

Keep Columbus Beautiful off to a great start

By John Carpenter
Gazette Staff

For a number of months the Gazette has reported on the city's discussion with, and eventual affiliation with the Keep Iowa Beautiful organization. One primary area that the city was focusing on as a first project was our entryways.

The project began in the fall with the clearing of trees and brush around the Swinging Bridge, making it visible from Highway 92. This led to the eventual lighting of the bridge during the Christmas season.

Now the city is into an additional phase of the entryway project with the elimination of brush in the area just east of the Civic Center. After the brush was removed, concrete has been poured to give another sidewalk to the Civic Center, and a round cement pad has been placed in the center of the walk way. Possibly a bench or some other type of seating will be placed here to establish a rest or visiting area.

Also, some excavation work has been made on the Monkey Run Creek along Walnut Street. A number of fallen trees were removed to allow better movement of the water and minimize washing and flooding



along the banks. Further projects include new entry signs into town, additional clean up of rough areas, and planting of new trees and shrubbery. Pictured is the work in progress east of the Civic Center

School Board approves long range plan

By Jim Rudisill

Although a long-range plan received approval from the Columbus School Board during a special June 6 meeting, there might still be a lot of work ahead for school officials before the full plan is implemented. The plan was initially presented to the board last month by local resident Al Bohling and members of his Shive-Hattery design team. The plan was developed after meetings with local residents appointed to a planning committee by the school board. The plan included five components, but the board's latest action purposely left details on those components open.

According to the plan, the components included land acquisition, a joint Muscatine Community College/school district outreach building, a wrestling facility, relocation of the high school softball field and a new driveway to the Roundy Elementary building. The estimated total cost for the five components was around \$3,427,000, which included \$447,000 in engineering and contingency expenses.

Superintendent Rich Bridenstine reminded the board last week the plan could be scaled back to the land acquisition, outreach building and wrestling facility, with a total cost of \$2,072,000. However, he recommended adopting the full plan, using revenue from the one-cent local and statewide school sales tax to finance the work. He said if all five components of the plan were developed at the same time, the school would need to issue revenue bonds.

That would require the school to seek voter approval for a new revenue purpose statement. Bridenstine said the current statement was authorized under a public vote held in

2006, but only covered the portion of sales tax revenue generated in Louisa and Muscatine counties. Since then, the sales tax program has been modified and school districts throughout the state share sales tax revenue through a state pool.

Bridenstine said the Columbus School District currently receives around \$700,000 annually in local and state sales tax revenue, which can only be used for infrastructure and similar projects. Although the board did adopt the full plan, it would still need to separately approve each component.

Board members said that requirement would give citizens who might have specific ideas on each component an opportunity to present their views. Several people at the meeting, including some who were members of the long-range committee, offered some of those views before the board approved the plan.

Jenny Scorpil said she had talked with several local farmers who were worried the school's plans would mean an increase in their property taxes. "They are very confused," she reported, explaining school officials needed to explain the plan's funding mechanism.

Board member Dan Peters said part of that mechanism must include a new revenue purpose statement that would allow the district to issue revenue bonds. He said bonding for the work would force the Iowa Legislature to leave the sales tax funding mechanism intact. "The Legislature couldn't take it away," he said.

Local farmer Steve Martin, who was not a member of the committee, cautioned the board not to assume the proposal would win instant acceptance from the community. "The com-

munity has to be involved. Remember what happened with this building," he said, referring to the initial defeat of a bonding plan for Roundy Elementary.

Board member Sandy Martin agreed community input was critical. She suggested a survey and meetings with local clubs and organizations needed to occur before any vote. "I think we need to sell it," she said.

Several people, including committee member Jim Gabriel said they were concerned over the proposal to purchase land away from the current campus. The proposed site is an approximately 40-acre parcel on County Road X-17 across from the Columbus Softball Association fields. "I was disappointed more sites were not looked at," Gabriel said.

He also suggested the proposed outreach building could be adapted to include Columbus' agricultural program. The school's current ag program could then be rehabilitated into a wrestling facility, he added.

Local resident Larry Prior agreed the school needed to keep its athletic facilities near its other property. "I personally would hate to see us move our facilities one and half miles away," he said.

