

Sheriff's office loses deputy

Supervisors say they won't replace deputy who quit, leaving the force at six deputies instead of seven.

By ERIK GABLE
Ledger assistant news editor.

The Jefferson County Board of Supervisors decided today they would not authorize hiring a deputy to fill a vacancy in the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office.

Supervisors Dick Reed and Steve Burgmeier voted for the resolution, saying in light of the county's tight financial situation, they wanted to see how the sheriff's office functioned with one less deputy. Supervisor Mike Pech voted no, saying he didn't feel it was the supervisors' job to micromanage the sheriff's office. Sheriff Jerry Droz said leaving the spot vacant would jeopardize the safety of his officers and the public.

The vacancy was created recently by the resignation of sheriff's deputy Bart Richmond, leaving the sheriff's office with six deputies instead of seven.

"With a tight budget, we've been looking down the road and all department heads have shrunk their budgets as much as possible," said Reed. "It looks like the next avenue could be a reduction of employees and this could be easier than trying to select somebody and lay somebody off."

Reed placed a motion on the table to leave the deputy's job vacant. Pech disagreed with the proposal.

"As we came on as board members here, one of the things we tried to do was eliminate micromanagement of departments, which was rampant in the previous administration," he said. "I don't personally think that we should try to micromanage the sheriff's budget."

Burgmeier said Iowa law allows the supervisors to determine how many people are employed by each county department.

"The number of employees is part of our jurisdiction," he said.

Droz said leaving the position vacant would be a safety problem for the remaining deputies and for the public.

"They're cutting our force by 14 percent, so you definitely have an officer safety issue. You have a public safety issue," he said.

Reducing manpower in the sheriff's office would cut down on surveillance activities, Droz said, which in turn would reduce the office's ability to crack down on the methamphetamine problem. Often, he said, surveillance efforts are aimed at catching meth manufacturers and "preventing" it before it even gets to the streets.

Even before Richmond resigned, Droz said, the sheriff's office — which includes the county jail — had 2 1/2 fewer employees than it did four years ago.

Meanwhile, he said, the demand on sheriff's deputies are escalating. "We're on call 24 hours a day," he said. "Someone has to answer the calls."

Chamber proposes plan to market Fairfield

By ERIK GABLE
Ledger assistant news editor

The Fairfield City Council will consider a proposal tonight to hire the Institute for Decision Making at the University of Northern Iowa to develop a comprehensive marketing plan for the city.

The 10-year plan drafted last year

by the Fairfield Strategic Planning Commission called for the plan as part of an effort to expand Fairfield's economy.

The Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce Marketing Committee has been working on the matter, and decided recently to propose contracting with the Institute for Decision Making, the same group

which helped the city draft its strategic plan.

The marketing committee solicited proposals from three organizations with experience creating marketing plans for cities, according to the proposal city council members will review tonight. They were the Institute for Decision Making; Essman Companies of Des Moines;

and Next Generation Consulting of Jackson, Wis.

The Essman proposal was the most expensive, with an estimated cost of between \$40,000 and \$45,000.

According to chamber president Bob Moore, the IDM proposal was priced at \$15,000. In addition, the

city had already

to create the strategic plan. According to Moore, discussions with IDM revealed a full end product. If the city council



JULIE JOHNSTON/Ledger photo

Now that's entertainment!

From left, Gabby Moberg, Kimberly Miller, Olan Duncan and Zach Bamberger, all kindergarten students at Fairfield Christian School, get into the act at the song as they entertained the residents at Nelson Nursing Home this morning. Accompanied by Jan Hunderdasse on the guitar, the students sang about the wise man building his house on the rock and several other tunes, some in chorus with students from first, second and third grades, much to the delight of their listeners.

Former officer pleads innocent to felony charge

Former policeman Cameron Cooksey pleaded innocent today on charges of stealing approximately \$1,500 from the Fairfield Police Department when he was an officer.

The written plea was entered this morning in Iowa District Court for Jefferson County.



C. COOKSEY

Cooksey, 34, was represented by attorney Ottumwa, v. speedy trial.

