



West Branch City Council  
City Administrator's Report  
5/18/20

**Pending Action Items:**

**(Wastewater Topic)**

The City continues to move forward with our two prong approach. 1) We continue to move forward with the Submerged Attached Growth Reactor (SAGR) system (an estimate \$7.7m investment). Currently, Veenstra & Kim (V&K) working with the State of Iowa in keeping this process moving forward. I suspect that they will soon have to begin the work of applying for State Revolving Loan funding for design work, but at this time V&K have asked that I hold it until they notify us. 2) We continue to work at gaining DNR approval for a Pilot Project extension. As you know, Baldridge Environmental reported positive data levels which brought the city into compliance during warmer months. This was achieved with minimal investment (currently authorized not to exceed a total of \$40,000). As we also know, we have missed the mark the months of January and February due to the cold weather. However, the results have caught the attention of the University of Iowa and the Iowa Innovation Authority. Currently, there is a proposal being drafted by the University of Iowa, planned to be submitted to DNR. The hope is that based on the strength of this proposal, DNR will be motivated to grant the City of West Branch a 2-3 year extension to validate the Baldridge early results and give the technology time to solve the cold weather challenge. In other news, the City Administrator's Office has been working with the East Central Intergovernmental Association (ECIA) and Cedar County Economic Development Commission (CCEDCO) to pursue a grant request under the COVID-19 Economic Development Assistance Program. Since wastewater service is not only critical for residential but also critical for our industrial and commercial partners, we have gotten the green light to submit an application. ECIA will be preparing the grant application with assistance from CCEDCO and the City Administrator's Office. At this time, we are pursuing a \$7.7m grant, of which the city would be obligated to contribute 20% (approx. \$2m investment). This could be a substantial decrease in our anticipated future sewer rates. Due to my family emergencies, the Wastewater Task Group has not been able to reconvene and weigh its options before making any official recommendations to City Council. However, at this time, it doesn't hurt to keep both initiatives active. I hope to get the Baldridge technology approved for a formal pilot project before the city has to outlay major design expenses. Over the past several months, it has been thought to be an uphill battle, but with the public / private partnership involving the University of Iowa, I believe we may just have a breakthrough we all are looking for. It should also be noted that the Baldridge technology has gotten DNR pilot project approval in Middletown, Iowa. In the Middletown case, the Department of Natural Resources gave Middletown a new time frame to carry out its study.

**(College Street Bridge)**

The project is expected to be ready for final acceptance next month, June meeting(s). For more information, please call Eric. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the city's project engineers.

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**(Cubby Park)**

Unfortunately, I could not be at the last meeting; however, I understand that the City Council wanted to halt all fund raising for now. For that reason, the "GoFundMe" site was closed and work has stopped in

this regard. Currently, Parks and Recreation has taken on the work of getting more information as to anticipated capital and operational expenses for the proposed park. Since, there is no funding for pre-design work staff we be regulated to generic designs, project expenses, and operational numbers from other communities.

#### **Report from the Desk of the City Administrator:**

- **Reminder New Councilmembers: Please set up time with Nick for website pictures.**
- Turn Lane related to the School Project? V&K organized a meeting with the Department of Transportation (IDOT) to inquire if this project would qualify for assistance for the turn lane since the I-80 construction project could have negative traffic impact on West Main. I believe the meeting has planted the seed in IDOT planning process, and I believe we will be following up in the next couple weeks.
- **Some may recall that the City and CDG urged local businesses to apply for the COVID-19 Small Business Relief Grants opened this past March 30<sup>th</sup>. Two West Branch businesses were able to get grant funding. I am happy to announce that "Mexico Lindo" got the grant maximum \$25,000 and "The Down Under" received \$10,000. One of the criteria used were businesses most at risk of claiming losses more than 75%. At this time, I am unsure of future rounds of funding, but the city will do its best to try and keep our businesses aware any future funding opportunities. The West Branch Food Pantry received a \$25,000 grant. We hope to partner with School District, Scattergood Farm School, area churches, and the West Branch Food Pantry. It is intended to increase our food delivery, food pick up, and enhance the school district brown bag program. I also wanted to report that Scattergood Friendship School also received \$160,000 COVID-19 SBA Forgivable Loan.**
- I will start working on preparing the final Derelict Building Grant Report for Final Reimbursement. We received our last invoice from Barnhart's Custom Services for \$44,820.00; we received \$5,000 payment for the purchase of rock, we will be working to get the remaining rock sold and weighed.

#### **Follow up / Reminder Items:**

- Initially the social distance emergency policy deadline was April 30<sup>th</sup> 2020; then it pushed back and anticipated to end May 15<sup>th</sup>. Currently, the Governor's has taken the position easing social distance policies and restrictions. At this time the City Council has directed to continue beyond this date to June 1<sup>st</sup>. At which time it is intended to evaluate whether resume regular working conditions. Until then we will continue feasible remote working and limited city hall and public facility access.

#### **Report from Police Department**

- There are graduation plans that are taking place. The graduation will be May 24 at 1400 hours at Rose Bowl. The plans are still in the works. Each family would be allowed 1 parking spot. They will take their turns walking across the staged. They will take turns walking down the field. Might last 1.5 to 2 hours. The school would want the streets blocked off. They would have it blocked off at one location at Poplar, and two ends blocked off on Oliphant. They would have people screening at each of the blocked off locations, screening cars. The school would request at least two officers.
- After the graduation they want a parade similar to the teacher parade. That parade took almost 2 hours. That would almost double the amount of cars. Not sure if they want to duplicate the same route or would need to be that long. They are requesting that Officer Steen escort the parade. I would think they would ask for council approval. – Mike Horihan