's skin.

"It's so warm," they said.

Farmers shear their sheep, he explained, for several reasons: to keep the sheep cool and comfortable when sent out to pasture; to inspect the condition of the sheep; and to make it harder for predators to take them down.

This is all new to most of the students he sees at Ag Day events.

"They've never been exposed to it before," Stodghill said.

Stodghill's demonstration was part of Ag Day, an event organized by the Mahaska County Farm Bureau to help kids see how agriculture is relevant to their lives. The event, held Thursday at

Southern Iowa Fairgrounds, hosted around 300 third-grade students from around Mahaska County, said Jill DeBruin, outreach coordinator for Mahaska County Farm Bureau.

One might think kids in a rural agricultural county like Mahaska County wouldn't need an "Ag Day" to learn about agriculture; that they would be exposed to it enough to already know some of this.

One would be wrong.

"Yes, there's very few farm kids left," Stodghill said. "One kid thought they were cows. The parents don't know either."

DeBruin said when she was in third grade 40 or so years ago, most of her classmates either had relatives who lived on a farm or lived on one themselves.

"That is really not the case anymore," DeBruin said. "There are a lot of kids, when I get into classrooms, I would say two-thirds of the kids, say that they have no

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One of the students reaches out to touch one of the fake plants on display at the soil station at Ag Day on Thursday. The event was organized at the Southern Iowa Fairgrounds by the Mahaska County Farm Bureau.

Despite criticism of salary, school board makes offer for AD

JEFF WILFORD
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — School board members voted Monday to formally offer the activities director job, and a salary of \$118,000, to Jamie Jacobs, amid public questions about the size of her salary and the process that hired her.

The school board approved the hiring and salary 4-2. Board members Kathy Butler and Clint O'Day voted no.

A hiring team chose Jacobs, an elementary principal from Oelwein, to be Oskaloosa High School's new activities director starting July 1. She will replace Ryan Parker, whose contract was not renewed by the Oskaloosa school district.

Nick Ryan questioned why Jacobs' salary will be more than what Parker makes, even though Parker has more experience as an activities director. Parker is paid \$110,000 a year.

"So we're looking at an \$8,000 increase for someone with far less experience, and this at a time when you're asking the public to approve a

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Osky city council looks to adopt budget

JEFF WILFORD
STAFF WRITER

OSKALOOSA — The Oskaloosa City Council will hold a public hearing on its proposed \$50 million budget Monday night before voting on whether to adopt it.

The budget will cover Fiscal Year 2025-26, which would take effect July 1. It includes a city property tax levy of \$14.46 per \$1,000 of valuation — a slight decrease from the current budget.

The overall budget is about \$3 million more than the current one. But city information attributes that increase to normal salary increases, commodities inflation, higher insurance costs and the city's \$2.9 million share for a Southeast Connector Road project.

The city council will also consider the appointments of Mayor David Krutzfeldt and council member Bob Drost the South Central Regional Airport Agency.

Those appointments were tabled at the previous city council meeting

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WEATHER

Today:
▲ High of 59, ▼ Low of 44
Partly sunny with a chance of showers.

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