

# CITY SCENE

Winter 2012



Ed Sadler

## My Reasons for Being Thankful

By Ed Sadler, City Manager

The holidays have just ended, City Council has concluded its goal setting for the next year and we are setting forth on a brand new year, so I think it is a great time to share with everyone what I am thankful for (both professionally and personally), and there are numerous reasons to be thankful, not the least of which is the faith exhibited by numerous people in the future of our community. Rather than focus on the negative, now is the perfect time to review the good things we can all be thankful for as a way to start the New Year on a positive note.

**...now is the perfect time to review the good things we can all be thankful for as a way to start the New Year on a positive note.**

From a professional perspective, the changes, advancements, additions and improvements over the last couple years is pretty impressive for a small town in Iowa. We have a new hospital, new construction at the High School, a new downtown garden area, a new Casey's under construction, new additions to Town and Country, Windsor Manor, Fareway and First State Bank, more street work completed and a new water well which will begin soon, all of which demonstrate a belief in Webster City by insiders and those outside the community alike. This belief continued with the approval of the bond issue for the school district, the approval of a City bond issue (new street

sweeper, new slide for the pool and a new ladder truck for the Fire Department) and voter approval of the renewal of the LOSST money to continue work on the City infrastructure. New events and volunteer activities include Heritage Days, the Ghost tours at Halloween, the Art in the Park sculpture contest, and the Warm Hearts for Warm Homes project to help winterize the homes of our neighbors. New or improved activities include the Rampage football team, RC car racing, Little League for boys and girls, and the ever improving Community Theatre and museum complex.

We have a Chamber of Commerce who has worked hard to promote our City with a new website, new television advertising and an expanded membership. The Chamber has promoted new awareness of our City and new events to attract locals and visitors alike to our businesses.



Wacky Wednesday, Ladies Night Out and discounted savings events have spurred interest in local businesses.

"Boone River Country"

City of Webster City

We have improved the livability and appearance of our City, by cleaning up numerous properties, demolishing numerous hazardous structures, new signage for our parks, initiated a new pilot program to assist low and moderate income families to improve their dwellings, and created new ordinances to address habitual violators, abandoned properties and a maintenance code for rental properties. Despite the economic conditions throughout the Country, our financial outlook is stable. We have obtained and retained an AA- bond rating, created a \$1.7 million economic development fund to attract new industry; we have retained strong monetary reserves and still not increased the mill levy for property taxes. The City's new website for economic development has now earned two first place awards (both national and international), and

our social media program for economic development has also been recognized nationally. To top all of this off, we have seen a 30% drop in the crime rate in our City over the last year.

All of this gives me reason to believe that this City and its citizens will succeed in their future endeavors. We have the will and the belief in ourselves to succeed. We have a bright future.

As for me personally going forward into the New Year, I have a great job, I have a great staff to work with, and I have a Council who has unified goals and direction. I have a great wife, great children (who have jobs and didn't move home after college), my first grandchild (Quincy in Denver) and life in general is good! I hope that all of you have as optimistic view of our future as I do. Have a great new year.



## A Second Look At Webster City During 2011

by Doug Getter, Councilman

As residents and taxpayers, we sometimes need to take time to view the actions of the Council from a more encompassing perspective. It is easy to get consumed by a specific topic or issue. Looking at 2011 our City is a great place to live, raise a family and have an environment that is warm and inviting for current and new residents.

While the list of what City government should look like may vary slightly from person to person, there are many basic

elements we can all agree upon as essential and expected services. For example, having our streets maintained and snow removed in a timely fashion,



Doug Getter

having above average police and fire protection, being able to turn the faucet for state approved drinking water, flipping the light switch and having the light turn on immediately, having a sewer system and state approved waste treatment plant that works when the toilet is flushed, good parks and recreation facilities, a clean/prosperous/neat appearing community, and competent and friendly municipal employees. However, most important to taxpayers is having all of the above

**However, most important to taxpayers is having all of the above for the lowest reasonable cost.**

for the lowest reasonable cost.

