

CHIEF: Thomson appointed

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operations, including major criminal investigations, training, policy development, budgeting, and community engagement,” according to the release.

Thomson is a graduate of the Northwestern University School of Police Staff and Command and holds an Associate of Science degree in Law Enforcement from Ellsworth Community College. He is also a graduate of the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy.

As Deputy Chief, Thomson has played a key role in department leadership, including

overseeing operations, coordinating major investigations, implementing best-practice policies, and strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders and regional agencies.

“His leadership philosophy emphasizes transparency, accountability, and collaboration, with a strong focus on community-oriented policing and organizational trust,” the release states.

Thomson is a lifelong Burlington resident with deep ties to the community.

“His experience and relationships within the department and community position him to lead the Burlington Police

Department forward while addressing modern policing challenges and enhancing community trust,” the release states.

Thomson’s appointment comes after the recent announcement of current Chief Adam Schaefer’s pending retirement.

Thomson will be attending the FBI National Academy for the next several weeks.

“His official appointment will be made at an upcoming Burlington City Council meeting and upon his return from this prestigious educational opportunity,” the release states.

SCHOOL: Levy to increase

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actually, over the last three years we will have cut over \$3.5 million out of our expenditures,” he said.

Bryan Bross of Klinger and Associates, and former board member, gave a presentation on the Junior Achievement program. The program has students participating in activities to simulate real-life business situations. “In the fall ... we do what’s called JA (Junior Achievers) stock marketing. That’s where the students kind of do a fictitious investing exercise and compete with other students,” said Bross. “In the spring ... we have simulations for operating as a CEO of a cell phone manufacturer.”

Student Baylen Olsen described his experience participating in the simulation and competing: “We just had to keep our employees happy. We had to invest a lot in marketing, researching and developing and then integrating the things that we researched into our actual product. We had to invest in factories to manufacture the products and then we also had to invest in, basically, the people who

work for our company. We had to manage corporate social responsibility.” The competitions challenged the Junior Achievers. “You could go from having a million dollars to being almost bankrupt within a quarter of a year. It was very difficult but I had a lot of fun,” said Olsen.

Telisha Van Rycke from the Greater Burlington Partnership presented the CEO in the Classroom program. Students who participate will be given hands-on experience running a business as a class, and as individuals. “They never meet in the classroom,” said Van Rycke. Instead, they meet in industry locations at real businesses. The course has the students go through an intensive process of creating a business idea and pitching the idea to a board of business leaders. Eventually students go to a bank to go through the process of getting a business loan, where, “they do everything but actually sign your name,” according to Van Rycke. At the end of the program, the students hold a trade show where they actually sell their products and services. The program will offer a minimum of two high

school credits and up to four college credits.

New student representative Kiara Winski presented her report. She talked about the achievements of the local HOSA chapter, which is an organization for future health workers. “HOSA competed in state at Drake University and came home with 13 medals, two recognition plaques, and the highest honors and placed third in the State Leadership Conference Chapter Cup competition,” she said. Winski also announced that the high school band’s spring concert will be on April 17. She added that “school spirit is high with lots of smiles in the halls.”

Scott announced that the closing ceremony of the soon-to-be-demolished James Madison school building has been changed to April 24 at noon. Members of the community are welcome to come to the ceremony and have a walk-around inside from about 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., after the ceremony.

The Board voted to approve a three-year contract to hire Nathan M. Marting as the new superintendent starting July 1. Marting is currently the principal of Burlington High School.

had worked with the reptile on the island in the south Atlantic Ocean between Africa and Brazil, said he was heartbroken to announce the death of the “gentle giant” that “outlived empires, wars, and generations of humans.”

The post quickly accumulated nearly 2 million views through Thursday, mostly an outpouring of condolences.

But Hollins later said on Facebook that he didn’t even have an X account and something more sinister was afoot.

“There is a hoax — not even an April Fool — going around,” Hollins wrote. “The hoaxer is asking for crypto donations. It’s a con.”

Guinness World

Records lists Jonathan as the oldest living land animal and the oldest tortoise ever. He was believed to be about 50 years old when he was brought to St. Helena in 1882.

The St. Helena government sent a photo of Jonathan taken Thursday of him roaming the grounds of the governor’s residence on the island best known as the place Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled following his defeat by the British at Waterloo in 1815. It was the place where the former emperor of France died in 1821, about a decade before Jonathan is believed to have taken the first steps in what would become a very long life.

Department of Corrections announces new Iowa State Penitentiary warden

BRAD VIDMAR

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FORT MADISON — The Iowa Department of Corrections (DOC) has named Janie Mendez as the new warden of the Iowa State Penitentiary (ISP) in Fort Madison.

Mendez brings more than two decades of experience within the DOC, having served in a variety of leadership and frontline roles across multiple institutions, including ISP, the Iowa Medical and Classification Center (IMCC) and the Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility (MPCF), according to a press release from the Iowa DOC.

