



Ed Sadler

# CITY SCENE

Fall 2009

## It's that Time Again (still)

by Ed Sadler, City Manager

It's Iowa and it is election time again, and in Iowa, to be honest, that time seems to never stop. This year however, it is local elections that are before us, and it appears that you have plenty of choices before you. The future City Council will likewise have numerous decisions before them. The current City Council has already dealt with numerous difficult issues including the care of the City's water and sewer infrastructure to insure that you have safe water to drink and that the sewer system operates correctly. The decisions were not easy, but they were issues that needed to be dealt with.

The future City Council will need to deal with a plethora of issues also and you need to ensure that you find out how your candidates feel about these issues and the positions they will take on your behalf. Examples of issues that the new Council will face include capacity at the wastewater plant, economic development, renewal (or not) of the optional one cent sales tax, and a possible new electric wholesaler, to name but a few. These issues are not black and white and there is no easy answer to any of these issues as you will see.

First, let's examine the wastewater issue. Currently, we have several times a year where our current wastewater plant is operating at capacity. Knowing this, what do we say if a new major water user wants to move to town and set up business here? Do we say, sorry, we can't handle you, or do we say, yes, love to have you come here, but please wait a year or two so we can build additional sewer capacity to handle you? Hopefully, this isn't our answer. Hopefully, we are prepared for this and can welcome them with open arms. Now, how do we get this additional capacity? Realistically, we have two options: 1) reduce the water we are currently sending to the wastewater plant, or 2) spend an estimated \$5.5 million to build additional capacity. Reducing usage most probably comes in the form of eliminating sump pump water from entering the wastewater

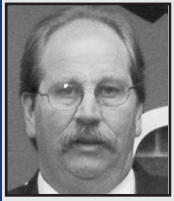
system. We have already eliminated the City's storm water from entering the system and sump pumps are now the next largest contributor that we can reasonably eliminate. The \$5.5 million to build additional capacity breaks down to a cost of about \$1,500 for each and every water meter (customer) in town. The issues then are: 1) we don't have additional capacity when the new development comes to town; 2) we build additional capacity; or 3) we reduce the current usage. Which option does your candidate for City Council support and why?

Economic development would seem to be the next logical subject to discuss. Webster City has had some measure of success in attracting new businesses over that last few years. Nothing major to offset the losses with Beam and Electrolux, but we have had numerous new small businesses set up here and it does appear that the Spec Building at the industrial park south of town is all but sold. We have a nice town and we have had numerous new businesses express interest in locating here, but time after time, we have lost out to the competition because the competition had more to offer the prospective new business. Let's face it, every town in American thinks it is a nice town, and for the most part, every town has Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to offer prospective candidates, so offering this keeps us even with the competition. The problem is that many other places offer even more, and this is where we appear to lose more often than not. What are we going to do to insure that we win more than we lose and that the good jobs come here to Webster City? Due to the layoffs at Electrolux, we have now been declared an Enterprise Zone by the State and this will offer additional tax incentives to prospective new businesses and this will help us attract new businesses. The bad news is that numerous other places in Iowa also have this status and they are competing with us for these businesses. What will we do to

continued on page 3

"Boone River  
Country"

City  
of  
Webster  
City



Mark Gillette

## Closed Session

by Mark Gillette, Councilman

In my nearly 6 years on the City Council, in the last year and one half, we have called for as many closed sessions as the previous four and one half years combined. Many citizens have noticed this and have questioned as to why so many. The only time that a closed session can occur is spelled out in Chapter 21.5 of the Iowa code.

These laws restrict governing bodies in Iowa to very specific times and matter that a elected body can go into closed session.

There are many parts to Chapter 21.5, of the Iowa Code but the following three are the ones that garner the most attention and action by the Council:

21.5 [1(c.)]

*"To discuss strategy with council in matters that are presently in litigation or where litigation is imminent where its disclosure would be likely to prejudice or disadvantage the position of the governmental body in that litigation."*

Numerous lawsuits that have been filed against the city as well as continuing negotiations and information gathering concerning electrical issues have been the bulk of our closed sessions. These are ongoing complicated issues. So, don't be surprised to see them continue for quite sometime to come.

