

*(The following is a synopsis of the minutes of the West Branch City Council meeting. A video recording is available for inspection at westbranchiowa.org. The minutes are not approved until the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.)*

**West Branch, Iowa  
Council Chambers**

**City Council  
Regular Meeting**

**March 3, 2025  
7:00 p.m.**

Mayor Roger Laughlin called the West Branch City Council regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.  
Roll call: Council members present; Colton Miller, Mike Horihan, Tom Dean, Jerry Sexton. Absent: Jodee Stoolman.

City Staff present: City Administrator Adam Kofoed, City Clerk Leslie Brick, Finance Officer Heidi Van Auken, Police Chief Greg Hall, Park & Recreation Director Erin Laughlin and City Attorney Kevin Olson.  
Attending via Zoom: Library Director Jessie Schafer and Sergeant Cathy Steen.

**APPROVE THE AGENDA**

Motion by Miller, second by Horihan to approve the agenda. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried on a voice vote.

**APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

Approve minutes from the February 18, 2025 City Council meeting.  
Approve the January 2025 Monthly Financial Report.  
Claims for March 3, 2025.

EXPENDITURES	3/3/2025	
AMAZON.COM	VARIOUS ITEMS	357.24
BAKER & TAYLOR	BOOKS	365.75
COTTERILL, DANIEL	HEALTH PREMIUM REFUND	104.20
CROELL	SAND FOR STREETS	879.32
GOERDT INSPECTION	BLDG INSPECTIONS	1,470.00
LRS HOLDINGS	GARBAGE STICKERS	285.00
LYNCH'S PLUMBING	FAUCET REPAIR-POLICE	126.40
MAINSTAY SYSTEMS OF IOWA	DELL LAPTOP-P&R	1,206.00
STERICYCLE	SHREDDING SERVICES	91.04
THE HOME DEPOT PRO	WALL CLOCK FOR CHAMBERS	39.19
VEENSTRA & KIMM	VARIOUS PROJECTS	49,924.20
WEST BRANCH REPAIRS	VEHICLE SERVICE-POLICE	91.50
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>54,939.84</b>
PAYROLL-WAGES, TAXES, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	2/28/2025	68,305.85
PAID BETWEEN MEETINGS		
JOHN DEERE FINANCIAL	BLDG SUPPLIES-CITY, POLICE	122.05
MEDIACOM	CABLE SERVICE	41.90
SISCO	HEALTH CLAIMS 2/24/2025	33.25
IA INSURANCE DIVISION	CEMETERY REPORT FILING FEE	121.00
ARNOLD MOTOR SUPPLY	AIR FILTER-PW	35.39
CASSABAUM, LEE & PATRICIA	LAND PURCHASE 1ST PAYMENT	4,750.00
COMPASS MINERALS AMERICA	SALT FOR STREETS	6,904.23
IA DNR	WW TREATMENT OPERATOR CERT	20.00
LEAF CAPITAL FUNDING	COPIER LEASE-CITY OFFICE	396.00
PITNEY BOWES GLOBAL	POSTAGE METER LEASE-LIBRARY	77.37
QC ANALYTICAL SERVICES	LAB ANALYSIS	1,052.00
USA BLUE BOOK	WATER PLANT SUPPLIES	1,445.26
VERIZON WIRELESS	VERIZON WIRELESS	454.71
SISCO	HEALTH CLAIMS 2/18/2025	16.56
CARDCONNECT	ANNUAL SECURITY BUNDLE FEE	249.99
ALLIANT ENERGY	ALLIANT ENERGY	21,405.40
AMAZON.COM	PRIME MEMBERSHIP FEES-LIB, CITY	308.00
ARNOLD MOTOR SUPPLY	TIRE GAUGUE & EXHAUST FL-FIRE	73.27
CEDAR COUNTY COOP	FUEL-PW	1,407.46
CULLIGAN WATER TECH	WATER SOFTENER SERVICE	30.49
FIRE SERVICE TRAINING BUREAU	TRAINING - FIRE	150.00

FRONTLINE PLUS FIRE & RESCUE	WARNING SIRENS MAINT SERVICE	700.00
MOPPY MO'S	CLEANING SERVICES-FIRE	17.50
OVERDRIVE	DIGITAL & AUDIO BOOKS	464.13
US BANK CORPORATE CARD	CREDIT CARD PURCHASES	2,568.85
TOTAL		42,844.81
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES		166,090.50
FUND TOTALS		
001 GENERAL FUND	49,500.67	
022 CIVIC CENTER	873.86	
031 LIBRARY	6,674.26	
110 ROAD USE TAX	15,231.41	
112 TRUST AND AGENCY	15,395.39	
321 WIDENING WAPSI CREEK	2,288.00	
330 EASTSIDE WATER MAIN PH2	89.00	
331 CEDAR JOHNSON RD RECONS	43,929.50	
600 WATER FUND	16,188.50	
610 SEWER FUND	15,391.49	
740 STORM WATER UTILITY	528.42	
GRAND FUND TOTAL	166,090.50	

