

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

To: City Council  
From: Matt Muckler, City Administrator  
Date: April 19, 2013 Weekly Council Update

- **Tree Planting Rescheduled to April 29th:** Due to the recent storms, the Tree Planting Event, originally scheduled for Earth Day, April 22nd, has been postponed to April 29<sup>th</sup>. The initial response to the Earth Day Event from West Branch Community Schools and Scattergood, as well as other community members, was outstanding. We are hopeful that many of the volunteers will be able to join us on April 29th. We will start the day with a welcome ceremony at 9:00 a.m. at the West Branch Municipal Cemetery including remarks from Mayor Mark Worrell and Emily Swihart, Field Coordinator/Design Specialist with Trees Forever. The day has been divided into one-hour shifts until 5:00 p.m. The first shift of volunteers will arrive around 9:00 a.m. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Melissa Russell at (319) 930-0393 or via e-mail at [recdirector@westbranchiowa.org](mailto:recdirector@westbranchiowa.org).
- **Library Building Project Design Charrettes:** The library will be hosting a design charrette in which the library's architects, FEH Associates, will be drawing, presenting, and making adjustments to preliminary outlines of a how a future library building might exist on several possible locations. We will be holding two meetings each day with library representatives, community members, and city leaders which we hope you will be able to attend. At each meeting, we will be looking for input and ideas on the work up to that point with changes and alterations to be made by the architects between sessions. With the feedback from those in attendance as well as from the architects, the library board will have enough information to make a decision to move forward with the building project on a selected site. You may stop by at any time between 9:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. to talk to the library and architects. Reviews and decisions will be made at noon and 6:00 p.m. each day.
- **2013 Community Foundation of Cedar County Grant:** The West Branch Public Library accepted the award on behalf of the Cedar County Libraries for the 2013 Community Foundation of Cedar County grant. The \$7,500 will be split among the county libraries for computer hardware upgrades. The WBPL will be using their portion, in combination with a grant from Target, to purchase an early literacy station - a computer with hardware and software dedicated to teaching children early literacy skills.
- **Code of Ordinance Updates:** Updates to the City Code of Ordinances have been completed. Please bring your Code books by the City Office at your earliest convenience. Deputy City Clerk Dawn Brandt will be updating the Code Books with all of the changes per our recent recodification.

- **Alex Koch Graduation:** Alex Koch graduated today from the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. Alex is now a certified law enforcement officer. Congratulations to Alex and we look forward to having Alex join the City Staff.
- **West Branch Preservation Commission:** The West Branch Preservation Commission met yesterday. Several items were discussed including certified local government designation, wayfinding signage and the development of Heritage Square.
- **Storm Update:** Thanks to the Public Works staff for all of their work this week. Bypassing from our wastewater system occurred in Pedersen Valley, on Main Street and at the lift station over the last couple of days. Our lift station is finally catching up with the flow of storm water that has inundated our wastewater system as a result of the storms. The storm also caused a retaining wall to collapse near Hilltop Condominiums. A portion of Hilltop Drive has been closed until repairs have been made.
- **Iowa League of Cities Property Tax Update:**

#### Senate Property Tax Bill

The Senate passed SF295 with a vote of 29-21 on Monday. The Senate Democrats' "Main Street Tax Credit" would provide a \$50 million annual state appropriation to a newly created Business Property Tax Relief Fund beginning in FY2014. The appropriation would increase by \$50 million each year the state's revenue increased by at least four percent for a maximum \$250 million. Properties valued at \$324,000 or less would be taxed at the same rate as residential properties, and larger businesses would be taxed at the residential rate for the first \$324,000 of value with the remaining value taxed at the current commercial rate. The bill provides property tax relief for commercial properties through a state appropriation without reducing necessary city revenues. The bill then moved to the House.

#### House Property Tax Bill

Wednesday, the House Ways and Means Committee took up and struck all the contents of SF295 and replaced it with the contents of HF609—the combined Governor's plan on commercial property reform and the House plan on school program foundation base. The amendment also added changes in taxation to multi-residential property and telephone company property. The bill then moved to the House floor on Wednesday where amendments were also added on the floor (See H-1311 and H-1315). The bill finally passed the full House by a 54-45 vote.

This type of "loading up" action often occurs when bills are heading to conference committee. Conference committee rules allow only discussion of the differences between the bills or amendments that pass one chamber or the other.