21.5 [1(1)]

*"To evaluate the competency of an individual whose appointment, hiring, performance or discharge is being considered when necessary*

*to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual requests a closed session."*

This section is normally closed to enhance working relationship between management and an employee. The decision for an open or closed session is at the discretion of the employee and should not influence the feedback given at the evaluation.

21.5 [1(j)]

*"To discuss the purchase of particular real estate only where premature disclosure could be reasonably expected to increase the price the governmental body would have to pay for that property. The minutes and the tape recording of a closed session under this paragraph shall be available for public examination when the transaction discussed is complete."*

This is self-explanatory and is to safeguard the taxpayer.

*"All closed sessions shall be tape recorded and written detailed minutes are to be taken by the City Clerk or a designee," according to Ch.21.5[4]. This is to insure a record of the closed session can be verified in case of legal challenge or breakdown of recording devices.*

No voting may occur in closed session, policy decisions cannot be decided and all discussion must be relevant to the topic disclosed to the public as the reason for the closed session.

I hope this helps explain and answers any questions.

## Protect Your Water Meter!

Winter weather is near and the City of Webster City would like to remind our utility customers to protect their water meters.

As you are weatherproofing your home this season, please make sure to check your water meter also. If your water meter is in an unheated basement, crawlspace or underneath a trailer, you will need to insulate it from the cold. You are responsible for protecting your water meter. If you are unsure of how to do this, please call a plumber. The City has a list of licensed plumbers who can help with this.

If your water meter freezes, please contact our office as soon as possible. Please do not try to repair the meter yourself. This can result in further damage and costs that you will be responsible for. One of our meter technicians is always on call to help with these types of

emergencies.

During our regular business hours of 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, you may reach us at (515) 832-9141. After-hours and on weekends and holidays, please call the police department non-emergency number at (515) 832-9166 and they will page a technician. Please do not leave a message on our voice mail system if it is an urgent matter. Call the police department so that the situation can be corrected in a timely manner.

If your water meter freezes, you will be responsible for the replacement cost of the meter and any overtime charges incurred by the City for after-hours calls. You will receive a separate bill from the utility office for this charge. If you have further questions, please contact our office.

"Boone River  
Country"

City  
of  
Webster  
City

2

City Scene

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN continued from page 1  
separate ourselves from the pack and make us the obvious choice? It is no longer enough to show what a great place this is. These are tough economic times and the competition is fierce for new jobs. With other towns and states throwing cash, buildings, equipment, infrastructure and tax incentives at new businesses, what will we do to get the new jobs here? Council will need to weigh in on these issues if we are to compete. What does your candidate prefer and why?

Several years ago, the voters in the area approved the optional one cent sales tax. This money was used initially to pay for the new jail. Once the jail was paid for, the City of Webster City has been using its share of the money to work on infrastructure (specifically paving streets). We have made some very good progress with this money in repairing numerous streets in town, but the tax will expire in the next year or two. Will the issue be put before voters to extend the tax again? What will the money be used for? This issue too will be before the new City Council. Under what conditions would you favor approving the tax again? Ask your Council candidates how they feel about the issue and what they believe the money should go for if they support the renewal of the sales tax.

The last of the major issues that I know the new Council will face is the issue of an electric wholesale contract. Our 30+ year contract with Corn Belt is due to expire soon. What do we do? Extend the current contract? Negotiate a new contract with Corn Belt? Try to find a new wholesaler? This landscape is changing drastically everyday and for us, it is changing more drastically than for most others. We are currently caught in a massive change of alliances. Mid-America, the electric company that supplies many towns in our area, and the company that Corn Belt, up to now has been associated with, will have joined MISO by the time you read this. MISO is the transmission group that supplies electric power to the areas north and east of us. I believe that Mid-America is joining MISO to increase its profits. Electricity within the MISO footprint is more expensive than what the costs are in our immediate area and I believe that over the next few years that the price Mid-American customers pays for electricity will increase to reflect that market price. Corn Belt on the other hand has chosen to sever its relationship with Mid-America and has chosen to