REVENUE-FISCAL YEAR 2025  
FUND JANUARY

001 GENERAL FUND	57,443.06
022 CIVIC CENTER	650.00
031 LIBRARY	67.40
036 TORT LIABILITY	272.68
110 ROAD USE TAX	29,811.93
112 TRUST & AGENCY	4,713.16
121 LOCAL OPTION SALES TAX	35,122.88
125 TIF	337.95
226 DEBT SERVICE	1,433.98
300 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT RESERVE	363.59
324 WW TREATMENT FACILITY	2,413.50
330 EASTSIDE WATER MAINS PH2	136,162.46
500 CEMETERY PERPETUAL FUND	1,262.19
600 WATER FUND	62,333.48
610 SEWER FUND	83,092.92
740 STORM WATER UTILITY	6,164.52
TOTAL	421,645.70

Motion by Dean, second by Miller to approve the Consent agenda. AYES: Dean, Miller, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

**PRESENTATIONS / COMMUNICATIONS / OPEN FORUM**

Forrest Brown – Proposed Trail plan expansion (via Zoom)

Brown, owner of Brown’s Jeep, Dodge car dealership on Tidewater Drive, West Branch laid out his plans to expand his dealership which consists of a new, larger building to hold more cars as well as installing charging stations for electric vehicles. Brown, who has been in contact with Kofoed over the past twelve months or so is requesting a TIF rebate for the improved future value of his property proposed other improvements such as; possibly purchasing property from Tidewater to join a “future” walking trail to the east side of the Tidewater property and possibly a small dog park. Brown also asked the city to consider improving East Tidewater in front of his property stating that the chip and seal road is bad condition. Kofoed asked the Council to provide direction on Brown’s request for street improvements.

Gwen Senio – Juneteenth significance to the community and event planning

Senio, representative for the West Branch Humans for Racial Justice group asked the Council to consider having Juneteenth observed as a city holiday. Senio, an active participant in the group provided the history and significance of Juneteenth and its relation to the history of West Branch. Senio said the group is planning a week-long celebration during the week of June 14<sup>th</sup> which will provide education and history of the Juneteenth holiday.

## **PUBLIC HEARING / NON-CONSENT AGENDA**

Public Hearing – on proposal to enter into a Franchise Agreement with Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative for the provision of providing for the distribution, transmission and sale of electricity within the City of West Branch, Iowa; assessment of a one percent Franchise Fee and allowing for the petition for an election.

Laughlin opened the public hearing at 7:25 p.m. There were no public comments. Laughlin closed the public hearing at 7:26 p.m.

Public Hearing – on proposal to amend a Franchise Agreement with Interstate Power and Light Company (Alliant Energy) for the provision of providing for the distribution, transmission and sale of electricity within the City of West Branch, Iowa; assessment of a one percent Franchise Fee and allowing for the petition for an election.

Laughlin opened the public hearing at 7:27 p.m. There were no public comments. Laughlin closed the public hearing at 7:28 p.m.

Public Hearing - on proposal to amend a Franchise Agreement with Interstate Power and Light Company (Alliant Energy) for the provision of providing for the distribution, transmission and sale of natural gas within the City of West Branch, Iowa; assessment of a one percent Franchise Fee and allowing for the petition for an election.

Laughlin opened the public hearing at 7:28 p.m. There were no public comments. Laughlin closed the public hearing at 7:29 p.m.

1st Reading Ordinance 823 – Granting to Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive Twenty-Five-year Franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa, and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee. / Move to action.

Van Auken informed the Council that the Iowa League of Cities released information last week regarding a bill the state legislature is considering that will end allowing cities to collect franchise fees effective July 1, 2025. Van Auken reached out to both the League and Alliant Energy to get clarification on the proposed bill. The consensus from the League is that it would abolish all franchise fees in effect. Van Auken stated that franchise fees are being sought by cities as a result of HF718 (property tax reform) which have cities scrambling to find ways to replace lost revenues by that bill. Miller asked if the Council should move forward with the franchise ordinance as a result of this new information. Van Auken encouraged the Council to continue with adopting the ordinance as the bill may or may not pass. City Attorney Olson agreed with Van Auken.

Motion by Dean, second by Miller to approve the first reading of Ordinance 823. AYES: Dean, Miller, Sexton, Horihan. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

1st Reading Ordinance 824 – Repealing Ordinance No. 533, and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action.

