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Farmers Market to begin season in late April

By Colleen Williamson
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The Parsons Farmers Market will continue this year to the delight of those who frequent the market almost weekly, looking for fresh produce, baked goods and more.

A breakdown in communication led to City Manager Debbie Lamb announcing this week that the market would not be moving forward this year because the person managing it could no longer do so.

That person, Gretchen Sassenrath, said

because of the amount of responsibility that comes with managing the Farmers Market, she did not feel she could manage it all on her own while also working a full-time job with an expanded workload. She sought someone else willing to take on the management of the market but could find no one. Given that, she initially had notified Lamb she could not manage it.

There used to be others who assisted with the jobs, such as former City Commissioner Aaron Stewart, who moved to England, and former market manager Norma Cagle, who

moved to Oklahoma.

"There were about five or six of us who were involved, so we all had little jobs, so it was manageable. It's whittled down so there is only me left," Sassenrath said.

"There's lots of different jobs that are involved in running the Farmers Market. It's not horrendous, or difficult; I just don't have time. So, I did all the background stuff because I knew all the vendors wanted to be there, and I was hoping somebody would step up and nobody did," she said. "I kept doing all the background stuff and then

talked with some of the vendors, and we talked about how we're going to divvy up some of the jobs, so it will be reasonable and manageable."

With vendors' willingness to help her out, Sassenrath feels they can host the Parsons Farmers Market from 3 to 6 p.m. every Tuesday 8 to 11 a.m. Saturday 8-11 a.m. at the northeast corner of Forest Park, as in the past.

"I appreciate all she is doing, and I'm

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Super 8 to be sold in auction at courthouse

By Ray Nolting
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A Parsons hotel that closed July 31, 2020, will be auctioned at a sheriff's sale next week.

The sale of the former Super 8, 229 Main, will take place at 10 a.m. Wednesday on the east steps of the Labette County Courthouse in Oswego. Om Parmatma is the Kansas limited liability company that owns the property, and Simmons Bank foreclosed on the property. Others listed in the 2020 civil suit filed in Labette County District Court are Hilamkumar M. Patel, Keniben B. Patel, Mahendrabhai H. Patel and Pragnaben M. Patel.

A journal entry of judgment in the case filed March 2 notes that Hilamkumar M. Patel attended a March 1 hearing in the case and did not object to the bank's motion for summary judgment in the foreclosure.

In the suit, the bank reports it loaned the borrower \$1,202,000 on Feb. 12, 2014, and that per an agreement that amount increased to \$1,252,000. The Patels signed guaranties for the loan repayment and also waived all redemption rights, and Hilamkumar Patel also provided his life insurance policy as loan security. A security agreement conveyed to the bank interest in the building, inventory, accounts, deposit accounts and investment property.

According to the civil suit, Simmons Bank issued a demand letter on Dec. 11, 2019, asking the Patels to honor terms of the loan and accelerated the amounts due under the note.

As of Jan. 13, 2020, the amount due was \$1,115,220.08 on the principal amount of the loan, \$23,210.52 accrued interest, \$912.10 in late fees and miscellaneous expenses of \$2,230. These totaled \$1,141,572.70 at the time, but the interest has accrued since.

The judgment grants Simmons Bank the right to sell the hotel property and apply the sale proceeds to the debt.

A note on the hotel's door indicated that it closed July 31, 2020. In August 2020, the LLC that owns the motel owed \$107,559.59 in property taxes, penalties and fees to Labette County for three years of unpaid property taxes.

KATY HERITAGE



Colleen Williamson/Sun photo

The Katy Heritage Locomotive, numbered 1988 to reflect the year the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad became a part of Union Pacific, passed through Parsons on Wednesday.

School funds tied to 'choice' plan

TOPEKA (AP) — Conservative Republican lawmakers on Wednesday tied funding for Kansas' public schools to a proposal that would allow parents of academically struggling students to use state dollars to pay for private schooling.

Republican negotiators for the state House and Senate drafted the final version of legislation that would set up education savings accounts for students who are at-risk of failing in pub-

lic schools, using tax dollars normally earmarked for those schools. Parents could use the state funds to cover a wide range of educational expenses to help their children, including tuition at private schools.