For the current fiscal year, the City's portion of local property taxes is support by paying \$15.99 per \$1,000 of taxable value. In checking the records, this is the same property tax rate that was in play five years earlier.

Within that five year-period the number of City employees fell from 70 to the current level of 64. In addition, the City's bond rating improved from 'A' to double 'AA', which allowed the Council to re-finance \$655,000 in municipal debt at a lower rate and a net financial savings to the City. It also permitted the Council to finance the purchases of a new fire truck (based upon the recommendation of a citizen review committee), purchase a new street sweeper and replace the water slide at the outdoor swimming pool. City staff and employees have just completed developing a healthcare insurance package that will maintain health insurance costs at the same level for the next 18 months.

In August, residents gave their approval for the continuation of the local option 1% sales tax. Proceeds estimated to be \$640,000 per year are directed for funding street repair, maintenance and sewer/water lines.

To help keep our sewage treatment plant in compliance with state requirements, Council adopted a resolution establishing a sump pump inspection requirement. The City has the need to reduce the amount of water entering the sewage treatment plant. Failure to make a significant reduction could lead to the City being required by the state to make a multi-million dollar investment in the plant. To date, approximately 60% of the properties have been inspected. Inspections need to occur prior to June 1, 2012 to avoid incurring a monthly penalty.

Council was presented with the community need to establish a new well to address future drinking water supply. Several sites were researched and cost estimates were assembled by the City's engineering firm. Two proposed sites had very similar estimated costs, however new disposal regulations from the state Department of Natural Resources shifted the balance substantially in favor of a site



on the Kendall Young Library farm. No well drillers were interested in bidding on the other site in Wilson Brewer Park, given the new state regulations.

After more than five years of discussion and legal proceedings, a multi-decade agreement was reached with Corn Belt Power Cooperative. The new agreement requires Corn Belt to supply the City sufficient electrical energy at rates commensurate to other Corn Belt supplied customers. In this process, Corn Belt has informed the City that the cost of electricity will be increasing January 1, 2012 by approximately 10-11%.

In January 2011, Corn Belt increased the supply/transmission rate to the City by 29% and the energy rate by nearly 4.9%. Responding to last year's rate increases from Corn Belt, Council raised the electrical base charge by 2.9% and the energy rate by 1.9%. For 2012, Council considered several options before voting to maintain the base charge and increase the energy rate by 5.66%.

## Crime Stoppers

By Brian Hughes, Chief of Police

Crime Stoppers is a national program that helps to build a network of local programs that work together to prevent and solve crime in communities and schools throughout the nation. Recently, citizens throughout Webster City and Hamilton County who were concerned about their communities decided to breathe new life into the Crime Stoppers program that had dissolved several years ago. These citizens recently formed

In other action, Council recently enacted a pilot program to assist low and moderate-income residents in making home improvements; details can be secured at City Hall. The City's economic development activities have



been recognized with three awards during the year. The newly appointed Airport Commission was able to reach understandable and financially improved agreements with the Airport's fixed-based operator and Airport Manager. In addition, the Airport's master plan was completed and accepted and a contract was awarded to make the DOT/FAA required runway modifications.

Webster City is truly a great place to live and work.

the Hamilton County Crime Stoppers program and included a whole new mission statement. It reads as follows:

***"Hamilton County Crime Stoppers endeavors to encourage the community to assist local law enforcement agencies in the fight against crime by overcoming two key elements that inhibit community involvement: Fear and Apathy."***

continued on pg. 5

After more than five years of discussion and legal proceedings, a multi-decade agreement was reached with Corn Belt Power Cooperative



Brian Hughes



Police departments can only be effective to a certain point when it comes to reducing crime. Communities have to overcome the temptation of being apathetic toward the plight of other people and the real or imagined fear of criminals who prey on their fellow neighbors. The most vital tool for law enforcement agencies is information! Information

from the community aids law enforcement to solve and reduce crime. There are several organizations throughout Hamilton County and Webster City that provide wonderful and much needed service to the community, but

Crime Stoppers benefits every single law abiding citizen in Hamilton County! I am very excited about this new venture and would encourage anyone interested in serving this organization to please call the Hamilton County Crime Stoppers President Terry Christensen at 515-832-4350.

