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110 N. Poplar Street • PO Box 218 • West Branch, Iowa 52358  
(319) 643-5888 • Fax (319) 643-2305 • [www.westbranchiowa.org](http://www.westbranchiowa.org) • [matt@westbranchiowa.org](mailto:matt@westbranchiowa.org)

## City Administrator's Weekly Update

Matt Muckler, City Administrator

March 4, 2017

- **Annual Audit Now Available:** The Auditor of State has provided the City of West Branch with our annual audit for fiscal year 2015-2016. That document can be found on the City Website at <http://westbranchiowa.org/departments/annual-audits>.
- **Planning and Zoning Commission Update:** The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a preliminary plat for the Meadows Subdivision, Part 3 and the site plan for the West Branch High School ACE multi-purpose practice facility at their meeting earlier this week. Both of those items will be before the City Council at your March 6<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. The Commission also unanimously approved a recommendation to the City Council to adopt residential individual lot site plan regulations.

There was some concern expressed by residents on the plans for the multi-family development on Hilltop Drive. The next meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission is expected to take place on Tuesday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. Items on that agenda are expected to include site plans for the development proposed on Hilltop Drive and the new Croell Redi-Mix Plant in the industrial park.

- **Thurs. March 9<sup>th</sup> City Administrator Public Input Meeting:** Pat Callahan will facilitate a public input meeting on Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at Town Hall. After presenting an overview of the recruitment process for the next city administrator, small group discussions will take place regarding the qualities that residents want to see in their next city administrator. Specifically, Pat will be attempting to define the level of education and experience, skills and abilities, personality traits and community involvement, and management style and leadership that the community expects in its next city administrator. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.
- **National Park Fair at Hoover Elementary, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm:** Superintendent Pete Swisher and National Park Service staff will hold the "Every Kid in a Park" School Fair on Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in the Hoover Gym at Hoover Elementary School. Elected officials are encouraged to attend if your schedules allow to view the projects created by 4<sup>th</sup> grade students who have each adopted a National Park and prepared a brief presentation to share with the community.

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- **Nick Shimmin Taking on Interim City Administrator Tasks:** In preparation for taking on responsibilities of the Interim City Administrator duties, this week appointee Shimmin began work with Administrator Muckler on the process of creating resolutions for the upcoming March 6th Council meeting to provide experience in that matter. Mr. Shimmin also attended the meeting of the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) in Tipton on the morning of March 2nd. The ECIA in Cedar County is currently discussing the process of becoming designated a Great Place (<https://iowaculture.gov/about-us/about/grants/iowa-great-places>) which provides opportunities for cultural and historic grants. The process, currently, is looking at creating a county-wide trail and vision plans. More information is provided on a following sheet as well in the link above. Other processes discussed involved the communities becoming designated Certified Local Government (currently in process in West Branch).
- **North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Main St. Sidewalk – Phase 4:** Bids were received on March 2nd for the Main Street Sidewalk – Phase 4 and the North First Street Improvements projects. Three bids were received on each project. Bids on the Main Street Sidewalk project base bid ranged from a low bid of \$129,149.00 to a high of \$156,997.00. The range on the alternate bid, which included some asphalt work on Main Street, was from \$170,349.00 to \$216,582.00. All American Concrete was the low bidder on that project. Bids on the North First Street Improvements project ranged from \$314,151.40 to \$397,259.00. Eastern Iowa Excavating from Cascade, Iowa was the low bidder on that project.
- **League of Cities Legislative Update:** The Iowa League of Cities has provided the following updates on legislation which has made its way through “the first legislative funnel of the 2017 legislative session:”

### **Workers’ Compensation**

[SSB1170](#) and [HSB169](#), identical bills that provide for sweeping reforms of Iowa’s workers’ compensation laws passed out of committees in their respective chambers this week and are likely to be debated next week. More information can be found [here](#).

### **Confidentiality of Volunteer Information**

[HF403](#), a bill that amends [Chapter 22](#) of the *Code of Iowa* to protect the confidential information of volunteers for a government body from the open records law, passed out of the State Government Committee in the House this week.

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### **Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law**

[SSB1172](#), a bill relating to the enforcement of federal immigration law by political subdivisions in the State of Iowa, passed out of subcommittee and the full Local Government Committee with amendments on Thursday. The League is registered against this legislation because of strong concerns about several of the provisions within the bill. While the bill is intended to prohibit cities, counties and educational institutions from enacting “sanctuary” policies, the bill includes a provision that would leave cities and counties liable for 10 years for tort claims arising from any felony committed within Iowa by a person who was subject to a federal immigration detainer request and was subsequently released.

Amendments adopted in committee include removing a moving traffic violation from the definition of “public offense”, removing language that required law enforcement agencies to presume that immigration detainer requests are based on probable cause, and language that prevents victims or witnesses of public offenses from being asked about their national origin if it is not pertinent to the investigation.

