



## North Kossuth School Board holds work session regarding overview of Swea City building

By Kim Meyer

Following their July 14th meeting, the North Kossuth School Board held a work session to listen to the findings by Site Logic who did a comprehensive review of the Swea City building.

The two representatives present gave a power point presentation going over areas that may need to be upgraded/updated. This presentation gave the school board a place to start to help with maintenance of the building and to start talks on cost an projects.

Prior to the worksession, the board held their monthly meeting. Julie Runksmeyer, building principal, informed the board that summer school will be held for three weeks. The building will be closed while RAGBRAI is in Swea City.

The carpet in the bottom hallway will be installed following the board approving the purchase from Algona Flooring.

Mrs. Runksmeyer stated that the wiring and cameras have been installed for the new PA system.

She reviewed the new cell phone policy for the students. Students will not be allowed cell phones during instructional time due to state legislation. Mrs. Runksmeyer noted that this will not be a shock to the students as this had been implemented a few years ago in the building.

Disciplinary action of not following the policy - student will have phone taken away and have to pick up in the office, 2nd offense - parent will need to pick up phone and 3rd offense - parent/child and administration will have a meeting.

North Union Superintendent Travis Schueller noted that both baseball and softball were done for the season.

He commented that tearing out the hallway carpet offered many issues with the floor. But have been taken care and the new carpet squares will be installed.

The school board approved the following:

- Jennie Larsen as board secretary/treasurer
- Approved Brett Nitzche as Board Attorney for the 2025-26 school year.
- Approved the first reading of board policies 503.9 and 503.9R1 regarding the usage of cell phones and disciplinary actions.
- Approved Schnurr & Company as the Auditor for the 2024-25 school year.
- Appointed the following depositories and limits:
  - Fidelity Band and Trust, with a limit of 2 Million Dollars
  - Bank Plus of Swea City, with a limit of 4 Million Dollars
  - ISJIT, with a limit of 2 Million Dollars, Motion carried.
- Approved the free and reduced breakfast and lunch programs
- Approved the elementary and middles school handbooks
- Approved students fees with no changes
- Approved the resignation of Loren Looft as a middle school boys and girls basketball coach and of Adam Pointer as a high school assistant basketball coach.

The next school board meeting is tentatively set for August 11 at 5:00 p.m.



The ladies (and Gents) from Ringsted provided one hundred home baked pies for the riders on Tuesday morning in Armstrong. Riders could purchase their pie with or without ice cream. Proceeds will be used for various community and veterans projects.

Photo Above: Jeff Black tops a piece of pie with ice cream for a rider from England.

## Spilled Ink

By Clinton J. Davis

Amazing.

That is the only word that comes to mind when I think of RAGBRAI coming through Armstrong. As I type this column, the press is running and the people of RAGBRAI are flooding Main Street. Seeing the flood of people going down Main Street is something I never thought I would see. I know a lot of people were skeptical on whether RAGBRAI would be good or bad for the town of Armstrong. I can't speak for the clean-up just yet but I do believe the good will out weigh the bad by a lot.

I know a lot of people, whether it be volunteers or ABC members, put in a ton of work for this to be great in Armstrong. I hope the riders had a great time stopping in for breakfast and seeing our small little town. A big thank you to those who put in any sort of time putting this thing together for Armstrong. This is the first time that RAGBRAI has come through here and I hope it won't be the last. I am thankful that people can see our town and what we have to offer.

I hope most of our Armstrong residents made a point to pop up at some point and see the river of people down the center of our town. Who knows when the next time this many people coming to Armstrong will be. Hopefully we will be a stop again in the future.

We heard early on from a few riders that Armstrong did the breakfast stop perfectly. They were impressed with what they saw in our town as they strolled down Main Street. That is great to hear because we want people to know what a great place Armstrong is. I was happy to hear from those riders that they were enjoying our town greatly.

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Hartley was excited for RAGBRAI because he got to help Grandma Jolene make a pan of bars for the event. He even smiled when I asked how many he ate before delivering them. He said they split one because they had to taste test them before giving them out. Grandma said he did most of the work on the bars. I didn't get to taste test them so hopefully Hartley did a great job with Grandma's supervision. I am sure the riders enjoy getting these homemade treats from the grandmothers and mothers in town. What a cool way to show some small town love.

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With RAGBRAI moved out and the town settling back in, it is time to start thinking about back to school shopping. Hartley says he is ready to go back to school and Calvin says he is excited to start pre-school. Although I don't know if Calvin realizes that school lasts eight months and that going to school isn't going to be a one day ordeal. He will find out pretty quickly but he is very excited to start. I guess that is a good thing. We will see how willing he is to get on that bus and tell his Mom goodbye for the day. That might be the rough part of it all.