ally itself with Basin Electric. Basin Electric is in a transmission area that includes, Basin, Heartland and WAPA for the large part and they supply electric to much of the area to our west. At least on the surface, I believe this to be a good move on Corn Belt's part. These moves appear to be very driven by whether the company involved has energy to sell or needs to purchase power for its future needs. With Corn Belt joining Basin, it will inevitably mean changes for Corn Belts customers and we have just seen the first of the changes (see other article on electric heat). What other changes are in store for us is anybody's guess. Will our prices continue to climb? Will prices stabilize? My job and Council's job does not come with a crystal ball and so we are unsure of these answers. What we are fairly sure of is that a long term contract will best suit Webster City to insure that we have power and that we have power at the best cost we can manage, whether that is with Corn Belt or someone else. As for the someone else part, in the scope of the world of electricity, we are a fairly small fish. The world is not going to be beating down the door to provide us with electric power, so our options there are not limitless. The decisions to be made are not easy, but this new Council will have to face this and their decisions will affect Webster City for a very long time. We have employed some of the best people in the business to assist us in this venture and to make the best decisions we can.

So, as you can see, there are many large issues before us in the upcoming years. Please take this election seriously and select those who will guide us well. This is not just a beauty contest. As I encouraged you previously, do not succumb to fear tactics. Take a positive attitude and select those who will lead us effectively. Above all else, I encourage you to vote for those candidates who see the positive in Webster City and who will build on that positive attitude. Our City Council sets the tone for how others see us. Make it a positive light in which others see us. During this election time, ask the hard questions and select those who will take Webster City in the direction you want us to go. I encourage you to watch, attend and take part in the League of Women Voters forum for the candidates and judge them by their responses to your questions.

## Important For Electric Heat Customers!

As you may have already read in another article in this newsletter, the electric landscape is changing across the country and for us here in Iowa it is changing even more drastically due to new alliances being established by many wholesale companies. Here in Webster City, the landscape is changing because Corn Belt (our electric supplier) has established a new alliance with Basin Electric. As part of this new alliance, many of the rules and pricing structures we have had are expected to change. Recently, we were notified of the first of these changes and the change relates to those who utilize electric heat. Starting January 1, 2010, all customers who wish to receive the discounted electric rate for electric heat must have the electric heat component separately metered. Up until now, we were allowed to give the credit based upon estimated usage, but this will no longer be the case. To have separate metering, the customer has a couple of acceptable options: 1) install separate service for all electric heat components with a separate outside meter and a separate breaker panel, or 2) Install a separate breaker in the existing panel to feed an additional panel through a separate meter inside the house and move all heat related circuits to the new panel. In both cases, the City will supply the meter and only one base charge will apply to the customer's bill. Those residents or businesses who wish to do this will need to find a private contractor to perform the work and the appropriate permits will be required.

The other electric utilities with Corn Belt who have been giving discounted electric rates to people for electric heat have required separate metering for some time now and the requirement is now being required of us. The choice of whether or not to separately meter for electric heat is one that each customer needs to make for themselves based upon their own particular circumstances. Currently, the discount available for electric heat is a half a cent per KWH and is expected to decrease over time. If you use an average of 1000 KWH a month, this amounts to a savings of \$5/month. We have tried to notify everyone that this affects as soon as possible so that they have adequate time to consider their decisions and perform the necessary work if needed, but as of January 1, 2010, there will not be a discounted rate for electric heat for any customer where the electric heat is not metered separately. If you have questions regarding this change, please call the Utility Office at 832.9141.



“Boone River  
Country”

City  
of  
Webster  
City

4

City Scene

## Looking to the future

by Gary Sandholm WCAD

Quoting from the musical Annie, "The sun'll come out tomorrow." Let's get the bad stuff out of the way so that we can concentrate on things that really count. The economy stinks. The unemployment rate in Hamilton County was 8.3% in July with much of our economy closely tied to housing and appliances. An increasing number of economic indicators show the recession is possibly ending which may bring some jobs back.

