



‘THE BEAST MUST BE FED’

RAILROAD BRIDGE HAS FANS



ANDREW SMITH, THE NONPAREIL

A car easily passes under the railroad bridge that stretches over the west end of Big Lake Road on August 27, 2024.

Low clearance leaves many vehicles with scars

ANDREW SMITH
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

If the slew of yellow and black striped warning signs doesn't scare you, let this be the warning to mind your height when driving through Big Lake Park.

The park is wrapped by two rail lines; Canadian National owns the rails to the west and Union Pacific owns those to the east.

Vehicle passage through Big Lake Park is tied to Big Lake Road, which itself winds

VIEW: For a video showing some of the victims of “The Ripper,” point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

NEWSVU

around the aptly named Big Lake. This is only possible by traveling under at least one of two railroad bridges.

The greater offender is the bridge that spans the gap west of the lake, which is rated

with a clearance of 8 feet, 8 inches. While a motorcycle, sedan, sport utility vehicle or an average-sized pickup truck should be fine to cross under, moving trucks, cargo vans, campers and other taller vehicles are at risk of adding paint — or more — to the scars that run underneath the bridge.

There are cars that shift into reverse, and cars that go full speed ahead.

Please see **RIPPER**, Page A2

Chamber looks to future as merger progresses

SCOTT STEWART
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

Leaders of the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce don't really know what the organization will look like in a few years. And that's by design.

As the chamber continues moving forward with a merger with The 712 Initiative and as their new combined leader continues to settle into his role, the short-term plans are clear: keep doing what they're doing, wrap up the merger, and work on strategic planning.

Looking toward the horizon, though, the sky's the limit. That's part of what Chris LaFerla finds exciting about his still-pretty-new job as president and CEO of the chamber and 712.

When the chamber was first formed, LaFerla said, the goal in 1916 was to grow Council Bluffs into a community of 100,000 people.

“Obviously, we haven't reached that goal yet,” LaFerla said. “I'm really excited about

the idea of being a part of that rich history of a chamber of commerce that has that mission. Together, our 718 members right now have an opportunity to share in that vision of growing and developing Council Bluffs.”

Beyond facilitating growth, there's plenty of certainty about the future work of the chamber. It will still promote the interest of businesses in Council Bluffs. Through the merger with 712, it will also play a role in promoting housing and economic development in the community.

Collaboration is another cornerstone, as the organization seeks to act in concert with others in the community instead of trying to chart its own path at odds with City Hall and other civic institutions, such as the Iowa West Foundation.

Dave Zimmerman, market president of Availa Bank and past chair of the chamber's board of directors, told The Nonpareil that

Please see **CHAMBER**, Page A2



SCOTT STEWART, THE NONPAREIL

Chris LaFerla, president and CEO of the Council Bluffs Area Chamber of Commerce, mingles during a chamber mixer in the space formerly occupied by Jefferson's Lounge on the 100 Block of West Broadway on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2024.

Inside

Opinion	A4	Obituaries	A11	Sport	C1
Recap	A8	Weather	A12	Lively	D1
Puzzles	A10	National	B1		

Weather

Sunny and comfortable
High 84 • Low 61
FORECAST • A12



DIGEST

Creekside Church to host Labor Day fireworks display Sunday

For those community members sticking around town over Labor Day weekend, Creekside Church is hosting an event that is free for the public to enjoy.

Creeksidepalooza will have inflatables, games, prizes, music, and face painting. The event will also be selling hot dogs and chips for a dollar and hosting a car demolition fundraiser.

The night will end with a fireworks display where guests are

encouraged to bring blankets and lawn chairs to use while watching. Creeksidepalooza will occur Sunday, Sept. 1, from 6 to 9 p.m. at Creekside Church. The church is located at 3320 Harry Langdon Blvd.

Council Bluffs police seek information on Thursday shooting

A 17-year-old was shot Thursday evening near South 26th Street and Third Avenue.

The Council Bluffs Police Department said in a news release

Friday that police responded to the area about 9:30 p.m. Thursday to discover a teen had been shot and was taken to a hospital before they arrived.

The teen was shot in the chest and the leg, police said in the release. He was taken to CHI Health Mercy Hospital and is expected to survive the injuries.

An initial police investigation indicated a disturbance took place in front of 215 S. 26th St., during which someone produced a firearm and fired multiple shots.

The investigation remains ongoing. Anyone with information

is asked to call the department's Criminal Investigation Division at 712-328-4728. Anonymous reports can be made via Council Bluffs Crime Stoppers at 712-328-7867 or tinyurl.com/cbpd-crimestoppers.