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Don Laiding of Ringsted participated in RAGBRAI this year, riding from Milford to Forest City. The first stop on Day 3 (Tuesday, July 22) was in Armstrong. Close to 20,000 riders coasted into town and by noon they were gone, all headed to Swea City and Bancroft.

## Paging Back through the Ringsted Dispatch



**100 Years Ago - July 1925**

- Classified ad: Remember we are giving away free to the highest purchaser for this month at the Variety Store one set 20 year guaranteed knives and forks.
- Hail as large as baseballs and goose eggs fell in Ringsted last Wednesday evening for a period lasting about fifteen minutes. Many people filled their ice boxes with hail.
- C.L. Weisbrod has been appointed Township Clerk by the Township Trustees in place of Ole Justesen who has resigned owing to ill health.

**75 Years Ago - July 1950** - No issues available

**50 Years Ago - July 1975**

- Suzanne Johnson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Johnson, has completed the Medical Secretarial course at American Institute of Business, Des Moines, Iowa.
- Headline: Two to Be Ordained Into Ministry At St. Paul's Lutheran Church - William C. Hassel, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hassel July 20th and John Petersen, son of Mr. and Mrs. Iven Petersen, July 27th.
- The delegation that left Ringsted, Iowa July 2 to travel to Ringsted, Denmark returned Wednesday, July 23 to a rousing welcome.

**25 Years Ago - July 2000**

- Photo: Brian Tigges stands by the golf cart he uses for transportation while his wife Sandy with Cory, Brett and Craig, share the driver's seat. The family was honored during a benefit supper July 18 at Railroad Park. Brian was seriously injured in an accident on May 23.
- On Tuesday, August 1, more than 90 members of A-R Middle School Marching Band will showcase their talent in a performance at Valleyfair Family Amusement Park. The band is under the direction of Athlynn Black.
- Photo: Pam Matheson, representing the Evening Out Club, presents the Yard of the Month award to Duke and Jane Christensen.

## Ringsted EOC Back to School Collection

Now that the Fourth of July is over, it is time to start thinking about children going back to school the end of August. The Ringsted Evening Out Club will be doing their Back to School Collection. Items may be left at the Ringsted Legion or at either church.

The supplies will then be delivered to the North Union School to be disbursed to the children as needed. All items need to be NEW and we are collecting until August 30th.

Especially needed are Kleenex, Expo markers, Ticonderoga pencils, jumbo glue sticks, Elmers bottle glue, 8 count washable CRAYOLA markers, boxes of snack, quart, and gallon baggies. If you do not want to purchase but help with a cash donation, please put in an envelope and mark it school supplies and then drop in the money box at the legion.

## Eyeglass Collection

Drop off your old glasses at: Ringsted Legion/Community Center and NorthStar Bank & Agency. The program is sponsored by the Ringsted Evening Out Club.



## POP TABS

Continue to save pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House. They may be left at either church in Ringsted, City Hall or Ringsted Legion Community Center

## Iowa counties navigate uncertain waters as FEMA faces potential dissolution

*Rural drainage districts stuck between flood damage and agency shakeups*

Clay, Dickinson, and Emmet counties seek 12-month extension for \$1.3 million in flood repairs as Trump administration threatens to eliminate FEMA

Representatives from three northwest Iowa counties gathered July 8 to confront an uncomfortable reality: the federal agency they're counting on for \$1.3 million in flood recovery funding might not exist much longer.

The joint drainage district meeting between Clay, Dickinson, and Emmet counties held during Tuesday morning's county supervisors meeting centered on a seemingly routine request - asking FEMA for a 12-month extension to complete repairs on 30 damaged drainage sites from catastrophic June 2024 flooding. But beneath the technical discussion of culvert repairs and bank stabilization lurked a more pressing concern: President Trump says the agency could be eliminated as soon as December 2025, leaving rural communities to fend for themselves against future disasters.

### The damage report

Federal disaster assistance became available to Clay, Emmet, Lyon, Plymouth and Sioux counties following severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds and tornadoes beginning June 16, 2024. The devastation was extensive - Joint Drainage District 61 alone identified 26 damage sites, while another joint drainage district documented four additional locations requiring immediate attention.

Beck Engineering's cost estimates paint a sobering picture of the destruction: Drainage District 61: \$1.1 million in construction costs, bringing total project expenses to approximately \$1.2 million with engineering and administration. This was the largest estimate.

The engineering firms' detailed breakdown reveals the scope of

work ahead: shallow slide bank channel repairs, rotational slide fixes, washout restoration, pipe culvert installations, and extensive erosion control measures across thousands of linear feet of damaged drainage infrastructure.

Under current FEMA guidelines, the federal share of assistance is not less than 75 percent of the eligible cost, with an additional 10% state contribution, leaving counties responsible for just 15% of repair costs - assuming FEMA approves their applications.