Now is the time to stop looking in the rear view mirror and concentrate on the future. Webster City has many strengths to build upon. Webster City has received Enterprise Zone designation from the Iowa Department of Economic Development making us eligible for enhanced incentives for local business expansions and for businesses recruited. See [www.iowalifechanging.com/business/downloads/06ez.pdf](http://www.iowalifechanging.com/business/downloads/06ez.pdf) for details or call the Webster City Area Development office at 832-2564.

The sale of the spec building in the Highway 20 Business Park is moving to completion for a new business. A new business will open.

Van Diest Supply Co. continues to expand their facilities.

Cropland Containers, a small company that opened this spring, is seeing rapid growth.

Other companies are aggressively recruiting new customers with some successes very likely. Our industrial base provides opportunities for our existing companies to grow and also to attract new companies.

Construction on four-lane Highway 20 continues at an accelerated rate. Paving will be completed to Highway 4 near Rockwell City by the end of next year and to Highway 71 near Early by the end of 2013. Combining this with Interstate 35 and class one rail service, our ground transportation is very good and getting better. A quality municipal airport, with the aviation class, has much greater value than typically recognized.

Using our strengths there are several opportunities to exploit **IF** we don't bog down trying to fix problems that have little impact on our future. The focus must be what is needed for tomorrow rather than trying to fix something from yesterday. Some of our opportunities are:

**Workforce:** Many people who have lost or will lose their jobs at Electrolux, Beam, and possibly some other employers, have the opportunity to acquire new skills under the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA). Our workforce will be better prepared to transition from traditional production line jobs to jobs that require higher technical skills.

**Wind energy** appears poised for a long run. Our location and transportation make Webster City a prime location to attract companies in this sector. Webster City Area Development is marketing to this industry group.

With the ongoing improvements on Highway 20, our airport becomes increasingly more valuable. It is the closest airport to Interstate 35 on Highway 20 and is the only airport easily visible on Highway 20 between Independence and Sioux City. Enhancing its capacity and improving its appearance is very important for corporate traffic. Corporate aircraft carry people who can influence decisions about plant location and expansion. We need to give these people a very good impression of Webster City.

Iowa Central Community College has a new president. With a vacancy in this position, there was a pause developing and improving programs. With Dr. Kinney now in place, Webster City can be a point of significant growth. The Mid Iowa Growth Partnership (MIGP), which includes Hamilton County, continues to build its presence as a marketing organization. The Mid Iowa Development Conference will be November 12th in Fort Dodge. This is a great opportunity to see what MIGP is doing, and what is going on in the region. See [www.midiowadevelopmentconference.com](http://www.midiowadevelopmentconference.com) for details.

continued on page 6

# LOOKING To The Future

Webster City  
Boone River Country

"Boone River  
Country"

City  
of  
Webster  
City

5

Summer 2009

The North Central Iowa Regional Sports Authority has received funding for the third year in a row to promote amateur athletic activities in Hamilton, Humboldt, and Webster Counties. With the goal of bringing more people to this region, this collaborative effort is having positive impacts.

To move toward a strong future requires hard work from the entire community. Getting the horses pulling in the same direction is never easy, but there is an opportunity to put things in motion. This Iowa Great Places program enables communities to develop a unified vision, organize resources, and execute plans to achieve the vision. Money is also provided to leverage local investment for communities that are selected. See [www.iowagreatplaces.gov](http://www.iowagreatplaces.gov) for information about this program.

Many small towns face a very bleak future, but Webster City can be a notable exception. We have intelligent people, a good community, and many financial resources (not just two or three) that can be tapped if there is the will to excel. Call 832-2564 if you want to make Webster City a "Great Place." Some heavy lifting required.

## Webster City Municipal Utilities

### Winter Disconnection Procedure for Electric/Water Services

The Webster City Municipal Utility Office will follow the rules and regulations set by the Iowa Utility Board regarding winter weather disconnections. If the temperature is below 20 degrees, service cannot be disconnected until the temperature reaches 20 degrees. Weather conditions will be watched closely when necessary.

