

**City of West
Branch
Office of the
City
Administrator**

To: Mayor and Council

From: Matt Muckler, City Administrator

Date: October 14, 2011

Weekly Council Update

- **City Council Work Session:** A Work Session to discuss our options concerning the City's natural gas franchise agreement will be held at 6:30 p.m. on Monday October 17th in the City Council Chambers. Bob Haug, Executive Director of the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities, will be on hand to present and answer questions from the Council.

Alliant representatives Joe White, Customer Operations Manager, and Keith Sherman, who specializes in franchise agreement renewals, met with City Administrator Matt Muckler this week to discuss the renewal of the current gas franchise. Bob Haug also visited with Muckler and Public Works Director Matt Goodale to discuss the City's options if the Council chose not to renew the gas franchise agreement.

- **Volleyball Tournament:** This weekend, West Branch will host the youth volleyball games on Saturday morning for the 3rd and 4th grade division and Sunday afternoon for the 5th and 6th grade division. Games will be played at the High School. This is a great opportunity for family and friends to come and watch the West Branch youth play. There are around 20 teams total in each division. Parents and students help to referee, line judge, keep score and run the concession stand. This is the last tournament of the recreation season.

- **Library Update:** The West Branch Public Library has been in the process of creating a plan for care of the planted areas around the building. Given the amount of space covered by the planted areas, they often become overgrown during the summer months. This fall, the library's building and grounds committee will look to heavily cut back many overgrown bushes, remove some that obscure visibility or are not intended to be where they are, and cover planting ground so that weeds do not begin in the spring. Following that, this spring the committee will insert a variety of native and aggressive plants that will be able to take over the areas, working to keep down weeds and make the areas look better while requiring much less maintenance.

- **Blue Zone Project:** In August, Gov. Terry Branstad joined business leaders in announcing a public-private program, the Blue Zone Project, with the goal of making Iowa the healthiest state in the nation within the next five years. As part of the initiative, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield pledged to provide up to \$25 million over the next five years to lead an information campaign. Ten Iowa communities will be chosen through a competitive process to become Blue Zone communities. The communities selected will be provided resources and funding to help residents make lifestyle changes. Blue Zones are geographically defined places around the world where people live measurably longer lives. The term “Blue Zones” comes from the book written by Dan Buettner: *Blue Zones*.

The Blue Zones Project will focus on permanent environmental and policy changes that will make the healthy choice the easy choice. For example, experts will work with restaurants to find ways to provide better and affordable choices, such as making fresh fruit the default option rather than French fries. Also, rather than asking residents to walk or bike more, walking and cycling will be made easier and more desirable than driving. The Blue Zones Project will encourage all Iowa communities to become Blue Zones Communities over the next five years. Those who exhibit the greatest passion, interest, and ability to transform their communities will receive assistance from international experts to turn their community into a Blue Zone Community. The next step for West Branch is to submit a statement of interest. Parks and Recreation Director Melissa Russell is currently working to submit the statement of interest prior to the October 28th deadline in cooperation with the West Branch Community School District and West Branch PTO.

- **Trick or Treat:** Trick or Treat in West Branch will be held on Sunday, October 30th from 5:00-7:00 p.m. Join us for a HALLOWEEN PARTY at the WB Fire Station from 4:00-7:00 p.m. A costume contest will be held for children in 5th grade or younger. All kids will receive yummy treat bags. A Soup Supper will also be available for \$5. (The Soup Supper includes chili or chicken noodle soup, cookie, roll & drink.) Stop in and feed the family before trick or treating! For more information contact Park & Recreation Director Melissa Russell at (319) 643-4212.

- **Leaf Pickup:** Pickup will begin Monday, October 17th and continue through Friday, December 2nd. Leaves must be placed curbside for pickup. Crews will collect on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays starting with the east side of town moving west during the week. Please note that crews may not be able to get to every resident on every collection day. Residents who have not had their leaves picked up for an entire week are encouraged to contact City Office at (319) 643-5888.

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.