### A race against time and changing political landscape

The urgency became apparent during the July meeting when Beck Engineering representative explained the precarious timeline. The current deadline for construction completion is December 31, 2025, coinciding precisely with Trump's stated timeline for FEMA elimination. "I think it would be wise to wait for an obligation from FEMA to make sure that we're able to talk with landowners about expected costs," officials from the three counties were advised, acknowledging the unprecedented uncertainty surrounding federal disaster funding.

The recommendation reflects broader concerns about FEMA's stability. Trump is on his second acting FEMA administrator in five months, and the director who coordinates national disaster response turned in his resignation letter June 11. Meanwhile, reports indicate hundreds of staff cuts to FEMA and agency disaster response capabilities.

### The stakes for rural Iowa

For these northwest Iowa counties, the implications extend far beyond bureaucratic reshuffling. Their drainage districts - critical infrastructure managing water flow across thousands of acres of agricultural land - represent decades of collaborative investment between landowners and local government.

"The more we leave these banks unstable, they could have the potential of getting worse as we go," one meeting participant noted, highlighting the environmental

## Union Slough NWR Taking Bids for Hay Harvest

Union Slough National Wildlife Refuge is soliciting sealed bids (per harvested ton) for hay harvest on three tracts of land to be harvested in August 2025. The tracts are located in Kossuth County as follows: Portland Township: Sections 5 and 10; and Ramsey Township: Section 29.

Bidders must place bids on forms provided by the Refuge and submit them in a sealed envelope labeled "Union Slough Haying." Bid forms and maps are available at the refuge headquarters and on the Union Slough NWR website at [https://www.fws.gov/refuge/union\\_slough/](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/union_slough/). Applicants must be 18 years of age or older. Bid forms must be received at the refuge headquarters by close of business (4 pm) on Thursday, July 31st, 2025

consequences of delayed repairs. Heavy rainfall events could trigger additional erosion, exponentially increasing repair costs and threatening agricultural productivity in some of Iowa's most fertile farmland.

The counties' decision to request a 12-month extension reflects a calculated gamble that FEMA will still exist and have funding available in 2026. Their alternative - proceeding without federal assurance - would require local funding for repairs that could total over \$200,000 in combined local share costs.

### Nationwide, communities unprepared

The Iowa drainage district dilemma mirrors concerns being raised across disaster-prone states. Some governors, including Democrat Andy Beshear of Kentucky, have said Trump's threats to dismantle FEMA are dangerous, noting that replicating FEMA's administrative functions in each state would be far more costly than a single national agency. States like Texas and Florida, each receiving about \$18 billion in federal disaster aid since 2017, account for almost a third of the 50-state total. The proposed transition to state-managed disaster response would place unprecedented fiscal burdens on state budgets while potentially leaving smaller states like Iowa at a significant disadvantage.

### What's next?

The Trump administration has established a 20-member committee via executive order to review the agency and propose ways to overhaul its work, with Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth co-chairing the group. The council is expected to recommend whether to restructure, reduce, or eliminate FEMA entirely.

For Iowa's drainage districts, the path forward remains uncertain. Rather than making an immediate decision on the 12-month extension request, county supervisors chose to take no action during the July 8 meeting, opting instead to schedule a work session for further review. This cautious approach reflects the complexity of balancing immediate

to be eligible. The bid opening will take place at the refuge headquarters on Friday, August 1st, 2025 at 10 am. Bidders are encouraged to attend, but do not need to be present. The successful bidder(s) will be contacted by phone if they are not present. The refuge headquarters is located 6 miles east of Bancroft, Iowa on County Road A-42. Please call (515) 928-2523 with any questions.

For more information on the Midwest Region of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service visit <http://midwest.fws.gov>.

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infrastructure needs against an uncertain federal funding landscape. The delay in decision-making underscores the broader challenges facing local governments nationwide as they navigate potential changes to federal disaster assistance programs while critical infrastructure repairs remain in limbo.

Looking upstream  
The meeting concluded with discussion of broader watershed management concerns, acknowledging that drainage district repairs represent only a fraction of regional flood mitigation needs. One participant raised questions about comprehensive Little Sioux River watershed management, noting the lack of coordinated response to address systemic flooding issues across state lines.

These concerns take on added significance as the administration is trying to kill every program that pops up in a search for the word "climate," potentially affecting agencies like NOAA that provide critical weather forecasting and storm prediction services.

For now, Clay, Dickinson, and Emmet counties wait - for FEMA obligation letters, for political clarity, and for the spring construction season that will determine whether their damaged drainage infrastructure gets repaired before the next major storm tests their resolve once again.

The broader question remains whether rural America's disaster recovery infrastructure can survive the transition from federal coordination to a patchwork of state-managed programs, particularly for communities that lack the resources and political influence of major metropolitan areas.

The three-county drainage district serves agricultural areas in northwest Iowa, managing water flow across thousands of acres through a complex system of channels, culverts, and engineered waterways that require ongoing maintenance and periodic major repairs following significant weather events.