Mendez’s career includes service as Associate Warden of Treatment at IMCC (2021–2026), Treatment Services Director at ISP (2020–2021), Correctional Counselor at ISP (2012–2020), Correctional Counselor at MPCF (2005–2012), and Correctional Officer roles at both MPCF and IMCC beginning in 2003.

“I am pleased to welcome Janie Mendez to her new role as warden of the Iowa State Penitentiary,” Deputy Director of Institutional Operations Marcy Stroud said in a statement.

“Her extensive background across multiple institutions has equipped her with the knowledge, leadership skills, and steady judgment essential for this position.”

“In addition to



Janie Mendez has been named by the Iowa Department of Corrections as the new warden at the Iowa State Penitentiary in Fort Madison. (Iowa Department of Corrections)

her professional experience, Mendez has deep roots in the Fort Madison community,” the release states.

“Her longstanding presence in the area reflects a strong commitment to both the institution and the people it serves, providing a sense of continuity and stability that is invaluable during times of transition.”

Mendez said returning to ISP is a meaningful milestone in her career.

“Being able to return to the ISP team truly warms my heart,” Mendez said in a statement.

“It is a special place where strong, resilient staff work tirelessly to provide a safe and secure environment for the people that live there, and I am thrilled to work with them again. It is important to me to help ISP maintain its critical role within the Department of Corrections.”

“I am excited to announce Janie as the new Warden of Iowa

State Penitentiary,” DOC Director Beth Skinner said in a statement.

“Her deep experience across multiple institutions and her long-standing commitment to this department make her exceptionally well prepared for this role. Her leadership will strengthen ISP’s mission of safety, security, and rehabilitation, and I look forward to the positive impact she will continue to have on staff and the community.”

“I am confident that Janie will lead with integrity, professionalism, and a clear vision for the future,” said Stroud.

“I look forward to supporting her as she steps into this important leadership role and am excited about the positive impact she will have on staff, operations, and the broader community.”

Mendez holds a Master of Science in Criminal Justice.

CHICKENS: Council discusses birds

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A new policy could include permission on active and non-conforming agricultural-use property, agriculture districts and large lots, which are parcels containing two or more contiguous acres of land under unified ownership or control.

The council did not discuss any other rules the ordinance could contain, such as setbacks from neighboring properties or number of chickens allowed.

SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER PROGRAM

The council approved a 28E agreement with the West Burlington Independent School District outlining the terms, responsibilities, financing struc-

ture and operational framework for a School Resource Officer program.

Under terms of the agreement, the school district will provide 75% of the cost for a uniformed police officer to be located at school district buildings during school hours. The city will cover the remaining 25% of the cost. The agreement covers the 2026 and 2027 school years.

TAX LEVY

Before the start of the regular meeting Wednesday, the council held a public hearing on the FY27 property tax levy rate. Several governmental councils and boards have held similar public hearings this week to satisfy a requirement for more transparency with the

public about property taxes.

Property tax legislation that was enacted in 2023, requires a public hearing solely for the purpose of the proposed budget property tax levy rate. The council set April 22 at 6 p.m. as the date and time for a public hearing for the FY27 budget.

The proposed property tax levy rate, \$10.30/\$1,000 in assessed property valuation, is the maximum the city may levy, but a final budget has not been determined yet. The current year levy rate is \$10.10/\$1,000.

When the council set the amount for publication, Crouner said he was not in favor of the higher levy rate, and supports the city staying at the current rate.

April Fools: World’s oldest known tortoise still very much alive

By BRIAN MELLELY — Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Reports on April Fools’ Day of the death of the world’s oldest living land animal, a 193-year-old tortoise called Jonathan, were greatly exaggerated.

Jonathan is still kicking, albeit slowly, on St. Helena island.

“It was a hoax,” Anne Dillon, head of communications on the island, told The Associated Press on Thursday. “I can just assure you that he is very much alive.”

News of the Seychelles giant tortoise’s demise spread rapidly on social media on Wednesday.

An account on X, falsely claiming to be by Joe Hollins, a veterinarian who

COFFEE: Chain planning store

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energy drink, 7 Energy, which can be infused with more than 20,000 flavor combinations.

“We have a regular can and a sugar-free can that you can get infused with regular syrups, but also sugar-free syrup, and we have matchas, shakes, smoothies,” Oberg said, noting the “Blondie” that is a

sweet, creamy coffee drink—a caramel vanilla breve made with espresso, caramel sauce, vanilla syrup and half-and-half—is the top seller. “We really can make whatever you want in terms of beverages.”

“Cultivating kindness is something we really pride ourselves on, going out and finding the right kind of people team that work well together and

we put them in an environment that’s fun,” Oberg said.

When it opens, Burlington’s 7Brew will be the second Iowa location for this franchise group, High Plains Brew; their first location is in Council Bluffs.

The company will take job applications soon. Those interested in joining the “Brew Crew” should apply at hp7brew.com online.