Double homicide at I-29 Speedway remains under investigation

An investigation is still underway following a double homicide at the I-29 Speedway in Pacific Junction earlier this month.

On Aug. 10, shots were fired

prior to the start of an outdoor concert. The I-29 Speedway was hosting the Pull Up Car Show and Music Fest, featuring rappers Lil Boosie, Rob49 and Rich the Factor.

The shooting killed two Omaha men: Marcus L. Johnson, 28, and Charles A. Williams Jr., 27. Since then, the Mills County Sheriff's Office has turned the case over to the Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation.

A spokesperson for the state agency said Friday that there is no new information to report at this time and the incident remains an ongoing investigation.

Ripper

From A1

The Nonpareil has reported some larger accidents in the past, including when a bus from an assisted living facility struck the bridge in May 2018 — injuring six — and when the vehicles of two drivers fell victim to the low bridge in the same week in July 2014.

Since then, Canadian National's old train crossing has grown quite an online following — roughly 3,400 strong. “The Ripper” was born a couple years back with a voting contest on the Council Bluffs Scanner Facebook page after a poll unofficially named the bridge.

Jeremy Thielen, creator and admin of “The Council Bluffs Ripper ‘The Beast Must Be Fed’” Facebook page, said he's proud of the part he's playing in bringing people together.

“In this era of divisiveness, I see this as something that brings people together,” Thielen told The Nonpareil in an interview. “I keep crap off the page as far as like solicitations and stuff like that.”

Thielen, a Carter Lake resident, used to live on Broadway and



ANDREW SMITH, THE NONPAREIL

A car easily passes under the railroad bridge that stretches over the west end of Big Lake Road on August 27, 2024.

would watch truck drivers fall victim to the railroad bridge when he was growing up. The idea to personify the bridge didn't come until his daughter moved to Louisville, Kentucky, and sent him a page for the “Can Opener,” a local bridge near the University of Louisville with clearance of 11 feet, 8 inches.

“We've got one of those here in town,” Thielen said. “I just kind of thought about it as a beast that's hungry — eats trucks — and that's

how it started, and people love it.”

The bridge is often personified by group members and is known for its “feedings,” occasionally “uttering” the sounds “nom nom nom.”

Thielen works from home for a mortgage company and checks the page several times a day to see what's been posted. The Ripper strikes intermittently, but contributors post photos and memes depicting other destructive bridges

Chamber

From A1

the driving force for the organization is to improve Council Bluffs, not just the self-interest of the chamber members.

“You've got a staff that is just extremely motivated and excited, and the group that Chris has been able to assemble, you just see the eagerness to try to make Council Bluffs better,” Zimmerman said. “If Council Bluffs continues to get better, then all the residents benefit.”

Getting better was the aim of merging the chamber with The 712 Initiative in the first place.

LaFerla said the boards of both entities voted in July to formally merge, and since then the work has included integrating systems, resources, staff and office spaces.

Asked about how long it's taken, with the merger first announced in October 2023, LaFerla said the merger was paused to focus on the leadership of the chamber, including hiring him to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Drew Kamp in June 2023.

LaFerla started at the helm of the chamber in January, and a facilitator was sought to help with the merger. The facilitator began in March, with due diligence and stakeholder meetings with more than 100 people in April and May helping to prepare for a merger committee's work in May and June, including sorting out how to combine nonprofits under two different tax-exempt classifications.

“I understand that how it may look like this process has taken a really long time,” LaFerla said, adding that, in his view, the work has proceeded on “a pretty quick

Meet the team

- Chris LaFerla** – President & CEO
- Lynn Dittmer** – Director of Redevelopment
- Lindsey Grote-Rodgers** – Director of Marketing & PR
- Jacob Cool** – Director of Member Services
- Jessica Escamilla** – Director of Events
- Rachael Jensen** – Director of Workforce Development
- Anne Silknitter** – Program Coordinator
- Brandy Van Riessen** – Administrative Assistant
- Cieandra Tripp** – Project Coordinator
- Brandi Drvol** – Farmers Market Manager

timeline.”

LaFerla observed that the chamber and 712 “share a mission of growing and developing the community,” and the chamber had a strategic partnership with the Pottawattamie County Development Corporation before The 712 Initiative was formed — so it makes sense to bring the organizations back together now.

“This partnership will make it possible for these two organizations to amplify our impact in the community by pooling and sharing our resources and our talents as a team and being more strategic in terms of making sure that these two organizations are moving forward together in partnership to move big rocks in the community,” LaFerla

Meet the board

- George Barton** – ConAgra Brands
- Dave Burd** – Methodist Jennie Edmundson
- John Dresher** – American Family Insurance
- Jennifer Fletcher** – CyncHealth
- Wyatt Greenwood** – Midstates Bank
- Mark Hanwright** – Heartland Properties
- Scott Hartman** – US Bank
- Brent Hoelsing** – Lewis Central Schools
- Shane Hoss** – ETI
- Dan Kinney** – Iowa Western Community College
- Amy McDermott** – Black Hills Energy
- Vickie Murillo** – Council Bluffs

said. “I'm excited about that.”