### **Subdivision Assessments**

[SF375](#) (formerly SSB1116) and [HF509](#) (formerly HSB103), identical bills involving property tax assessments for subdivided real property, passed out of committees in their respective chambers this week. Current Iowa law provides that a platted lot for which a subdivision plat was recorded is assessed for property tax purposes as acreage or unimproved property for five years or until the lot is actually improved with permanent construction, whichever occurs first. The bill eliminates the five-year limitation and provides that when a subdivision plat is recorded, the individual lots within the subdivision plat shall not be assessed in excess of the total assessment of the land as acreage or unimproved property until the lot is sold for construction or occupancy of housing. The League is registered undecided on this bill but has stated concerns with any retroactive impacts the bill might have.

### **Bottle Bill**

[HSB163](#), legislation that would repeal the so-called “bottle bill” and reform Iowa’s beverage container recycling program, passed out of the House Environmental Protection Committee this week. The bill would direct fees beer wholesalers currently pay on containers into a fund dedicated to recycling projects. Once that fund reaches \$60 million, the fee would be discontinued. The bill also would collect a tax of fifteen-thousandths of 1 percent on beverages to support litter reduction programs.

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### **Other Important Bills That Remain Alive**

- [HF295](#) (formerly HSB92) – Minimum Wage Home Rule Preemption: a public hearing is scheduled for Monday, March 6.
- [HF203](#) (formerly HSB9) – Federal/State Road Fund Swap
- [SSB1145](#) – Public Improvement Project Labor Agreements
- [SF356](#) (formerly SSB1054) – Iowa Property Assessment Appeal Board (PAAB)
- [HSB109](#) – Governor’s Distracted Driving/Drunk Driving Bill
- [SSB1101](#) – Governor’s Distracted Driving/Drunk Driving Bill
- [HSB139](#) – Distracted Driving (allowing hands-free use)
- [SF388](#) (formerly SSB1126) – Energy Conservation in Residential Construction
- [SF236](#) (formerly SSB1051) – Fireworks
- [SF220](#) (formerly SF3) – Statewide Prohibition of ATEs
- [SF196](#) (formerly SSB1019) – Statewide Regulation of ATEs

- **Public Works Update:** Public Works has been busy working on several small projects in preparation for spring. This past month was spent removing dead or damaged trees from both the cemetery and Beranek Park. Pine trees in the cemetery were all trimmed up to allow for better access by the City snowplows and visitors to the cemetery. Public Works also began maintenance work on two baseball diamonds at the school that are utilized by the Park and Recreation Department. The fields will have new lime placed and bases reset in the next week. In preparation for spring chipping at the City brush pile, staff has been removing mulch and preparing a spot for mulch to be stored after the brush is chipped. Fencing and a gate will be installed at the brush pile over the next month as well as concrete barriers to allow staff to better separate yard waste and larger tree waste. Staff also began potholing last week and will be out this coming week to complete more pothole repairs. Lastly the first street sweeping of the year occurred last week and will be completed again towards the end of March or beginning of April.

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

## Program Summary – March 2017

**General:** The program goals are to cultivate the unique and authentic qualities of Iowa neighborhoods, districts, communities and regions in order to make them great places to live and work through professional development training; technical assistance opportunities; a network of vibrant communities and passionate leaders; and access to other state and local resources. In addition to designation, the program supports projects that are integrated with a shared vision and set of strategies, involve significant partnerships and collaboration, and focus on the development of local and regional assets in the following areas:

- Arts and culture
- Architecture
- Diversity
- Entrepreneurial incentives for business development
- Historic Fabric
- Housing options
- Natural Environment
- Amenities

**Great Places Designation:** Iowa neighborhoods, districts, communities and regions are awarded Iowa Great Places designation as a point of civic pride. Designation may be used in signage and marketing material to promote the area. Newly designated Iowa Great Places are added to the Iowa Great Places network on an annual basis through a competitive application process. Once designated, networking, professional development and technical assistance will be provided to the community by the Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs. Designated places will also receive additional consideration by other state agency programs for endorsed projects for three years post-designation. Additional consideration is limited to up to three projects proposed through the fall grant funding application cycle and does not apply to the spring designation application. Designated Iowa Great Places must complete a re-designation process every five years at which point they can present new projects for endorsement and potential funding.

**Great Places Funding (only to designated communities):** In addition to the benefits of designation, each designated Iowa Great Place has the opportunity to apply for grant funding for a single project during each five year designation cycle. Designated Iowa Great Places may request funding for up to three proposed projects during each of the first three years of their designation cycle, until funding is received, with the understanding that only one project per designated Iowa Great Place can receive funding.