### From ADventures to How to Wow

By Carrie Fitzgerald, Chamber Director

2011 was a busy year for the Webster City Area Chamber of Commerce. We have successfully changed the face of the Chamber by a brand new logo and tag line: Business...let's do it. We also launched a brand new website: [www.visitwebstercityiowa.com](http://www.visitwebstercityiowa.com) and click on Chamber! The websites focus was to increase visibility, enhance our benefits, and showcase our membership. The benefits we added are Business ADventures, Hot Deals, and From How to Wow Seminars.

Business ADventures is a video innovation project exclusively for Chamber Members. A member can sign up for a professional 5 minute video, showcasing their business. It's a very affordable marketing opportunity which will be posted on the Chamber website [www.visitwebstercityiowa.com](http://www.visitwebstercityiowa.com) and also on our YouTube channel. They will also air on Channel 12. The member business can use the video in



their own marketing campaign as well.

Hot Deals is a new marketing campaign for Chamber members. Members can offer a coupon or 1/2 price gift certificates. Some exclusions, so if you are interested please inquire at the Chamber office.

From HOW to WOW Seminars, is a new educational series that was started in 2011. We had 3 seminars on the

continued on pg. 6



Carrie Fitzgerald

"Boone River Country"

City of Webster City

following subjects: Social Media, Hire'em Right Treat'em Right, and Customer Service: A Bankers Point of View. We will continue this successful series with new topics in 2012.

The Chamber of Commerce wishes you a successful and prosperous new year.

Let's make 2012 a memorable year in Webster City! Supporting Webster city is easy, and one quick way to do it is be positive about our community with everyone that you interact with every day! Encourage others with your community spirit!

## Snow Removal - Be Courteous

As we are all aware, the weather has changed and the snow and ice are upon us. The Webster City Inspection Department would like to remind the community that every property owner is responsible to clear their sidewalk of snow and ice.

According to Municipal Code Section 185.03, "it is the responsibility of the abutting property owners to remove snow, ice and accumulations promptly from sidewalks. If a property owner does not remove snow, ice or accumulations within a reasonable time, the City may do so and assess the costs against the property owner for collection in the same manner as a property tax."

Also, according to Municipal Code Section 175.12, "it shall be unlawful for any person to throw, push, or place or cause to be thrown, pushed or placed, any ice or snow from private property, sidewalks, or driveways onto the traveled way of a street or alley so as to obstruct gutters or impede the passage of vehicles upon the street or alley or to create a hazardous condition therein..."

Please realize that failure to maintain your sidewalk could result in a liability issue for you, the property owner, and the City. Please remove all snow and ice from your sidewalk in an effort to create as safe a passage way as possible.

## Graceland Cemetery Spring Cleanup Reminder

The City of Webster City would like to remind all persons the spring cleanup removal will start on April 1 at Graceland and Foster's Baby Addition Cemeteries. It is requested that all flower boxes, wreaths, decorations, and flowers (this includes items in above-ground fixtures-saddles, vases, planters, Shepherd hooks) be removed before April 1. If these items are not removed they will be picked up and disposed of by the Cemetery staff.

After April 20 persons will be permitted to place flowers and other decorations on above-ground fixtures (i.e., saddles, vases, planters, Shepherd hook type hangings as long as they do not interfere with mowing/trimming). All decorations that will be placed on the ground will not be permitted until nine days prior to Memorial Day (this year after May 18- May 28 is Memorial Day). The post Memorial Day removal of flowers (placed on the ground) will begin on June 10.

In addition, the United States' flags placed on the Veteran's graves will be removed at this time. New flags will be placed on Veteran's graves in time to observe Memorial Day.

Please direct any questions to Graceland Cemetery at 832-9125.