Motion by Miller, second by Dean to approve the first reading of Ordinance 824. AYES: Miller, Dean, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

1st Reading Ordinance 825 – Repealing Ordinance No. 695 and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to erect, construct, reconstruct, maintain, and operate plant and systems for the distribution of natural gas in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to sell, distribute, and supply natural gas to said City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action.

Motion by Dean, second by Miller to approve the first reading of Ordinance 825. AYES: Dean, Miller, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-23 - Setting a Public Hearing date (April 7, 2025) for the Maximum Proposed Property Tax Levy Rate for Fiscal Year 2026. / Move to action.

Brick reminded the Council that the state requires the council to hold a separate meeting for the max levy public hearing. Brick said the public hearing will be held at a special meeting on April 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. Motion by Sexton, second by Dean to approve Resolution 2025-23. AYES: Sexton, Dean, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-24 - Amending the City of West Branch Schedule of Fees. / Move to action.

Brick said the only change to the schedule is for inspection fees for mechanical, plumbing and electrical permits and is due to the City covering their expense for inspections performed by the building inspector. Motion by Dean, second by Sexton to approve Resolution 2025-24. AYES: Dean, Sexton, Miller, Horihan. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-25 – Approving the 2nd Addendum to Agreement U-2023-21139 with the Iowa Department of Transportation. / Move to action.

Van Auken explained that when she began employment with the city in mid-2021, two projects related to the I-80 widening project were in progress. Van Auken also said that during that time, the IDOT had some staff changes and paperwork for reimbursements had been lost in the shuffle. Van Auken realized in 2022 that the city was missing some reimbursements from IDOT for the projects and started researching. Van Auken said she worked with IDOT over the past several months and determined that the city was missing nearly \$400,000 in reimbursements from the two projects combined. This resolution will approve IDOT to reimburse the city the missing funds. The Council thanked Van Auken for her work.

Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve Resolution 2025-25. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Horihan, Dean. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-26 - Approving a Policy and Procedure for Naming, Co-Naming, and Re-Naming of City-Owned Properties. / Move to action.

Miller said he remembered this issue coming up when the City was constructing Cubby Park. He said he wasn't happy with the idea that a person or business getting naming rights for something "they didn't pay for". Parks & Recreation Director Erin Laughlin (who drafted the policy) said the Council has final approval for the naming request, and that the City does not currently have a policy for requests. Brick reminded the Council, that like all policies, they should be reviewed and tweaked from time to time to ensure their effectiveness.

Motion by Dean, second by Sexton to approve Resolution 2025-26. AYES: Dean, Sexton, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-27– Amending the Employee Handbook (Amendment #3). / Move to action.

Brick stated that during her continued review of the employee handbook, the Vehicle Use Policy was not in alignment with recent changes to the residency requirement for the police department. Brick reminded the Council that officer's can now live within 30 miles of West Branch and that handbook should reflect the same. Brick spoke with Chief Hall who agreed. In addition, the Chief asked for additional wording that required his approval for officers to take police vehicles home in extra-ordinary circumstances. Miller stated that he didn't like the idea of the City's police cars being in "other cities", but Hall said he felt that these instances would be far and few between.

Motion by Dean, second by Sexton to approve Resolution 2025-27. AYES: Dean, Sexton, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Absent: Stoolman. Motion carried.

Discussion – Housing Market Updates

Kofoed shared updates and recommendations for the Council to consider regarding housing trends as West Branch continues to grow. Kofoed shared some photos of neighborhoods and design choices that provide flexibility with front yard setbacks. Kofoed said the Planning & Zoning Commission has approved some ordinance changes that he would like to bring forward in the future.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Kofoed said that State Representative Kerry Gruenhagen made a drop-in visit at the library last Friday. Gruenhagen had several questions for Library Director Schafer and even spoke with some library patrons regarding proposed state and federal funding cuts to libraries and other topics being proposed at the state level.

**CITY ATTORNEY REPORT – No report**

**CITY ENGINEER REPORT - Absent**

**STAFF REPORTS**

Van Auken asked the Council to consider how and when they decide to give TIF Rebates to businesses and developers and suggested that the City begin using TIF Rebate Application (which many other cities currently do). Van Auken said the application could include information necessary such as; cost of the proposed project, plans, specifications, benefit to the City, number of jobs created, timeline for completion, reason for the TIF request, etc. Van Auken said the application would be submitted to the Administration (city) staff who would review the applicants request, gather all pertinent information and then share the request with all of the Council members at the same time, who could then provide feedback, ask questions and provide direction to move forward or deny the request. Van Auken said this would be in the best interest of the City and help facilitate the process to ensure that the Council has good information to make an informed decision.

**COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS - NONE**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn by Dean, second by Miller. Motion carried on a voice vote. City Council meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

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Roger Laughlin, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Leslie Brick, City Clerk