
NIACOG

NEWS

Vol. 17 No. 5

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

August, 2005

CONGRATULATIONS TO ST. ANSGAR AND GRAIN MILLERS, INC.

NIACOG staff would like to congratulate the City of St. Ansgar and Grain Millers, Inc. on the recent funding awards by the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Department of Economic Development. NIACOG staff assisted with the funding applications for this project.

Grain Millers, Inc., a worldwide leader in industrial oat processing and organic food production is undertaking a major expansion to the St. Ansgar oat processing facility that will add 44 jobs and allow the company to retain 20 jobs. Total investment will exceed \$25 million dollars over a three year period. Grain Millers, Inc., has three major production facilities located in Iowa, Minnesota, and Canada. The quality of the workforce and the commitment from the City of St. Ansgar and the State of Iowa were major factors in the company choosing to make the investment in the St. Ansgar facility.

The Iowa Department of Transportation will contribute \$256,000 in RISE Immediate Opportunity funding for a new road to provide access to the Grain Millers, Inc., campus. The new roadway is needed as a result of the company constructing a new rail spur that will restrict access to the current location. The rail spur is necessary to handle larger quantities of oats from suppliers.

The Iowa Department of Economic Development awarded \$400,000 in an EDSA forgivable loan and approximately \$1,000,000 in Enterprise Zone tax credits to assist in the facility expansion costs.

If your City or County has any type of project in mind, let NIACOG be your first stop for information and assistance.

MASON CITY RECEIVES EDA FUNDS

Congratulations to the City of Mason City for the recent award of \$780,000 from the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the construction of a one million gallon elevated water tower. The water tower will serve the newly developing industrial park just north of the Avenue of the Saints highway near the new Golden Grain, Inc., ethanol plant. In addition to the EDA award, NIACOG successfully secured \$765,000 in RISE funds in support of the industrial park development in 2004 and is continuing its search for funds to assist with the installation of sanitary sewer.

HOUSING REHABILITATION

NIACOG is currently assisting 11 of its cities in carrying out their owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. All of these programs were funded by Housing Fund grant awards through the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED).

The grants for the cities of Buffalo Center, Charles City, Rake, Stacyville, and Swea City were awarded earlier this year. The environmental review process for these 5 communities was completed by NIACOG staff in June. Also the application intake period for all 5 projects was completed late last month. Meetings have been held or will be held soon in all 5 communities to adopt administrative plans and to assure that other grant contract conditions are cleared.

The IDED Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD (either CDBG or HOME funds) in order to expand or retain the supply of decent and affordable housing for low-income Iowans. Only local governments (cities, counties) are eligible to receive CDBG funds. However, eligible HOME recipients include for-profit entities and nonprofit organization in addition to local governments. Eligible activities include owner-occupied housing rehabilitation, rental housing rehabilitation and rental new construction (including transitional housing), tenant-based rental assistance, and homeownership assistance.

The application workshop for the 2006 Housing Fund program year is scheduled for September 1, 2005. Applications will be due on December 7, 2005. If your community is interested in applying for funding, please contact the NIACOG office. The program is extremely competitive and we appreciate as much lead time as possible to ensure a strong application.

NIACOG'S 2ND ANNUAL PICNIC & BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

MONDAY, AUGUST 8, 2005

6:00 P.M.

**EAST PARK, SHELTER HOUSE #4 IN
MASON CITY
PLEASE RSVP!**



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

I'm keeping my fingers crossed that the next time I pound a few words out for our newsletter, I will be doing it from a new office in conjunction with the Joint Transit Facility. The anticipation is building and everyone is excited to see the final finishes. Based on our last progress meeting with the architect and contractors, we should be in the new facility by mid-September. We will keep you posted as to the date of the ribbon cutting and public open house. We hope that our entire membership will be able to join us in celebrating our new 'home'.

On a personal note, we just returned from the University of Iowa for college orientation. Yes, the oldest is off to college this Fall and I just experienced two days of financial aid planning on how one attempts to pay for college. I'm just glad I'm not one of those Illinois parents that will be paying \$10,000 more in tuition! I'm still scratching my head on how we're going to afford this. Heck, student season football tickets were \$126! Nevertheless, she will be a freshman wearing the black and gold with her parents on the other side of the stadium wearing the cardinal and gold. Go State!

