



Bob Fenske/Tribune

## A great day to celebrate New Hampton FFA!

New Hampton FFA President Jennifer Eichenberger shares her “presidential reflections” during Saturday’s annual meeting and banquet that almost could have been held outdoors because of the warm temperatures. During the banquet, the chapter’s seniors were honored, awards were handed out, funds were raised by the FFA Alumni, Eichenberger and her fellow officers were “retired” and the chapter’s new officers were installed.

See STORIES AND MORE PHOTOS, next week’s Tribune

## New Hampton FFA president plans fundraiser for ag mental health

### FUNDRAISER: FROM 1

and former Chickasaw County ISU Extension Director Diane Day.

The goals of the event are simple: Raise the awareness of mental health in the ag industry and raise funds for the Farm Rescue Foundation.

And the seeds of the event were planted on that night years ago when Jeremy and Heather Eichenberger’s swine operation was lost to a fire.

“The community really came together, and they helped us a lot,” Jennifer Eichenberger said. “I want this to be my way to give back for how people helped us. I hope people will come out and support this.”

“People have been great, donating items, and really the only reason we’re charging [\$15 for adults and \$10 for children] is so that we can support Farm Rescue.”

Eichenberger said she came up with the

idea of a mental health awareness fundraiser during a trip to Washington, D.C., that she took with Iowa FFA members last summer.

The members were asked what they wanted to do make a difference in their communities?

“Everybody else was planning things like Farmers Markets, selling pumpkins, things like that,” she said, “and I was like, mental health has been really important to me and my family ... and then just seeing my friends go through everything.”

“And with being in an ag heavy community and an ag heavy family and everything, I knew this where I wanted to focus on so we’re going to have a night where we’re going to focus on mental health and agricultural.”

As the event draws near, Eichenberger admits that the nerves are coming to the forefront.

“I’ve had people come up to me and say, ‘Hey, I heard what you’re doing; this

is amazing.’ So in that aspect, I’m feeling good about it, but I still have in the back of my mind like oh my goodness, are people going to come?”

She said she’s appreciative that both Naig and Day will be on hand.

“They’re both such good people who really understand the importance of good mental health in ag,” she said, “and I think having them here is going to be great. I know sometimes people don’t want to talk about mental health, but it’s important that we do.”

But right now, Eichenberger admits her stress level is a little high.

She helped put together New Hampton’s FFA Banquet this past Saturday while gearing up for her fundraiser.

“I keep telling myself that I just need to breathe,” she said with a laugh, “but I’ve had a lot of support — from my parents, my family, my friends — and as nervous as I am, I can’t wait for Thursday night.”



Photos courtesy of Nick Sanford

## Pinewood Derby winners

Cub Scout Pack 48 in New Hampton recently held its annual Pinewood Derby and the winners included (above, from left) Grayson Bernatz, Naomi Moser, Henry Moore, Emerson Pint (champion), Nora Sanford, Liam Sanford, Marjorie Holthaus and Logan Fibikar, and during the competition, (below, from left) Logan Fibikar, Grayson Bernatz, Naomi Moser and Nora Sanford watch the cars go around the track.



*Thank You*  
to all who sent me birthday cards, attended my birthday gathering or called me!  
A huge Thank You to my kids for this wonderful celebration.  
I am truly blessed to have such loving family and friends.  
*Thank you so much!*  
Luella Rosenbaum Junko

### Friends, Family & Coworkers,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart, for all of your calls, cards, gifts and mostly for your prayers. I am gradually getting better and I look forward to seeing you soon.

*All my love,  
Jennifer Klunder  
Sugar & Spice*

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## Board members not sold on pay raise for deputy who will become clerk

### SUPERVISORS: FROM 1

“That could be the headline: ‘No one talked at the public hearing.’” Board Chairman Jake Hackman joked later in the meeting, but then again, the silence wasn’t totally unexpected because the county is actually lowering its tax-asking for the 2026-27 budget year that begins on July 1.

But if meeting No. 1 was quiet — under Iowa law, the public hearing on the max levy can be the only item on that meeting’s agenda — meeting No. 2 wasn’t as board members moved ahead with purchasing a new ambulance for Chickasaw County EMS, followed through with their plans to reduce the number of deputies in the Auditor’s Office and appointed two members to the city of New Hampton’s Board of Adjustment.