The progress so far, which included the integration of staff members into a shared office space on the 100 Block of West Broadway, was celebrated Aug. 22 with a private event at Bayliss Park Hall, according to a news release. The event brought together board members, community partners and staff.

“The event marked the beginning of a new chapter, celebrated with fellowship and refreshments,” the release stated. “The timing of the celebration coincided with Farmers Market Council Bluffs, offering attendees the opportunity to enjoy the market afterward. Farmers Market Council Bluffs is just one of the many programs that the

Community Schools

Nikki Rauth – CHI Health Mercy

Hannah Smith – Trivium Life Services

Kerrie Snyder – Assistant Pottawattamie County Attorney

Evan Summy – Midwest Ag Services

Jessica Vanderpool – Kinseth Hospitality Co.

Dave Wise – TS Bank

David Zimmerman – Availa Bank

Officers are chair Mark Hanwright, chair-elect Dave Burd, past-chair Dave Zimmerman and treasurer Jen Fletcher. Executive Committee members are Mark Hanwright, Dave Burd, Dave Zimmerman, Jen Fletcher, Amy Carolus, Wyatt Greenwood and Amy McDermott.

new organization will continue to support and expand upon as part of its ongoing commitment to the community.”

Over the next several months, the chamber will focus on establishing a new strategic plan to identify and guide future initiatives, with the expectation that discussion will continue onward as the chamber and 712 are fully combined.

“This initial strategic planning conversation will really be charting the course for the next year, year and a half, and once that integration is fully complete, then we'll come back together for a more comprehensive strategic plan,” LaFerla said.

LaFerla has the opportunity to help guide those discussions, just

as he helped shape the make up of the organization's staff, Zimmerman said.

“How often do you get to walk into an organization with a blank slate and say, ‘What do I want it to be?’ And that's really the opportunity that Chris has had here,” Zimmerman said. “It's not just one person's vision, but it's the vision of the board and the greater community — what's best for Council Bluffs — and how does the chamber fit into those goals.”

LaFerla said the organization will also work to ensure legal compliance and team unity, as well as look at the organizational structure and foster the right culture for the organization, all while contemplating what change it wants to implement in the future.

“The mission of the chamber of Commerce and The 712 Initiative just really aligns with the work that I want to do in Council Bluffs,” LaFerla said. “I'm really excited about the different opportunities that we get to do that here with this organization, just in terms of economic development, workforce development, tackling big challenges in our community right now, such as housing, and, ultimately, working to make Council Bluffs a better place to live.”

Once the plan is in place, the chamber's efforts in the community should be clearly understood and clearly communicated, Zimmerman said.

“We don't want people to guess, ‘What is the chamber doing?’” Zimmerman said. “It's important to try to get Council Bluffs to that next level, keep it growing, stay progressive with what we're going to do, bring new business in here, expand existing business — and it's going to take everybody.”

THE DAILY NONPAREIL
300 W. Broadway, Suite 712, Council Bluffs, IA 51503

IDENTIFICATION
The Daily Nonpareil (ISSN: 1046-1833), a Lee Enterprises Newspaper, is published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 300 W BROADWAY STE 108, COUNCIL BLUFFS, IA 51503. Periodicals Postage Paid at Council Bluffs, IA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to PO BOX 2795, MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23116.

CONTACT US
• **Scott Stewart, Managing Editor:** 712-325-5678 scott.stewart@nonpareilonline.com
• **Peter Burtnett, Sports Editor:** 712-325-5736 peter.burtnett@nonpareilonline.com
• **Subscriber Customer Service** 712-325-5726 custservice@nonpareilonline.com
• **Jessica Boucher, Classifieds Manager** 712-325-5710 jboucher@nonpareilonline.com
• **To place classifieds:** 712-325-5700 classifieds@nonpareilonline.com
• **To place legal and public notices:** legals@nonpareilonline.com; 712-325-5800
• **To place obituaries:** 402-444-1286 obits@nonpareilonline.com

NEWS TIPS
If you have a story idea or a news tip, call us at 712-328-1811 and select option 3 for the newsroom. You can also email us at editorial@nonpareilonline.com or send us mail at

The Daily Nonpareil Newsroom
300 W. Broadway, Suite 712
Council Bluffs, IA, 51503

Please provide as much detail on the idea and contact information as you can.

