

To: City Council  
From: Matt Muckler, City Administrator  
Date: May 4, 2014  
Weekly Council Update

- **Park Planning Update:** The Park and Library Planning Charrette on April 24<sup>th</sup> was very productive. Several different plans for the Pedersen Park Complex were drawn and displayed, however one site plan concept emerged as a clear favorite at the noon meeting. The afternoon was spent refining the chosen site plan. It was determined that it would be better to have three larger fields (one to accommodate adult softball and two large enough for children K-6<sup>th</sup> grade), rather than four smaller fields. When that decision was made, it allowed space for a larger concession, shelter and play area.

The other parks were not forgotten during the day. Different potential site plans were drawn for each of the parks. Some amenities included additional playground features and sand volleyball at Beranek Park, a band shelter at Wapsi Creek Park, restrooms and seating at Lions Field. During the day several people discussed the importance of trail connectivity to the parks as well as other places inside and outside West Branch City limits. Brian Boelk with HBK will be on hand at our Monday evening May 5<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting to make a brief presentation and answer Council member questions.

- **Urban Renewal Plan Amendment Update:** An update to the city's urban renewal plan was distributed to the City Council and affected taxing districts last week. A resolution to set a consult with taxing entities and a public hearing at the May 19<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting appears on the May 5<sup>th</sup> Council Agenda.

- **Earth Day Report:** The Earth Day on April 22<sup>nd</sup> was quite a success. About 240 children from 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade participated in various projects throughout town. The morning started with students work hard at Wapsi Creek Park. Students picked up sticks, planted grasses and flowers, cleaned the creek beds, and raked gravel just to name a few things. In the afternoon, students stained the gazebo and worked on the flower beds at the West Branch Public Library. The City Office had a transformation as well with new plantings and fresh mulch. Students remained busy at the West Branch Cemetery but mulching existing trees. Our thanks go out to the students and staff at West Branch Community School District for all of their hard work, as well as all of the City Staff that worked with students throughout the day.

- **League of Cities Report on End of Legislative Session:** The Legislature stayed primarily focused on finishing budget bills to close the second session of the 85<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. The House suspended the rules to work past midnight last Wednesday and adjourned *Sine Die* at 5:54 a.m. on Thursday morning. The Senate remained in session to debate a resolution filed very early Thursday morning granting an expansion of subpoena power for the Government Oversight Committee. The Senate passed the resolution, which allows the Committee to hold witnesses in contempt if they do not appear, and adjourned *Sine Die* on Friday morning at 8:50 a.m. This final Iowa League legislative update of the session highlights some of the final actions taken by the Legislature. Over the coming weeks, the League will put together more in-depth information including the *2014 New Laws of Interest to Cities* Special Report, a session summary to appear in *Cityscape* magazine and other information to help your city to best understand the impacts of actions taken by the Iowa Legislature this session.
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### **Standings Bill**

The House and Senate agreed to changes without the annual standings bill going to conference committee. [HF2473](#) is the annual catch-all appropriations bill that has multiple components, and its movement is a tell-tale sign of the end of the legislative session. This year's standings bill did not include many sections that impact cities, but a few highlights are mentioned below.

### **Property Tax Backfill**

The appropriation for property tax replacement claims that will be paid to local governments to cover losses from the commercial and industrial rollback is a "standing unlimited" appropriation for the amount necessary to cover the claims (see *Code of Iowa* Section [441.21A\(1\)\(a\)](#)). Because the appropriation was allowed to operate as designed, no outright dollar figure was included in any appropriations bill. The [fiscal analysis](#) for the standings bill includes a listing of such unassigned appropriations. An estimated amount that will be appropriated to the Department of Revenue to cover property tax replacement claims can be found on page 4. For more information, contact [Erin Mullenix](#).

### **Title V Air Quality Program**

\$1.4 million was appropriated to support the Department of Natural Resources air quality programs, including the Title V permitting program.

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### **Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB)**

Through the administration and regulation budget outlined in [SF2342](#), IPIB received an appropriation of \$350,000 for the office's ongoing operation. This allows for an additional full-time equivalent position (FTE). The League has worked well with the board over its initial year of operation and will assist IPIB as they continue to develop the role of their office as it relates to the open meetings and open records laws.

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### **Iowa Economic Development Authority Bill**

[HF2460](#), the appropriations bill for the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA), gave \$16.9 million for the newly-created High Quality Jobs Program that was passed last week with [HF2448](#). The bill that was passed previously repeals the Enterprise Zone Program and replaces it with an enhanced High Quality Jobs Program and Workforce Housing Tax Incentives Program. This was a compromise that the IEDA crafted with multiple stakeholders, including the League, over the interim.

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### **Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP)**

Advocates for the REAP program successfully fought for \$25 million to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the program. The money was appropriated in several bills with \$16 million from the Environment First Fund, another \$4 million from the Restore Iowa Infrastructure Fund in [SF2349](#), and \$5 million in one-time funding from [SF2363](#). This flexible program has been utilized by cities in river bank restoration and flood mitigation. The League will work with state agencies to ensure that the program will continue to assist in these efforts.

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### **Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF)**

The RIIF bill makes appropriations to state departments and agencies from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund. This year, [SF2349](#), did not include appropriations for the Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) program or the River Enhancement Community Attraction and Tourism (RECAT) Program. Both programs had sunsets for FY2015 and were not extended by the bill. The RIIF bill did appropriate \$9.6 million for watershed initiatives according to the lake restoration plan and report. There was also \$300,000 given to develop a river restoration program and an additional \$700,000 to support cost-share opportunities related to this development.

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### **Iowa Nutrient Research Center**

[HF2458](#) provided \$1.5 million for the Iowa Nutrient Research Center that was created last year at Iowa State University and provides funding for projects across all three regents universities. The Center had requested an additional amount, but received the same amount as was appropriated in 2013. The League has been working with the Center on supporting the League's Environmental Coordinating Committee efforts to develop a nutrient trading program. The Legislature did not appropriate any additional resources to support this effort, but we will continue to work with the Center in this effort.

**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.**