

To: City Council

From: Matt Muckler, City Administrator

Date: February 21, 2014

Weekly Council Update

- **Residents Want Combined Library/Rec Center by Three-to-One Margin:** Park & Rec Public Input Surveys have been completed and tallied. HBK Engineering presented the results at a Park & Rec Steering Committee Meeting on Thursday February 20<sup>th</sup>. 416 surveys were completed. When asked the question, “Would you be in support of combining the new West Branch Public Library with a Recreational Facility and/or Community Center?,” 293 responded in favor, with only 106 opposed. In another question, “To assist in funding these projects, which of the following would you support?,” 310 respondents (or 81%) supported either Local Option Sales Tax, a Bond Referendum or both of those funding sources, while only 72 people (or 19%) said they didn’t want to fund these projects. HBK Engineering is currently preparing the survey results for distribution to members of the community.

- **West Branch Project Featured at CONEXPO in Las Vegas:** The "Hoover Dam" Project is being featured in the CONEXPO-CON/AGG Quality of Life Campaign. CONEXPO-CON/AGG is the international gathering place every three years for the construction industries, with a focus on construction, aggregates and ready mixed concrete. The event features exhibits of the latest technologies and innovations in equipment, products and services plus extensive industry-targeted education. Held every three years, the next CONEXPO-CON/AGG is set for Tuesday March 4th through Saturday March 8, 2014 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The story is listed below:

#### The ‘Stream Team’ Transforms Flood Plain to Improve Quality of Life for Iowans

The City of West Branch, Iowa is the birthplace and boyhood home of Herbert Hoover, 31<sup>st</sup> President of the United States. With its great historical significance, the city is home to The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, one of the state’s major tourist attractions.

West Branch is a city proud of the quality of life offered to its residents. Located on the west branch of Wapsinonac Creek, the city has experienced flash flooding for decades much to the detriment of its 2,300 residents. In 1993, the overwrought banks of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries invaded nine Midwestern states with West Branch not spared from the rushing waters during a flood of biblical proportion.

West Branch experienced other flood occurrences throughout the years with local officials searching for ways to fix this chronic problem. In 2010, a great sea change occurred when several groups and individual citizens decided enough is enough. They determined that a comprehensive plan to detain and capture excess rainwater within the watershed would be one solution to curbing the problem.

A structure, dubbed the “Hoover Dam,” would be the first of seven proposed and built to address the problem. This collaborative effort included representatives from the City of West Branch, The National Park Service, The Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, The Herbert Hoover

Presidential Library Association, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, as well as upstream landowners and local citizens.

Bruce Barnhart is a member of the committee and owner of Barnhart's Custom Services, LLC. While his firm earned the bid as lead contractor on the project, Barnhart's interest is inherent going well beyond his company performing the construction work. "I live just outside the city limits, but my business is still based in West Branch," said Barnhart, who is long familiar with the area's flooding problems. "I was on the local fire department for 23 years and was involved in pumping sanitary sewers, basements, washing down parking lots, and re-routing traffic because of flooded streets."

Barnhart has spent 30 years in the earthmoving business first doing farm work exclusively, and then diversifying into demolition, subdivisions and commercial work with the agriculture market remaining a substantial part of his business. He's gained much national perspective through his involvement with the contractor trade association Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA). Barnhart served as LICA's state President, then National President. He is currently its National Membership Chair.

Iowans have a reputation for meeting a challenge head-on. Calling itself the "Stream Team," the committee got to work developing creative ways to fund, plan and build Iowa's Hoover Dam. The watershed was studied, water quality monitoring completed, and a potential long-term plan developed.

Key to the project was the contribution of John Black and Curt Friis, farmers who volunteered use of 15 acres of the JB & CF Farms located northwest of West Branch. It is the focal point of the flood control effort where the grade stabilization structure would be housed. Built with the help of both rural and city residents working together from start to finish, it's function is to hold back runoff water from a 311-acre drainage area, then storing up to 14.5 million gallons of storm water, enough to fill 1,800 tanker trucks.

"The landowners gave up a portion of their property for this project to be built with no financial return," Barnhart said. "We felt we just needed to do it to help the town," Curt Friis said at the time the project was planned. "I feel like it's important to give back to the community a little bit," John Black said of the contribution.

While the project broke ground in November 2012, the group first secured an I-JOBS grant, a state investment program that provides funding through the issuance of bonds rather than raising taxes. The grant was used to build the first structure and develop the overall plan for future structures to be built in the watershed. It also helped fund improvements for water quality and environmental protection.

According to Barnhart, the project addressed a variety of quality of life issues starting with its terraces and detention basins. These hold water, reduce flooding and allow silt to be captured helping to improve water quality. Waterways were designed to prevent erosion and capture the silt in the runoff water. The process also captures chemicals and fertilizers and keeps them in the fields. "While the primary benefit is flood control farmers realize the benefit of less erosion in their fields," Barnhart said.

Showing a community-wide effort between rural and urban residents, seven local farmers helped build eight waterways, five grade stabilization structures, two terraces, and two small detention basins. City residents focused on the urban portion of the project to improve water quality by creating four rain gardens, two native landscapes and a pervious pavement to slow down runoff. It provides a place to clean water of contaminants. Soil restoration work and the native landscapes allow the soil to absorb more water and to filter out contaminants. Meeting tight deadlines, the entire project was completed in December 2012.

Considering the enormous amount of work, the total expenditure was less than \$280,000, including \$121,000 for the “Hoover Dam.” The state of Iowa’s share of the expense was less than \$186,000, about 66 percent of the entire cost of the project. The remainder of the project was funded by the farmers and citizens installing the practices, City of West Branch and the Herbert Hoover Library Association, the non-profit supporter of the Presidential Library and Museum, which is located in the flood plain of the watershed.