PRICING
The Daily Nonpareil is a Lee Enterprises Newspaper and is published online daily, and three days per week in print (Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays).

The subscription price includes all applicable sales tax and a charge for the convenience of having the paper delivered. To avoid delivery charges, call 1-712-325-5726 to arrange pickup of your paper at a local office. We reserve the right to change your subscription rate at any time. Contact 1-712-325-5726 or email custservice@nonpareilonline.com for additional information.

SUBSCRIPTION OFFERS
All subscription offers available at nonpareilonline.com, including those advertised through our email promotions, on-site messaging, social media, and any external means of promotion, are valid for new subscribers only. You must not have been a subscriber in the past thirty (30) days to register for a new subscription offer.

You understand that delivery and billing will continue beyond the initial order period unless you cancel your subscription as detailed in the next paragraph. Rates may change after introductory offer period. There is a non-refundable one-time account set up fee of \$6.99 for all new subscribers.

AUTO-RENEWAL, CANCELLATION, REFUND, AND SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL POLICY
If you register for EZ Pay or debit banking (ACH) payments, your Digital Only or Print + Digital subscription service (your "Subscription") will automatically renew. On the last day of your current term (your "Renewal Date"), your Subscription will automatically renew for the same length of time, at the then-current Subscription rate, which we may change in our discretion, unless you choose to cancel more than twenty-one (21) days before your Renewal Date (your "Cancellation Date"). YOU MAY CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION BY EMAILING US WITH THE SUBJECT LINE "CANCEL" AT custservice@nonpareilonline.com OR CALLING US AT 1-712-325-5726. YOU MAY ALSO BE ABLE TO CANCEL ONLINE DEPENDING ON YOUR SUBSCRIPTION - PLEASE CHECK YOUR SETTINGS IN YOUR ACCOUNT DASHBOARD TO SEE IF THIS OPTION IS AVAILABLE TO YOU.

Prior to the Cancellation Date, we will send you a notice reminding you about the renewal of your Subscription. Subscribers who prefer to receive paper renewal notices in the mail will be charged \$6.99 for each renewal notice; this fee is waived for subscribers who sign up to receive their renewal notices via email. If you wish to receive renewal notices via email, please

contact us at custservice@nonpareilonline.com or call 1-712-325-5726.

IF YOU DO NOT AFFIRMATIVELY CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION BEFORE YOUR CANCELLATION DATE, YOU WILL BE CHARGED FOR AN ADDITIONAL TERM FOR THE SUBSCRIPTION YOU INITIALLY SELECTED AT THE RATES IN EFFECT AT THE TIME OF RENEWAL.

If you have provided us with a valid credit card number or an alternate payment method saved in your account, and you have not cancelled by your Cancellation Date, your Subscription will be automatically processed up to fourteen (14) days in advance of your Renewal Date, and the payment method you provided to us at or after the time of your initial Subscription purchase will be charged.

We reserve the right to change your Subscription rate at the next renewal period. If you are not satisfied with your Subscription rate or service, you may cancel your Subscription at any time. No refunds will be returned if remainder of the Subscription term is under thirty (30) days. The refund amount of any balance over \$25.00 will be returned minus an early termination fee of \$25.00. No refunds for Digital Only subscriptions are provided.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Print subscribers get the benefit of newspaper home delivery as well as digital access. All subscriptions are subject to the Cancellation, Refund and Renewal Policy described above, and all EZ Pay or ACH subscriptions are also subject to the Auto-Renewal Policy, as well as the additional

terms and conditions set forth below.

All Subscriptions include unlimited digital access, but there may be links to content on other websites owned by our parent company that can be accessed only through an additional payroll. In such cases, your Subscription to content behind a separate payroll will be governed by any additional terms that are associated therewith. To access these benefits, you must first provide your email address, register with nonpareilonline.com/services, and activate your account online. To activate your digital account visit nonpareilonline.com/activate. You can manage your account at nonpareilonline.com/services.

We may, in our sole discretion, change features of your subscription, including without limitations frequency of and media/platform for delivery. We will notify you of any material changes to your subscription prior to your next renewal and sent to you before your subscription renews with those changes. YOUR CONTINUED SUBSCRIPTION FOLLOWING SUCH CHANGES CONSTITUTES YOUR ACCEPTANCE OF THE CHANGES. IF YOU DO NOT AGREE TO ANY CHANGES, YOU MUST CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION.

VACATION POLICY
Print Vacation holds up to thirty (30) days will continue to bill at regular rate while full digital access is maintained. Extended vacations of thirty-one (31) days or more will not incur charges and all Subscription benefits will be suspended during that time.