Local resident Bob Reid agreed and suggested the proposed site had too many negatives. He said the lack of utilities, police protection and location outside the city were major

issues. He said a site near the present UI Health Clinic would be better suited.

Regardless of the site, Bridenstine said the district needed to look to the future.

He said the current campus does not have enough room to expand. Even though there are currently no plans to build a new high school, there was less than a 50-year span between construction of the district's 1919 high school and its current high school building. He pointed out the first graduating class from the current building celebrated its 50 anniversary this year. Bridenstine said pressure would continue to increase for school consolidation and eventually a county high school could be built. "Where will that high school be built. It's time to start having that conversation," he said.

Bridenstine also reminded everyone at the meeting the proposed long-range plan components would be built without any property tax support. "It's time to get that message out," he said.

Board president Marsha Gerot agreed and said all suggestions needed to be considered. She urged the board to adopt the plan and then seek community input for each component. Part of that input may begin at the board's June 20 meeting when a revised revenue statement is presented to the board.

Volunteers needed to help make improvements at Chautauqua Park

Volunteers are needed to help make improvements to Chautauqua Park. A work day is scheduled for Saturday, June 11 starting at 9:00 am. Projects include a prairie planting, construction of new restrooms; trail preparation, mulching and litter clean up. Volunteers are asked to bring their own equipment such as gloves, shovels, and rakes. Lunch will be provided. For more information or to register as a volunteer please call Mallory or Nitza at 319-728-7971.

The City of Columbus Junction received a \$75,000 grant from the REAP program to make improvements to Chautauqua Park. Money from REAP will pay for new restrooms, drinking fountains, and entrance sign and interpretive signs. Additional funding from the Community Foundation of Louisa County and Keep Iowa Beautiful will pay for the prairie planting and landscaping around the new signs. The Parks and Recreation Commission oversees the project. The June 11 volunteer day will kick off the Chautauqua Park renovation effort. Improvements will continue throughout the summer.

LDG sets annual meeting

The Louisa Development Group (LDG) would like to invite you to attend their annual meeting on Tuesday, June 21st at the Columbus Junction American Legion, 99 2nd Street, Columbus Junction, IA 52738. Debi Durham, Director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development will be the featured speaker. The social hour will start at 6:00 p.m. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. Following dinner, a short business meeting will be held to elect new board members. Director Durham will speak at 7:00 p.m. The theme for this year's dinner is Partnering for Success. LDG's annual dinner is open to both members and the general public. The cost of the meal is \$20 per person. Tickets are now on sale. Reservations may be made by calling 319-753-0690 or 563-260-4022 or by emailing ldg@louisacomm.net. For more information, visit www.LouisiaDevelopmentGroup.org. LDG is a non-profit organization that serves businesses and residents of Louisa County by advancing and improving economic, social and recreation environments in Louisa County. Membership is open to all organizations, businesses and individuals residing and conducting business in Louisa County.

Briefly -

Legion Auxiliary to meet

The American Legion Auxiliary will meet for a potluck supper at the Lekwa home, Tuesday, June 14, 2011 at 6 p.m. Meat and drink will be provided. Please bring your spouse and lawn chairs.

Benefit for Peter Saxon

Peter was in a car accident August 29, 2010. He has a spinal cord injury (C5-C6) leaving him without use of hands or lower body. There is limited movement with his arms. There will be a benefit on Saturday, June 11, 2011, at the Twin Lakes Recreation Center, Clark Avenue, Winfield, IA. The cost is a \$5.00 cover charge. At 6:30 P.M. food is served. At 8:00 P.M. there will be KUSTOM KARAOKE/DJ - Jolene Norcross. The menu includes: Maid Rites, Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Potato Salad, Chips, Baked Beans and Dessert. All proceeds go to the benefit for medical expenses, assistive equipment and other expenses related to Peter's recovery.