Only customers who have been approved for the low-income energy assistance program (LIHEAP) will be protected from disconnection of electric service for non-payment during the winter moratorium, which is November 1 through April 1. Any customer who has not been approved for energy assistance may be disconnected for non-payment. Please contact our office for payment arrangements before disconnection occurs.

Any questions regarding LIHEAP applications should be directed to Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc. at (515) 832-6451.

Approval for energy assistance has to take place before disconnection occurs, if not, service will not be restored until the past due amount is paid in full. Customers who have been approved for energy assistance are still required to pay for all other services during the moratorium. Energy assistance funds are for heating purposes only. Failure to pay the water, sewer and recycling portions of the bill will result in disconnection of water services during the winter moratorium. On April 1, all past due balances on an energy assistance customer's account are due in full to avoid disconnection of service. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Utility Office at 832-9141.



## Snow Emergency Parking Regulations

Chapter 70 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Webster City prohibits parking on residential streets during a declared emergency situation such as snow and ice conditions. A declaration of emergency may be called by the City when conditions warrant during winter weather conditions. The City stresses the need for each person affected by the ordinance to seek alternate parking places. It is solely the responsibility of each vehicle owner to find out when the declaration was made and where his/her vehicle can be legally and safely parked.

The announcement of cancellation of declaration will be made on KQWC-AM 1570, KQWC-FM 95.7, Cable Channel 12, the city website at [www.webstercity.com](http://www.webstercity.com) or a recorded message is available on the snow emergency status line at 832-9122.

Two hours following the declaration of emergency, parking will not be allowed on any residential street. The provisions of this regulation will be in effect and will supercede all other parking regulations relating to parking on public streets until the emergency declaration is terminated. Parking may be allowed on residential streets after **BOTH** sides of the street have been completely plowed or the declared emergency has been removed. The Central Business District, however, is exempt from the emergency parking regulations and is regulated as the posted signs indicate. The

central business district is the area between Prospect Street and Superior Street and between Bank Street and the Union Pacific Railroad Company tracks.

Two hours after a declaration of emergency has been called, the Police Department will begin ticketing and towing operations. We don't really want to tow your car, so please move it in time. If your car is towed, you must call the Police Department at 832-9166 to start the process to get it back.



## Fuller Hall Building Hours

Winter Hours: September 28th, 2009 - April 25th, 2010

Monday - Friday	6:00 AM - 10:00 PM**
Saturday	7:00 AM - 10:00 PM**
Sunday	1:00 PM - 10:00 PM (Fitness Room & Racquetball - Adults Only)
Sundays	11:00 Am - 11:00 PM - Private Group Rentals Only

\*\*Children under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult from 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM & 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM  
Children under the age of 7 must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

"Boone River  
Country"

City  
of  
Webster  
City

7

## City of Webster City

P.O. Box 217  
Webster City, Iowa 50595-0217

ECRWSS  
PRSRT STD  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit #323  
Webster City, IA 50595

# Postal Patron

## Fire Prevention Week

In observance of Fire Prevention Week the Webster City Fire Department will be offering tours of the fire station. Groups may call 832-9131 to schedule a station tour.

Firefighter Andy Sowle will be at the three elementary schools talking to the students about fire safety.

The department reminds residents to check their smoke detectors. Traditionally, the change of daylight savings time is the reminder when to replace the batteries in your smoke detectors. Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms save lives and protect against injury and loss due to fire.

### Fire Facts:

Smoke alarms play a vital role in reducing deaths and injuries from fire and have contributed to the almost 50% decrease in fire deaths since the late 1970s.

Sixty-three percent of reported home fire deaths happen in homes with no working smoke alarms.

Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and injuries followed by heating, electrical and intentional fires.

Smoking materials are the leading cause of fire deaths (roughly one in four) in the United States.



*Webster City*  
Boone River Country

**"Boone River  
Country"**

City  
of  
Webster  
City

Ph: 515-832-9151

Quarterly Newsletter for the City of Webster City