Start with that max levy public hearing,

Supervisors control three levies — General Basic (GB), General Supplemental (GS) and Rural Services Basic (RSB) — and all three will be heading “south” next year. GB’s levy is dropping from \$3.50 per \$1,000 valuation to \$3.39806 per \$1,000 valuation, but that decrease was required by law because the county’s valuations grew by almost 9 percent.

GS, meanwhile, is dropping from \$1.85 per \$1,000 valuation to \$1.39256 per \$1,000 valuation, a decrease of 24.7 percent while RSB max levy — which because of the increased valuations, had to go from \$3.50 per \$1,000 valuation down to at least \$3.39806 — is at \$3.10 per \$1,000 valuation, a decrease of 11.4 percent.

Under state law, supervisors can drop levy rates after the publication of the max levies, but they can’t raise them.

Board members hope to finalize the 2026-27 levies during its April 13 meeting.

“If we see a decrease moving forward,” Hackman said, “we can decrease it more. If not, that’s what we will probably move forward with at the next public hearing.”

The second meeting of the day, one that commenced eight minutes after the first adjourned, was busier.

Supervisors spent a decent amount of time talking with Chickasaw County EMS Director Joel Knutson about the three ambulance bids the board opened during its March 16 meeting.

Knutson said he spent the week looking over the bids and recommended the board approve the proposal made by Legacy Emergency Vehicles, a dealer for Sumner-based Life Line Emergency Vehicles. That bid was for \$237,514, and that included \$33,000 for the vehicle the service plans to trade in when the new rig arrives in about a couple of years.

The EMS director said that the contract also stated that if the trade-in vehicle had less than 75,000 miles on it, Legacy Emergency Vehicles would add \$4,000 on the trade-in, but supervisors and Knutson

seemed less than enthusiastic about doing that.

“I mean by the time that truck goes down the road, we anticipate we’ll have over 130,000 to 140,00 miles on it,” Knutson said, “so I don’t foresee us staying under that 75, and I don’t think it would be financially prudent, either.”

Board members did agree that the county should make a 25 percent down payment, which would bring with it a \$5,000 discount on the final price, and they balked at an idea offered by Supervisor Travis Suckow to have the county independently sell the ambulance it plans to trade in before finally approving the RFP from Legacy Emergency Vehicles on a 5-0 vote.

The lengthiest discussion of the day for board members came when they considered allowing each of the elected offices in the county that currently have “deputies” to only have one per office.

That would not affect the Treasurer’s or Recorder’s Office but would lead to the Auditor’s Office having one current deputy be reclassified as a clerk.

Board members quickly approved the resolution, but the subject came back up during a budget work session later in the meeting when supervisors took up the pay question for the position that will be moved from a deputy status to a clerk.

Auditor Sheila Shekleton made a spirited case for giving that employee a raise when the 2026-27 budget year begins, but supervisors didn’t appear sold.

“I’ll say this, I appreciate the extra duties,” board member Issac Carter said, “and I’ve never before taken money away from someone, but I think you just can’t justify that [raise] regardless of the duties because then everyone starts going, ‘I do this, I do that, I should be making \$30 an hour as well.’”

Board members pointed out that even with \$1.50 per hour raises, clerks in other county offices in the courthouse will be making between \$21.08 and \$26.10 per hour in 2026-27.

In the end, they asked Shekleton to refigure her budget without the raises and then if board members decide to up the hourly wage for the Auditor’s Office clerk when they set salaries in June, the board will consider adopting a budget amendment early in the fiscal year.

“I am not a big fan of talking about budget amendments before the budget has even been passed,” Cerwinski said, “but I get it and I think this is the best way to go.”

Board members also approved two appointments — Blake Ohm and current member Suellen Kolbet — to the New Hampton Board of Adjustment for terms that run through 2030.

Ohm’s appointment passed on a 5-0 vote while Kolbet’s was approved on a 4-0 vote because Supervisor Steve Breitbach, who is Kolbet’s brother, abstained.

*What can we say!!*

A lifetime of friends, family and customers who thankfully are always hungry when they visited us. Thank you New Hampton and beyond. It has been our pleasure to know and serve you.

Thank you for the honor you bestowed on our family. New Hampton is truly home surrounded by an active, caring community. Keep it going always. You are doing an outstanding job.

*Gods Blessings to all!  
Jim & Joyce Klunder + Families*