## Electric Rates 101

By Ed Sadler, City Manager

Rather than a direct energy savings article, this quarter, I want to discuss something related to energy savings, and probably something very few people are aware of, that over the last decade or so, has affected energy rates as much as anything. Once upon a time, long, long ago, energy production was both cheap and plentiful. That kept rates consistently low with few rate increases. Then came huge increases in demand as we became the electronic generation, and this was accompanied by our concerns for the environment, and skyrocketing fuel and metal prices. A power plant built today will cost more than twice as much to build as it did just four years ago and if you think turbines are the answer, they too have increased wildly in cost as the technology increases.

Where this is all leading to, is how these factors have affected electric pricing, and the structure of that pricing. A good corollary is for you to look at your natural gas bills. The amount you pay for a unit of gas during the Summer is less than you will pay for that same unit in the Fall, and even less than you will pay for that same unit of gas in the Winter when demand is highest due to heating demand. Electric prices are similar. Electricity is cheapest to buy during the wee hours of the morning when demand is at its lowest. Most factories are closed, no one is cooking, or doing laundry, and in most cases, they are sleeping with just minimal demand for

electricity for things that are still cycling on and off (furnace, refrigerators, clocks, etc.). Demand during these times can be met with the least expensive electricity available, and there is usually excess available because demand is so low and big power plants don't just turn on and off as demand changes. The flip side comes at other times during the day when everyone is cooking, doing laundry, factories are going full tilt, all of the commercial businesses are open and fully lit, business signs are on and we all have our computers running. Now almost every generation source is operating and as we have seen with brown outs and even black outs, that still isn't enough during very hot summers. When these times occur, everyone pays more for electricity because demand is high and even the most expensive sources are up and running to meet that demand.

Just last month, EPA released a list of power plants most likely to shut down soon because they can't meet new regulatory requirements. Several of those plants are in the Midwest and several are in Iowa. These are your current sources of cheap electricity and they will soon be gone in favor of newer and more costly sources. This transition is already surfacing in electric rate increases. For those plants that can be modified to meet current regulations, the costs are still high for the retrofits.

To address the cost and demand issues, some electric companies actually charge different rates during different times

continued on pg. 8

Webster City  
Boone River Country



Ed Sadler

**A power plant built today will cost more than twice as much to build as it did just four years ago ...**



**"Boone River Country"**

City  
of  
Webster  
City

7

Winter 2012

## Postal Patron

### Electric Rates 101 cont. from pg 7

of the year. Most however have gone to what is called a demand charge for both transmission demand and power demand. The electricity that the City buys during off peak times costs us about \$0.035/per KWH. At peak times, the cost is closer to \$0.17 per KWH. The demand charges we now pay are almost \$18 per KW during peak times. The key for the City in developing rates is to "guess" as well as we can as to when everyone will use the electricity they use so we can develop an "average" price per KWH that is then reflected in the price charges per KWH. The time will come in the near future when everyone will have a "demand meter" on their house, and they will pay for the price of the electricity they use at the time they use it. Those who do laundry at 3:00 AM will get a much cheaper price than those who do laundry at 7:00 PM. Right now however, the technology and the costs are not there to where this is practical, especially on a large scale. Companies are however already building appliances and HVAC equipment that are able to determine demand from a signal sent

by the utility company and will only cycle on when demand is low, in order to save the consumer money.

In the mean time, start getting in the habit of washing clothes late at night, same for the dishes. Get programmable thermostats that can have the HVAC units avoid peak times. Doing this will get you ready for the inevitable and in the mean time, if we all do it, it will reduce the cost for all of us, because our peak demand for the City will be lower and we can reflect that in your rates. For the most part, peak demand in the winter is early morning when everyone is either getting ready for work or just getting to work. Peaks for the summer tend to be more in the late afternoon when it is the hottest and also when people are getting home and turning on the AC.



*Webster City*  
Boone River Country

**"Boone River  
Country"**

City  
of  
Webster  
City