The measure is part of an education bill that also includes Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's proposal to provide \$5.2 billion in state aid to public school districts for the 2021-22 school year, a 5.3% increase in line with laws

enacted in 2018 and 2019 to boost education funding. The laws complied with Kansas Supreme Court rulings in a school finance lawsuit that remains before the justices.

"They go hand in hand," said Rep. Kristy Williams, an Augusta Republican and the chair of the House committee that drafted the chamber's school choice proposals. "We're con-

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DEATHS

Obituaries or notices for the following people can be found on Page 2 in today's Sun:

- George Henry
- Larry Troester

FUNERALS

LARRY TROESTER, 85, of Parsons, service at 10:30 a.m. Saturday at Forbes-Hoffman Funeral Home.

MARILYN BARKER, 76, of Fort Scott, service at 11:30 a.m. Friday at First Southern Baptist Church, Fort Scott.

GEORGE HENRY, 97, of Claremore, Oklahoma, service at 11 a.m. Friday at Oakwood Cemetery.

CHARLIE GREGORY, 71, of Aransas Pass, Texas, celebration of life at 3 p.m. Friday at Fulton Convention Center, Fulton, Texas.

LYNETTE HOUSTON, 53, of Log Cabin, Texas, celebration of life at 6 p.m. April 23 at the Alamo boat dock, Log Cabin.

Chetopa raises utility bills

By The Sun Staff
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CHETOPA — Still reeling from huge energy costs during the February cold snap, the city of Chetopa took steps last month to rebuild its budget.

The Chetopa City Council during its March 16 regular meeting agreed to add a 0.00829 kilowatt per hour fuel adjustment to city utility bills for the next two years. The city owns and operates its own electrical utility but buys its power from the Kansas Municipal Energy Association.

During the extremely cold temperatures of mid-February, many natural gas well heads froze, curtailing the supply in a time of great demand and in turn driving up the price of natural gas. Chetopa had to pay KMEA over \$500,000 in February. Only about

\$42,000 of that was for actual energy used, with the remaining being charged to the city for the cost from the Southwest Power Pool to obtain the natural gas used for KMEA's electricity generation.

The council approved a \$250,000 loan agreement from a state utility low-interest loan program during the March 16 meeting.

To pay back the loan, city employee Debbie Darnell presented the council with three options. Besides the fuel adjustment, the council discussed absorbing the cost or adding a surcharge of \$7.73 per month for two years. The council approved the fuel adjustment unanimously. Council members Gary Bryant and Jaunita Kepner were not present.

City Clerk Toni Crumrine said the city staff budgeted about \$500,000 for the electric utility for the

entire year, so the amount spent in February depleted the budget. The state loan will help fill the gap, but the city council agreed that loan payments need to be recouped through higher customer bills.

Because the fuel adjustment is based on the amount of electricity used, the additional amount added to each customer's bill will vary widely. Crumrine said a customer using 1,000 kilowatts in a month would pay an additional \$8.29.

The council also agreed to have council members Geraldine Castle, Linda Seaman and Ernie Wulf and Mayor Tammy Bushong meet with utility customers to create payment arrangements for their high bills on the evening of March 18. That date was set for people who could not go to City

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Federal official rescinds orders on employee speech

LAWRENCE (AP) — The director of the Bureau of Indian Education has rescinded directives that regulated public communication for employees at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence.

BIE director Tony Dearman notified Haskell faculty and staff in a letter Tuesday that he was rescinding a directive that forbid Haskell employees from publicly discussing issues they had with the school without going through a chain of command. A second directive said Haskell employees could not talk to the media without prior permission.

Dearman said the BIE supports free speech rights for staff, faculty and students. He also noted regulations and standards governing the public communications of Haskell employees can be found in the U.S. Department of the Interior's manual. The Interior Department oversees the BIE.

The order to rescind the directive comes after the school's Faculty Senate last week unanimously approved a vote of no-confidence in President Ronald

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