The job was not without its unique challenges starting with a relatively short time to complete the job. “The project had to be done and billed by the end of the year because the funding source would not be extended,” according to Barnhart. “Another challenge was something unique for this area of the country; the sand diaphragm around the principle drainage pipe, which is a new design for Iowa.” The hard work paid off with Barnhart saying, “We wanted to have a field day to publicize the project. As it turned out, the field day and the placing of the rip rap and completion of the project got done only two days before a major snow storm. We managed to make the deadline.”

While the project is deemed a success by all accounts, there was little time for celebration as the heaviest storms in 20 years—six to seven inches of rain in 48 hours--blanketed the area in April 2013, four months after the project was completed. “The new structure was filled to capacity and within inches of going over its emergency spillway,” Barnhart said. There was a marked decrease in the flash flooding from that storm with far less cleanup of flood damage throughout the National Park and the City’s green spaces. “The biggest benefit was that no flood water entered into any homes or businesses.”

According to West Branch Public Works employee Tim Moss, “The stormwater retention basin made a difference. Otherwise, we would have been at 1993 flood levels. We might have had six more feet (of water) downtown.”

Barnhart said the project passed its first major test. “In the past, (local) businesses have taken on water, which required clean up and repair. In addition, over the years, the Fire Department and National Park Service spent many hours cleaning off parking lots and streets because of the quantity of water laden with silt and debris.”

Bruce Barnhart grew up on an Iowa farm. He typifies the Iowa spirit that always strives to improve quality of life for family and friends. He also knows it will take more projects like the “Hoover Dam” to make an even greater difference. Barnhart cannot hide his passion for his work and for the people of West Branch. “Granted this is just a first step taken,” Barnhart said of the project. “It is nice to see our local public works and volunteer organizations reap the benefits of working together and having vision to plan for the future. We realized no structural damage, less disruption of traffic, and reduced cleanup due to flooding.”

- **Iowa League of Cities Update:** The weather that arrived in Des Moines on Thursday morning led to a compressed funnel week with the House finishing their business on Wednesday and the Senate only holding four committees on Thursday before adjourning for the week. Bills that did not make it out of a committee in at least one chamber are dead for the session. Appropriations and Ways & Means bills that are not subject to the funnel may still be introduced. Fireworks and Emerald Ash Borer are two issues that the League is following closely:

Fireworks - [SSB3182](#) moved rapidly out of a Senate subcommittee and through the Senate State Government Committee late this week. The League is still gathering feedback from cities on the bill, which greatly expands the ability for consumers to buy and use different types of fireworks in Iowa. The bill provides that a city council or county board of supervisors or may, by ordinance, suspend the use of consumer fireworks, display fireworks or novelties if the council or board determines that the use of these fireworks would constitute a threat to public safety. A person who violates such an ordinance would commit a simple misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of at least \$250. The bill will be eligible for debate in the Senate. Please provide any feedback you have on the bill to [DustinMiller@iowaleague.org](mailto:DustinMiller@iowaleague.org).

Emerald Ash Borer - [SF2248](#), a bill focused on woodland health, passed the Senate Natural Resources Committee. It was amended to set up an interim committee focused more exclusively on the Emerald Ash Borer, which is expected to decimate Iowa's ash trees. The bill sponsor spoke in committee about the need to assist Iowa's cities to conduct inventories of ash trees and deal with the diseased and dead trees. The League supports the bill.

- **Upcoming Events:**

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| ▪ Saturday February 22 <sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 a.m.  | Tough Mother Fitness Class              |
| ▪ Saturday February 22 <sup>nd</sup> at 8:45 a.m.  | Pilates Class                           |
| ▪ Monday February 24 <sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.    | Tough Mother Fitness Class              |
| ▪ Tuesday February 25 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.   | Zumba                                   |
| ▪ Tuesday February 25 <sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.   | Pajama Storytime at WBPL                |
| ▪ Wednesday February 26 <sup>th</sup> at 9:00 a.m. | Wednesday Roundup (Tot Time)            |
| ▪ Wednesday February 26 <sup>th</sup> at 2:00 a.m. | After School Programming at WBPL        |
| ▪ Wednesday February 26 <sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. | John Danos in Durant                    |
| ▪ Wednesday February 26 <sup>th</sup> at 5:15 p.m. | Pilates                                 |
| ▪ Wednesday February 26 <sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. | Indoor Walking at Hoover Gym            |
| ▪ Thursday February 27 <sup>th</sup> at 10:15 a.m. | Iowa Gym-Nest Tumbling Program          |
| ▪ Thursday February 27 <sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m.  | Iowa Gym-Nest Tumbling Program          |
| ▪ Thursday February 27 <sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.  | Tough Mother Fitness Class at Town Hall |
| ▪ Friday February 28 <sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.   | Preschool Story Time at WBPL            |
| ▪ Saturday March 1 <sup>st</sup> at 7:00 a.m.      | Tough Mother Fitness Class              |
| ▪ Saturday March 1 <sup>st</sup> at 8:45 a.m.      | Pilates Class                           |
| ▪ Monday March 3 <sup>rd</sup> at 5:30 p.m.        | Tough Mother Fitness Class              |
| ▪ Monday March 3 <sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 p.m.        | City Council Work Session #1            |
| ▪ Monday March 3 <sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 p.m.        | City Council Meeting                    |
| ▪ Monday March 3 <sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 p.m.        | City Council Work Session #2            |

**The information provided is one-way communication and should not be discussed among you as this would be a violation of the open meeting law.**