FUNDS FOR PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES

Small communities with water/sewer deficiencies often have significant difficulty in securing the necessary funds to contract for engineering/architectural feasibility studies required to make them applicable for the popular CDBG program. Lacking access to pre-development funds remain a primary obstacle for small communities contemplating options to repair/improve municipal services and utilities. To help with this problem, the Midwest Assistance Program can now provide low-cost, short and intermediate term loans for community water and wastewater projects through its Community Revolving Loan Fund. The term and interest rate are negotiable and a community contemplating the potential use of this resource is encouraged to contact the Midwest Assistance Program's loan fund manager at 952-758-4334 or tkmap@bevcomm.net. The application must clearly demonstrate the purpose of the loan, potential benefits to the community, proposed loan repayment provisions, and potential leveraging with other funding. The home page for the Midwest Assistance Program is located at: <http://www.map-inc.org/>.

CDBG APPLICATION SCHEDULE

Now is the time to begin considering whether your government desires to submit an application for the popular CDBG community facilities and infrastructure program. The following schedule has been announced by IDED, and the application process should begin shortly to assure a quality application. The CDBG applications require substantial background research in low and moderate income studies, engineering/architectural drawings and cost estimates, and collection of support documentation. Without these items, an application will not be competitive in the state review process: Rule changes for this year's water/sewer program will provide higher ranking scores to applications which have preliminary plans approved by DNR and are ready to start construction.

Water and Sewer Fund:

- ◆ Application workshop on August 30th, 2005
- ◆ Applications due on November 22nd, 2005 (4:30 P.M.)
- ◆ Awards announced on March 1st, 2006
- ◆ Recipient Workshop on March 22nd and 23rd, 2006

Community Facilities and Services fund:

- ◆ Application workshop on August 30th, 2005
- ◆ Applications due on November 22nd, 2005 (4:30 P.M.)
- ◆ Awards announced on March 1st, 2006
- ◆ Recipient Workshop on March 22nd and 23rd, 2006

HOME Tax Credit Program:

- ◆ Application workshop on September 1st, 2005
- ◆ Applications due on November 21st, 2005
- ◆ Awards announced on March 1st, 2006
- ◆ Recipient Workshop on March 22nd and 23rd, 2006

Housing Fund (CDBG and HOME):

- ◆ Application workshop on September 1st, 2005
- ◆ Applications due on December 7th, 2005
- ◆ Awards announced on March 1st, 2006
- ◆ Recipient Workshop on March 22nd and 23rd, 2006

FUNDS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The State Historical Society of Iowa provides several grant programs for preservation of and renovation to historic documents and properties. The primary grant programs are the Historical Resource Development Program and Historic Site Preservation Grant Program accessible at the following link: <http://www.iowahistory.org/grants/>. The Historic Site Preservation Grant provides funds to acquire, repair, rehabilitate, and develop historic sites that preserve, interpret, or promote Iowa's cultural heritage. Applications are due on September 14th, 2005. The purpose of the Historical Resource Development Program is to provide reimbursable grants to preserve, conserve, interpret, and educate the public about historical resources. The emphasis of HRDP is the resource, not the applicant. Policies and procedures focus on saving resources and utilizing the abilities of recipients, program staff, and others to preserve those resources. Applications are due on January 17, 2006.

CODIFICATION

Many cities in the NIACOG Region have, are currently, or soon need to codify their City Codes of Ordinances. NIACOG provides the service of codification and because cities pay dues to support NIACOG and its services, costs are usually less than can be provided by other entities that also provide this service. We would like to explain the NIACOG process of codification so that City Councils understand what the process entails and the time commitment necessary for a proper codified Code of Ordinances.

NIACOG is a member of the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC) which is a 16 member association of Council of Governments and Regional Planning agencies. IARC has hired an attorney to provide a base Model Code of Ordinances, and to track legislation that would have an effect on cities and the laws of the cities. Following each legislative session, a training session is held for NIACOG staff in which these updates are explained and inserted into the Model Code. In this manner, the Model Code is always current and legal, and has been reviewed by an attorney.

Once NIACOG and the City have executed a contract for services, NIACOG staff will need a copy of the existing City Code of Ordinances. Staff will go through a city's existing Code and compare it to the Model Code noting any discrepancies. Some discrepancies will automatically be corrected based on either a law change or in the case where a city has adopted and enforced laws more thoroughly defined than is currently in the State Code. In all cases though, those changes are highlighted so that staff can inform the City Council of the change and not just make additions or deletions without the city knowing about it.

