

Parsons Sun

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SCHOOL TALK



LCIS Administration, teachers meet pandemic challenges head-on

INSIDE TODAY'S SUN

AREA NEWS

Contract for Erie to buy Stub's not quite ready

By The Sun Staff
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ERIE — The Erie City Council discussed the purchase of Stub's Market on Monday evening, but no action was taken.

The city has been considering the possible acquisition of the town's only grocery store since at least August 2019, when owner Shirlene Mahurin introduced the proposal. David "Stub" and Shirlene Mahurin haven't been able to find a buyer for Stub's, and the council wants to prevent the store from closing because that would force residents to drive out of town for groceries.

The council had thought a contract for the purchase of the store would be ready on Monday, but Seth Jones, the city's attorney, is still working on some details and discussing the agreement with the Mahurins. The contract could be ready for consideration during the council's Oct. 12 meeting, City Clerk Cindy Lero said on Tuesday.

The council seems set to approve the contract following a survey early this summer when 213 utility customers of the 311 who returned surveys favored the purchase. The council also has signaled its willingness to buy the store by approving the application for a \$480,000 Rural Economic Development Loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Lero said the council on Monday discussed advertising for a store manager, but a job description first needs to be created.

A committee was appointed in the summer to make recommendations. Lero said the committee hasn't met since a business plan was finished and the loan application was filed, but it may reconvene later.

Under the proposed contract, the city would pay the Mahurins \$300,000 for the building and fixtures, plus inventory value at the time of the sale and 0.5% of gross sales for 10 years.

FUNERALS

GLENN BERG, 90, of Garden Plain, celebration of life at 1 p.m. Saturday at Thayer Christian Church.

JAMES O'NEAL, 93, of Parsons, service at 3 p.m. Saturday at Wesley United Methodist Church.

WANDA MCELDFRESH, 70, of Parsons, graveside service at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Hopewell Cemetery at Big Piney, Missouri.

Still plenty of relief funds available

By Ray Nolting
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OSWEGO — Labette County commissioners may change a date in their plan for spending money from the state's COVID-19 relief program.

The county received \$3,983,558.77 from the state's SPARK program (Strengthening People and Revitalizing Kansas), which is distributing the federal pandemic relief money. The money can be used to reimburse for COVID-19-related expenses or for projects tied to the pandemic. Local businesses or organizations will have until the end of the year to spend the money or to substantially complete funded projects. Ap-

plications for this funding are available through the city of Parsons website, parsonssk.com, or by emailing Jim Zaleski, the city of Parsons economic development director, jzaleski@parsonssk.com. Completed agreements come back to county commissioners for approval.

Zaleski and Laura Moore, community development director for Parsons, met with county commissioners on Monday.

Schools, Labette Health, Labette Center for Mental Health Services and the county received direct aid from the program for COVID-19-related spending. Commissioners approved setting up four programs to further spend the money: economic development, child care/senior care, food programs and connectivity.

Initially, commissioners wanted to give agencies, businesses and organizations first crack at the programs, which include about \$900,000 for distribution. The initial grant amounts would be smaller. If money remained by Nov. 10, commissioners would consider how to distribute what remained. This would give, for example, Parsons Recreation Commission the chance to recoup more pandemic expenses. Its initial grant was \$5,000, the cap for the program, but PRC had \$11,000 in pandemic-related expenses that qualified for reimbursement.

Zaleski told commissioners the Nov. 10 date may have to move into October. He said he has

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FREIGHTLINER BUILDING



Jamie Willey/Sun photo

Mason Reed, an electrician with Norbury Electric, Carthage, Missouri, works on wiring at the Joplin Freightliner shop under construction in the northeast section of Flynn Industrial Park. The shop will service Freightliner trucks in the area, including those used by the nearby Old Dominion Freightline. The city of Parsons issued a building permit for the project in December with an estimated valuation of \$1.1 million. Branco Enterprises, Neosho, Missouri, is the main contractor.

Employers compared notes on secret prices at Kansas hospitals

By Celia Llopis-Jepsen
Kansas News Service

The cost of getting an appendectomy with private health insurance has soared since the early 2000s. So has the bill for a knee replacement.