Judge Dan date of 9:30 conference, v. tunity for an for 10 a.m. Ju

The case v. the Iowa Att. The charge v. a Class D fel

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Legislators over last week education bill

By ERIK GABLE
Ledger assistant news editor

Education funding became a bone of contention for area legislators and school officials at the Fairfield Area Chamber of Commerce's monthly legislative breakfast Saturday morning at Best Western Fairfield Inn.

State Sen. David Miller, R-Batavia, state Rep. John Whitaker, D-Hillsboro, and state Rep. Sandy Greiner, R-Keota, were present at the forum.

Fairfield Community School District superintendent Steve Triplett

told the legislators the district's budget has declined in the past few years.

Since 2001, he said, the Legislature has set \$267,000 in allowable growth, but cuts during the same time amounted to \$162,000.

"Ten teachers have disappeared, a building has been shut, administrators have been cut," Triplett said.

The Republican-led Legislature passed its education funding bill last week, but the bill was vetoed by Gov. Tom Vilsack Thursday. Democratic legislators urged Iowans to seek out legislative forums to complain about the funding proposal. Saturday, Greiner accused Democrats of using the issue for political gain.

"This is all about politics," she said. "It's 'go get those darned ornery Republicans,' make sure you know that they are anti-education, when in fact what we did was restore the 2 1/2 percent across-the-

governor."

Greiner said schools is a representative now dominant.

"We have when it comes they want their students," she said. "It helped

"This is all about politics. It's 'go get those darned ornery Republicans.'"

— State Rep. Sandy Greiner, R-Keota

Poll: Iowans back tax plan

DES MOINES (AP) — A majority of Iowans support Gov. Tom Vilsack's proposals to increase the cigarette tax and expand the sales tax, according to the copyright Iowa Poll in the Des Moines Sunday Register.

The survey shows 70 percent of the state's adults favor raising the cigarette tax by 60 cents a pack. Twenty-nine percent are opposed

and 1 percent are unsure. Sixty-three percent favor extending the sales tax to 17 services that aren't currently taxed, including accounting and insurance. Twenty-nine percent are opposed and 8 percent are undecided.

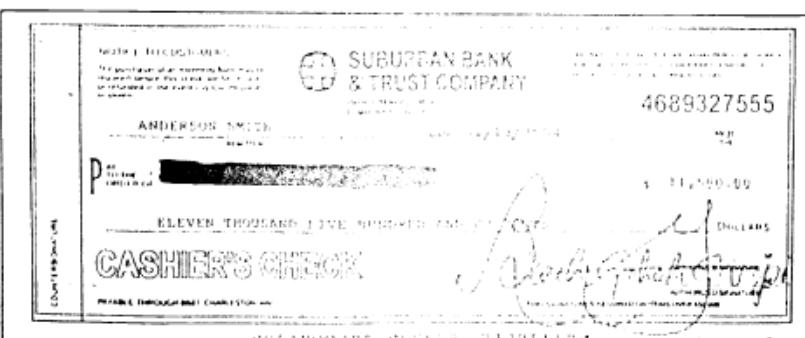
The poll, conducted Feb. 11 by Selzer & Co. Inc., has a margin of error of 1.5 percentage points. It was based on random telephone inter-

views with 800 Iowans age 18 or older.

"I'm a former smoker, and I honestly don't think they tax cigarettes enough," said poll participant David Genger, of Council Bluffs. The current tax on cigarettes is 36 cents a pack.

But Genger, a political independ-

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The Jefferson County Sheriff's Office received the take-it-backs check from the intended victim of a scam.

Scammer targets Internet sellers

People who place items for sale using the Internet should beware of a scammer who uses fake cashier's checks, Jefferson County Sheriff Jerry Droz said today.

Droz said the scammer appears to work by finding someone who is selling a big-ticket item, such as a car or a boat, arranging to purchase it, and sending a cashier's check via Federal Express. The scammer

tells the intended victim he got a cashier's check for more than the price of the item to be purchased, and asks the intended victim to cash the check and send back the difference. By the time the victim discovers the cashier's check is invalid, it's too late.

The sheriff's office learned of the scam from a Jefferson County resident who received one of the fake cashier's checks.

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