City Council meets tonight

City of Columbus Junction will conduct its regular meeting tonight Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. location is at the New Civic Center / City Hall

Alumni Banquet scheduled

The CCHS Alumni Banquet will take place at Roundy Elementary School on June 11, 2011. Social Hour will begin at 5:30 p.m., and Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. The Columbus Junction Presbyterian Women will provide the delicious Banquet meal. Special recognition will be given to the 50-year (1961) class and the 25-year (1986) class. The 40-year and 60-year classes will be recognized also. Tickets are available from Carol Ann Howell at the Community Bank 319-728-2226 and from Sherry Pine at the State Bank 319-728-2436. Tickets are once again the best buy in town at \$10.00. Get your tickets as soon as possible so meal plans can be completed. Contact Temporary Co-Chairman Jerry Bell and Jim Howell with questions.

Taco Night in Fruitland

The Fruitland Parks and Recreation Board will sponsor a taco night fundraiser on Wednesday, June 15, 2011, 4:00-7:00 p.m., at the Fruitland Community Center, 104 Sand Run Road. The menu includes tacos, beans, dessert and drink. Cost is \$5.00. There will also be a raffle for donated prizes. Proceeds will be used to support Drake Park improvements. The public is invited to view park plans on display and offer any suggestions for future improvements.

No Coffee Fellowship at Hope Bible

Hope Bible Church wants you to know there will be no Coffee Fellowship on Friday, the 10th of June due to VBS at the church. The Coffee Fellowship will resume on Friday, the 17th and we look forward to seeing you then.

Wapello CRUISE-IN

Saturday, June 11th 5 p.m. - 9 p.m. at downtown Wapello, there will be Country Music, Prize Drawings for Participants, a food stand on sight with sandwiches and soft drinks or visit Johnnie B'S Riverview Restaurant one block East so bring your lawn chairs. Event is sponsored by Memory Lane Cruisers, Wapello.

Ice Cream Supper in Conesville

Conesville Methodist Church will be having a homemade ice cream supper on Thursday, June 9, at the Conesville Community Center. The menu includes: creamed chicken on a bun, loose meat hamburger, potato salad, baked beans, pies, cake, beverages, and homemade ice cream. Serving begins at 5 p.m. There will be a free will offering.

County Fair dates set

The Louisa County Fair will take place July 24-30, 2011. Kick-off will be Sunday, July 24th. Fair will start on Monday, July 25 ending on Saturday, July 30. Hope to see you at the fair!

Visual Support Group to meet

Louisa County Visual Support Group will meet on the third Thursday of June at the Keck Memorial Library (119 North 2nd, Wapello). We will meet on the 16th at 1 p.m. Nancy Carter, a 2nd Grade Teacher from Mediapolis, will be our speaker. She will tell us about her class's project called OIC which got National recognition. OIC is a system that could help visually impaired children in the classroom. For more information, call Lois Richers at 319-527-2630.

Rees Reunion scheduled

The annual John A. Rees reunion will be held at Noon on Saturday, June 18, 2011, at Marr Park west of Ainsworth. We will meet in the first shelter for a potluck meal. Officers are President Tyler Rees, Vice President Jay Greene, Secretary-Treasurer Sharon Rees and Historian Richard Arthur. Table Committee will be Dee Anne Vincent - chair, Chris Leichty and Melinda Rees.

Shellbark Club to meet

Shellbark Club will meet June 16th at 11:30 a.m. at the Chop House in Mediapolis.

Open House for retiring school personnel

You are invited to an open house in honor of school retirees Kathleen Almeliem, Mary Wilson and Cheryl Curtis on Sunday, June 26, 2011 in the High School auditorium. The program begins at 2:00 p.m. Refreshments will follow in the student center

Farmers' Market this Friday

Fridays from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the American Legion parking lot, now until October 14th. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, homemade noodles, jams and jellies, and plants. Some vendors accept Iowa Farmers Market Nutrition, WIC and Senior Program coupons. Buy fresh and local and taste the difference. For more information, including how to participate as a vendor, contact Nitza or Mallory at 319-728-7971.

Legion establishes flag disposal box



The American Legion members have established a flag disposal box at the Legion Building. Any member of the public who has a flag to dispose of can drop it off in the box. Periodically Legion members hold proper flag disposal ceremonies. Legion members ask you to please not burn or throw away old flags. Simply drop them off in the box and the Legion members will take care of them in the correct way.