



Firemen use their 'pike poles' to peel back the tin to get at the fire that took down a hog confinement outside of Wellsburg last Tuesday night. (Photo contributed by the Grundy County Sheriff's Department)

### Fire consumes confinement building outside of Wellsburg

By **ROB MAHARRY**  
*The Grundy Register*

WELLSBURG- A fire brought down a hog confinement building outside of Wellsburg at about 6:00 p.m. last Tuesday night, but a crew of firefighters from Grundy Center, Wellsburg and Holland was able to get it under control.

Dallas Koch, who resides about four miles northeast of Wellsburg, owns the site, which contains three buildings, and the building that caught on fire has been deemed a total loss. The other two remained untouched, however, and only about 25 of the 1,300 hogs in the facility were lost as a result of the fire. Grundy

County Sheriff Rick Penning did not have an official estimate on the monetary value of the damages.

Neither Koch nor Penning is completely sure what caused the fire, but it started on the roof and spread quickly.

"We kind of presume that it was electrical because it was warm enough that the heaters wouldn't have been running," Koch said.

As Koch and his wife were gone at the time, a neighbor spotted it and reported it to the authorities.

"(My neighbor) called my brother who lives around the corner and said it looks too big for a trash fire," he added.

They were right: the fire had spread 220 feet under the eaves by the time Koch arrived, and it took a large crew of about 35 firefighters from the three aforementioned communities to subdue it. Koch thanked both the fire departments and the Grundy County Sheriff's Department for all of their assistance throughout the process.

The surviving hogs found temporary shelter at the site of another nearby farmer who had recently emptied his building, and the Kochs feel lucky that the end result wasn't much worse. According to Mr. Koch, the facility is covered by insurance, and he intends to have it rebuilt.



Spartans Blocking Hunger a big success- Students at Grundy Center High School capped a season of giving with a holiday celebration on Thursday, and a group of them posed for a photo to show off all of the items donated as part of the "Spartans Blocking Hunger" initiative. This is the second year of the program. (Rob Maharry/The Grundy Register photo)

## Clean Line withdraws Iowa application

By **JOHN JENSEN**  
*Eclipse-News Review*

Opponents of the Rock Island Clean Line received an early Christmas gift late last week, as Clean Line Energy Partners announced that it was withdrawing its application to the Iowa Utilities Board to construct a transmission line across the state.

The decision comes as Clean Line fights a court challenge in Illinois. The Illinois Commerce Commission granted the group permis-

sion to build the Illinois portion of the line in 2014, though since then the case has been in court. An appellate court reversed the Illinois decision in August, and the Illinois Supreme Court agreed last month to review the case.

The proposed power corridor project would extend 500 miles, from a switching station in O'Brien County in northwest Iowa through north central and eastern Iowa to another switching station near Joliet, Ill. According to Clean Line,

the corridor would transport power from Iowa to 1.4 million homes in 14 states east of the Mississippi River. It would not provide power to Iowa customers.

The proposed route of the line passed through a corner of Butler County just east and northeast of Ackley and would have passed through a large portion of Grundy County, going north of Stout, east of Dike and northeast of Reinbeck. Controversy over the project developed over the group's attempt to use eminent domain to acquire property for the project.

Clean Line Energy vice-president Hans Detweiler told the Quad City Times that the Iowa Utilities Board timeline would have required Clean Line to identify specific parcels for eminent domain application in several counties and that the company was not yet ready to do that. He said the Iowa process could be revisited once Clean Line receives final approval from Illinois.

The Preservation of Rural Alliance, which has opposed construction of the line, celebrated the decision, posting "We can celebrate" on its Web site.

"Today is a day to appreciate all the work that many people across Iowa did to protect private property rights," it wrote in a Facebook post.

The group said Clean Line's decision to withdraw its Iowa application means it would likely have to start the entire process of gaining regulatory approval in the state over again if it were to move forward with the project.

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