

PHAROS-TRIBUNE



Audrey Graham gives a presentation about her trip to Ireland to the Cass County Community Foundation board. Graham applied for a Richard and Rose Gates Discovery Award from the community foundation to help her attend the study abroad opportunity with the University of Notre Dame.

Josh Flynn | Pharos-Tribune

Cass Co prepares to finalize budget

Most employees will see 3 percent raise

JAMES BENNETT III
PHAROS-TRIBUNE

Barring any changes to the proposed budget, most Cass County employees can expect a raise next year.

The County Council held its first reading of the 2026 budget on Aug. 15. A second reading will be held during the council's meeting next month.

A 3% raise for most people employed by the county is included in the budget, with exceptions including Cass County EMS (which received approval from the County Council to give raises in May) and the new director of Julian Ridlen AIM High Park.

The budgeting process began around July, when each department submitted a proposed budget to be discussed at a workshop meeting. From there, the council examines each budget and makes some modifications.

Departments are asked not to include their own proposals for raises, Council president Dave Redweik explained. That number tends to change during the budgeting process, and recording new figures would make more work for the auditor's office.

The council figures out what percentage of raises it's able to offer based on what's presented at the first reading, Redweik explained.

In the past, the council has tried to keep raises on pace with surrounding counties. For the past few years, that's come out to a 5% raise for most employees.

"This one, we just felt we've got to stick with 3% and see what happens," Redweik said.

After the budget's second reading (and presumed approval), which is scheduled for Sept. 19, the council will send the budget to the

See **BUDGET** on A10

STUDYING ABROAD

Graham visits Ireland thanks to Community Foundation award

JOSH FLYNN
PHAROS-TRIBUNE

Audrey Graham took a detour heading into her senior year at Logansport High School, stopping by Ireland for a two-week study abroad program hosted by the University of Notre Dame.

The trip came to fruition thanks to a Richard and Rose Gates Discovery Award from the Cass County Community Foundation. The

awards give high school students an opportunity to participate in summer enrichment programs and the funding has been used to study ballet in Texas, theater on Broadway and attend a medical and healthcare conference in Chicago.

Ian Hooks, a graduate of Lewis Cass High School, was the first student to receive the grant in 2022. His persistence in asking the community foundation for financial help so he could study at the Berklee

School of Music between his junior and senior year of high school led to the creation of the grant program.

Students must first be accepted into a program of study before apply for a Gates Discovery Award.

"I'm a pretty big traveler," Graham said. "My mom is a huge traveler. My dad, too. It's something that interests me a lot culturally. I knew study abroad was a good choice for me."

She said she decided on Ireland because it was a location her grand-

mother had visited and she also loved the idea of getting to hike across the Ireland's vast landscapes.

She is the first student from Logansport High School to apply for and receive the award.

The trip ran from July 19 until August 2 and Graham traveled with a group of 18 students she had never met before. She was the only student from Indiana among them. She was able to meet Notre Dame faculty members at the terminal before the flight left and she said that helped

See **GRAHAM** on A10

Congress debates future of FEMA and roles of states

Bipartisan bill would streamline processes

JENNIFER SHUTT
THE STATES NEWSROOM

WASHINGTON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency could look significantly different by next year's hurricane season, with state and local governments shouldering more of the responsibility for natural disaster response and recovery.

Members of both political parties have long criticized FEMA, but a bipartisan bill moving along in Congress combined with President Donald Trump's disdain for the agency may provide momentum for a

big shift in emergency management.

Trump has said repeatedly he doesn't support FEMA's current structure and wants to see a special review council he put together propose a complete overhaul of the agency, possibly eliminating it entirely. That's provoked deep concern among some local and state officials who don't see how they would have the funding or background to handle a sudden natural disaster.

"We want to wean off of FEMA and we want to bring it down to the state level," Trump said in June. "We're moving it back to the states so the governors can handle it. That's why they're governors. Now, if they can't handle it, they shouldn't be governor."

Trump's FEMA Review Council, a

12-member board led by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, has until mid-November to write a report detailing its recommendations for the president.

But, as Noem has noted several times during the group's two public meetings, Congress holds authority over FEMA and would need to sign off on any major changes.

Lawmakers, some of whom have spent years working on federal emergency management issues, aren't waiting for the review council's report to get started.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves, R-Mo., ranking member Rick Larsen, D-Wash., Florida Republican

See **FEMA** on A10



Mariah Miranda | Associated Press

Parents of Texas Moms Rising and their allies protest the Trump administration for cuts to NOAA, NWS, and FEMA on July 21, 2025 in Washington.

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FIRST AMENDMENT

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

WEATHER

Partly sunny with stray storms.
High 85, Low 63.
Complete forecast on Page A12.



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