The House version of SF295 now is a combination of the Governor's commercial and industrial property tax rollback plan, the House school foundation levy buy down plan and several amendments:

#### *Commercial and Industrial Rollback*

-Beginning January 1, 2017, (after the 20 percent commercial rollback has been phased in) and each assessment year thereafter, residential, agricultural and commercial property assessed value is restricted to two percent, or the lowest growth of all of those classes.

-Full backfill to local governments for rollback losses to commercial and industrial property is only "guaranteed" by a standing appropriation through FY 2016—the first four years. The backfill is then capped at a maximum of the FY2017 appropriation level and will then be "prorated" beginning FY2018. Aims to create backfill for urban renewal areas.

-Industrial property is separate from the coupling of the other three property types because coupling all four property types would eventually allow industrial to rise back to 100%. Decoupling from agricultural, residential and commercial provides that after the growth limitation is applied, industrial property will be taxed at the same percentage as commercial. Effectively, this means the lowest growth among commercial, agricultural or residential properties will serve as the limiting growth factor, since those three classes remain tied together under the bill. The effect of decoupling will hold industrial down to commercial rollback levels.

#### *New Multi-Residential Tax Class*

-SF295 creates a new multi-residential property tax class which will be rolled back beginning in 2014 at 10 percent per year until 2018 when it will then be taxed at the same rate as residential property. This new multi-residential class includes mobile home parks, manufactured home communities, land-leased communities, assisted living facilities, and that portion of a building that is used for human habitation and a proportionate share of the land upon which the building is situated, even if the use for human habitation is not the primary use of the building, regardless of the number of dwelling units located in the building and not otherwise classified as residential property. Unlike the backfill for local governments within the Governor's plan, this new class is **not** included within backfill portions of the bill and would be lost revenues to local governments.

#### *Qualified Telephone Company Property*

-The House bill rolls back all "qualified telephone company property" to 60 percent over a four-year period. The definition for "qualified telephone company property" is

“property that is used by the companies in the transaction of telegraph and telephone business.” The rollback for telephone property is **not** included in the backfill for local governments within the Governor’s plan; this would also be lost revenues to local governments.

*School Program Foundation Base*

-The bill increases the regular state school program foundation base to 95 percent over four years starting in 2014, using state dollars. Currently, the regular program foundation base level is 87.5 percent.

*Additional House Floor Amendments*

Four additional amendments were offered and passed on the House floor before passage of the entire bill:

-Sends end balances of the state back to Iowa taxpayers as a tax credit. (H-1313)

-Extends the Property Assessment Appeal Board (PAAB) which is due to sunset December 31, 2013. (H-1314)

-Replaces the 8.10 levy limit with a Consumer Price Index (CPI) factor restriction for total general fund revenue. (H-1315)

-Makes technical corrections railroad taxation portions of bill. (H-1316)

● **Upcoming Events:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| ▪ Tuesday April 23 <sup>rd</sup> , 9:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m.   | Library Building Project Design Charrette  |
| ▪ Tuesday April 23 <sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 p.m.            | Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting       |
| ▪ Wednesday April 24 <sup>rd</sup> , 9:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m. | Library Building Project Design Charrette  |
| ▪ Saturday April 27 <sup>th</sup>                        | City Wide Garage Sale                      |
| ▪ Saturday April 27 <sup>th</sup> , 10:00-2:00           | Prescription Drug Disposal Event           |
| ▪ Monday April 29 <sup>th</sup> - all day                | Earth Day Tree Planting Event              |
| ▪ Saturday May 4 <sup>th</sup>                           | City Wide Clean Up – Water St. Parking Lot |
| ▪ Monday May 6 <sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.                | City Council Meeting                       |
| ▪ Tuesday May 7 <sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.               | Park & Recreation Commission Meeting       |
| ▪ Thursday May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 6:30 p.m.               | Library Board of Trustees Meeting          |
| ▪ Tuesday May 14 <sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.              | Animal Control Commission Meeting          |
| ▪ Monday May 20 <sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.               | City Council Meeting                       |
| ▪ Thursday May 23 <sup>rd</sup> at 6:30 p.m.             | Preservation Commission Meeting            |
| ▪ Tuesday May 28 <sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m.              | Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting       |

**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.**