Once the two documents are compared side by side, the two documents are combined into a first draft Code of Ordinances. The first draft will include all differences between the two Code copies (Model and City's) and new laws so that Council members can review the differences or so that staff can explain why the proposed changes are necessary. The first draft Code of Ordinances is reviewed page by page with NIACOG staff and the City Council, Mayor and City Clerk or a committee appointed by the City Council, so that everyone can see and understand what is actually in a municipal Code of Ordinances. As the city and NIACOG staff discuss differences or items specific to a city, the working copy will be "marked up" and changed for second and subsequent drafts to be reviewed by the City. The second draft and all subsequent drafts will be new copies with additions or deletions made. In this manner, the City will make the City Code unique to their City as much as State Code allows.

Following discussions and revisions, the City will be presented with a final draft that will have been thoroughly reviewed by the City and NIACOG staff and will be the most up to date, legally accurate Code possible for each community. Many items in a City's Municipal Code are taken verbatim from the State Code. However, items such as utility rates, truck routes, franchise ordinances and many others can be tailored for individual cities. NIACOG staff will explain where and why cities can utilize Home Rule authority to benefit their communities.

While this sounds like a long and complicated process for a City, it really isn't very difficult. The majority of time is spent by NIACOG staff reviewing the City and Model Code and making revisions as directed by the City. Generally all of this can be done in a maximum of 2 to 3 meetings between NIACOG staff and the City. The initial meeting is generally the longest (2-3 hours) as we try to get through the first draft and create a more streamlined draft to work from. Also, this meeting is where NIACOG staff can learn of specific issues facing a City and discuss how to utilize the City Code to address these issues. NIACOG staff recommends that this first meeting be a special council meeting, or committee meeting, dedicated to the codification process. Following the first meeting, subsequent meetings are generally an hour or less and can be held during regular City Council meetings where changes are reviewed of subsequent drafts.

Once the City is satisfied with the draft Code, NIACOG recommends that the Code be reviewed by the City Attorney. The City Attorney is responsible to assist the City in enforcing the Code and prosecuting violations. They need to know what is in the Code and be comfortable with the language. Again, IARC has retained the services of an attorney to create the Model Code; however, in the editing process, specific City requests or ordinances may not be enforceable in your City Attorney's opinion.

NIACOG is very proud to offer this service to its member governments and feel that our reduced costs and desire to provide a solid Code will substantially benefit the communities in the NIACOG Region. While the process outlined above is what is typical for past codifications, NIACOG staff can tailor the services any way a City wishes. If you have any questions regarding your City Code, or the codification process please feel free to contact the NIACOG office.



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NIACOG Calendar of Events

August

- 8- NIACOG Picnic & Board Meeting, 6:00p.m., East Park Shelter #4, Mason City
- 18- Iowa Grants Symposium, Iowa Historical Bldg., Des Moines
- 30- CDBG Water Sewer Fund Workshop

September

- 1- Housing Fund Workshop
- 5- Labor Day Holiday, NIACOG office closed
- 12- NIACOG Board of Directors, 6:00 p.m., location TBD
- 14-16- League of Cities Annual Conference, Des Moines
- 15- NE Iowa Community Development Conference, Decorah
- 23- City Clerk's Association, 9:30 a.m.
- 28- Small Towns & Economic Shocks, Scheman Conference Center, Ames, Iowa

Hydrogen Engine Center on the recent funding award by the Iowa Department of Economic Development. NIACOG staff assisted with the preparation of the funding applications for the project.

Hydrogen Engine Center will be constructing a new 30,000 s.f. building in the Algona Industrial Park to produce a new 4.9L engine to replace the Ford F300 in-line 6 and capable of operating on alternative fuels such as hydrogen, propane and hythane. As a result of this undertaking Hydrogen Engine Center will make an investment of over \$1M at its Algona operation, and create 49 FTE positions at an average wage of over \$20 per hour.

The Iowa Department of Economic Development awarded \$250,000 forgivable loan from the Community Economic Betterment Account (CEBA); \$142,715 in estimated Enterprise Zone benefits and a \$150,000 forgivable loan from the Physical Infrastructure Assistance Program.

NIACOG looks forward to working with Hydrogen Engine Center, the City of Algona and Kossuth County as this project moves forward.

NIACOG STAFF	
Joe Myhre	Executive Director
Chris Diggins	Local Assistance Director
Kevin Kramer	Transit Administrator
Joshua Kohlhaas	Regional Planner
Steve Wendt	Community Development Planner
Jodi Huborn	Administrative Assistant

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALGONA AND HYDROGEN ENGINE CENTER

NIACOG staff would like to congratulate the City of Algona and