But the secrecy of prices negotiated between health care providers and insurance companies makes it hard for employers to understand what they pay for a knee replacement and whether it's a good price.

Researchers broadly agree workers suffer for it.

"That's a cost that comes directly out of how much your employer can pay you," RAND Corporation policy researcher Christopher Whaley said. "In wages or other types of benefits."

A new study from RAND, a think



Chris Neal/Kansas News Service photo

A new report from the RAND Corporation tries to shed light on prices negotiated between hospitals and private insurance.

tank specializing in defense and public policy, analyzes billions of dollars in medical claims pooled largely by employers desperate to know who's paying what.

They crave transparency that would let them comparison shop among health plans and hospitals in an industry that can charge vastly different amounts to different people for the same services.

In Kansas, private health plans paid more than twice the rate of Medicare for hospital care in 2018, RAND found. Prices at the University of Kansas Hospital and Overland Park Regional Medical Center were among the highest RAND saw. Not just in Kansas, but across the country.

The KU Health System disputes the think tank's findings that show KU Hospital charged four times what Medicare would have paid for the 676 insurance claims that RAND man-

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Unemployment system blocks 45K bogus claims

WICHITA (AP) — Criminals have targeted Kansas' unemployment system in a multibillion dollar fraud scheme that has delayed relief payments to thousands of people around the state who lost their jobs during the coronavirus pandemic, officials say.

Ryan Wright, the acting secretary of the Kansas Department of Labor, said the agency has blocked at least 45,000 fraudulent payments this year. The agency doesn't know how much money the fraudsters are believed to have stolen in Kansas, but the Legisla-

ture approved an audit of the program to determine how many payments slipped through to them, The Wichita Eagle reported.

"We will know eventually what the scale and scope of this is and what those costs are," Wright said.

State unemployment systems throughout the U.S. have been targeted by criminal organizations and individuals who use stolen identities to exploit the massive expansion of benefits offered because of the coronavirus pandemic, authorities say. Wright

said the U.S. Department of Labor's inspector general estimates that \$8 billion in fraudulent claims have been filed this year nationwide.

Victims often don't find out they've been targeted until they run into problems filing legitimate claims or their employer approaches them.

Among them was Margaret Dawe, an associate professor in the creative writing program at Wichita State University, who was surprised to be noti-

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Auction to benefit VFW Auxiliary member

By Colleen Williamson
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Amid a pandemic when many businesses are struggling, some are still stepping forward to help their own.

Brown Bishop Post No. 704, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the VFW Auxiliary reached out to area businesses when one of their auxiliary members, Sherri Anderson, requested help with paying medical bills.

For over 40 years, Anderson worked in the medical field and most recently worked as a home care giver/certified nurse's assistant for Healing Hands Caring Hearts LLC and Community Care Connections.

She has served in the VFW Auxiliary, including as local auxiliary trustee and president from 2017 to 2019 and Kansas' 3rd District auxiliary president in 2012-13 and 2017-18. From 2016 to 2019, but not continuously, she served as Kansas' 3rd District auxiliary color bearer, chaplain, junior vice president, senior vice president and committee chairwoman and trustee. As well she served as Kansas' VFW department banner bearer and color bearer during those years.

The VFW originally requested support from the local community of Parsons. Some community members stepped up and donated monetarily to help Anderson pay some of her mounting medical bills as she battles cancer.

"Then we began to discuss a silent auction as another way of gaining more support," the VFW stated in a release. "It was decided that gathering people in an enclosed space wouldn't be responsible at this time, so the idea of a silent auction that could be held completely online was born. Thus our first ever digital silent auction was born. We agreed that this would be a great way to increase the funds already received as well as support our community by promoting patrons to visit their businesses in return for their donation. A win-win."

"She has given of her time

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FREE Prostate Screening Clinic at Labette Health

Thursday, October 22, 2020 * Bldg E, 2nd Floor

*For males under the age of 75 who have not had a prostate screening in the last year

*Screening includes a free examination courtesy of Dr. Logan Wineland & Scott Fox, APRN-C

*PSA blood test courtesy of the Labette Health Lab



Appointment Required—Call 620-820-5444

*MASK REQUIRED

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