
NIACOG

NEWS

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NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

June, 2005

WANT TO BE IOWA'S NEXT GREAT PLACE?

NIACOG encourages all cities, counties, neighborhood groups, historic districts, etc. to participate in Iowa's Great Place Program by simply requesting the State to be a partner and assigning a "team" to work with your community. A sample invitation letter is provided below:

(DATE)

Great Places Citizen Advisory Board
Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
State Historical Building
600 East Locust Street
Des Moines, IA 503 19-0290

Dear Citizen Advisory Board Members:

We are writing to invite the State to be our partner to help make (PLACE) an Iowa Great Place.

Here is some information about (PLACE): (Describe how the place is defined. Is it a neighborhood, a community or group of communities, a county, a district, a region or some other kind of place? What is authentic and special about the place?).

Our vision for (PLACE) is... (Describe the results needed to make the place a Great Place. What are the hopes and goals for the place? Who will be involved in helping achieve the vision for the place?).

Please assign a coaching team to work with us to develop our Great Places offer. The primary contact person for (PLACE) is (Contact Name), who can be reached at (mailing address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address).

We look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

(PLACE Representative(s))

SILOS AND SMOKESTACKS HONOR JIM ERB



NIACOG Board of Directors member and Charles City Mayor, Jim Erb, was recognized for his contributions as an Outstanding Volunteer at the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area Annual Conference, May 3-4 in Waterloo. Awards were presented to individuals and organizations whose contributions demonstrate outstanding excellence in preserving and telling the stories of American agriculture. Jim Erb received the Golden Silo Award, given individuals who have given tirelessly to the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area. Jim Erb has served on the board of trustees for seven years, including one year as chairman and an additional year as past chairman. Previous to that, he was involved with regional groups seeking to gain the Heritage Area designation.

Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area is one of 27 federally designated heritage areas in the nation. It is an Affiliated Area of the National Park Service. Iowa's Silos & Smokestacks area covers 37 counties in the northeast quadrant of Iowa. It is bounded by Interstate Highway 35 on the west and Interstate Highway 80 on the south.



The last of the interior concrete floor is being poured in the Joint Use Transit Facility. The vehicle storage and maintenance area are completely enclosed, with the office area to soon follow. Anticipated total completion date is August 22, 2005.



DIRECTOR'S NOTES

As you can see by the photo on the front page, activity continues with the joint transit facility project. Based on the last progress meeting, we hope to be in the new facility by the end of August.

We had an interesting visitor to the building last week when a deer ran through the building and out the south overhead door. Luckily, no one was hurt, particularly since there was a near miss with one of the drywallers. One day earlier and we would have had hoof prints in the fresh poured cement!

Generally, this time of the year I offer my opinion on what happened in the Iowa Legislature and how historic the session was. Well, we are on track for the historic part since at time of writing this article the Legislature has now made the 2005 session the longest in 27 years and there is beginning to be rumblings of a possible government shutdown if they can't get a budget approved by July 1. I'll reserve comment and let you judge for yourself how historic this Legislative session has been!

I attended the first 'Great Places' regional forums in Clear Lake on May 17th. It was interesting to hear the presenter talk about how daunting it can be working with all of the state agencies. Although there will only be three pilot sites identified, it is an opportunity for every community and county in our region to access at least two representatives (coaches) from state government to visit your community or county and assist with a profile on how to be an Iowa Great Place. This team will come together just for your place from a whole span of state agencies, to work and think together with you about how the state can partner to help your place achieve its vision. What's even better is these state agencies will come to you with the help they can offer, rather than your having to seek out each possible type of assistance. The state is labeling this a 'One Stop Shop' for state programs where the state will help you find the state services that fit your vision, and walk you through the process to access them.

I would strongly encourage all our cities and counties take advantage of this offer. All you have to do is send a brief letter to Great Places Advisory Board and you will be contacted about when a team can come to your community to discuss accessing state agency funding. We have even provided you with a sample invitation letter on the front page of this newsletter that can be used. Don't miss this opportunity to make your community one of Iowa's next Great Places. If you need assistance or have questions please do not hesitate to contact our office. As always, we will be glad to assist.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT CHANGES PLANNED FOR 2006

At the annual Community Development Block Grant workshop, pending changes for the 2006 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications were announced by representatives of the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED). The changes were designed to accelerate IDED funded projects, but they may require additional funding by communities.

The change is that higher scores will be given to project applications, which have preliminary plans approved by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) or are ready to start construction. This means that competitive projects will be started sooner with costs incurred at an earlier date, which are not eligible for reimbursement by grant funds. All projects must at least have a preliminary engineering report submitted with a completed application.

Another change, which encourages a satisfactory performance, is requiring final plans for projects to be approved by the IDNR within eighteen months. Unapproved projects may have their funding withdrawn.

Finally, another possible change to the CDBG process is the submittal schedule. The application workshop would occur in August, applications would be due in November, and grant awards would be announced in March.

Cities and Counties planning to apply for CDBG grants should contact their engineers now and discuss how these pending changes will affect their project. Out of 112 water and sewer grant applications in 2005, only 37 were awarded project funds. Obviously, projects that are ready for construction will be more competitive and have a better chance for receiving an award.

2005 SMALL TOWNS CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for the 2005 Northeast Iowa Community Development Conference, which will be held on Thursday, September 15th, 2005, at the Hotel Winneshiek in Decorah, Iowa. This conference is designed to bring together community leaders, volunteers, professional developers, rural leaders, and elected officials from the Northeast Iowa region to share their experiences and learn new ideas for community and rural development. Everyone from rural communities is invited to attend this conference.

An introduction to grant seeking and proposal writing workshop will be held prior to the development conference on September 14th. This workshop will teach the fundamentals of identifying grant opportunities and writing successful proposals to secure grant funding.

Questions may be directed to Sandy Scholl, ISU Extension, at:
(641) 234-6811

PLANNING AND ZONING WORKSHOPS FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS



Iowa State University Extension to Communities in partnership with the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC) will be holding an "Introduction to Planning and Zoning Workshop" between May 18th and July 18th throughout the State of Iowa.

The workshop is designed as a "basic training" for local elected and appointed officials on the land use issues facing them today. It will provide participants with an overview of Iowa law, including relevant statutes and court cases; the roles and responsibilities of the planning commission, the board of adjustment, the elected council and board of supervisors, and technical information on how to make the land use decision-making process more effective, efficient and legally defensible. The workshop is intended primarily for local officials new to planning and zoning issues, though it may serve as a refresher for veteran members.

The workshop in the NIACOG region will be held on Wednesday, June 22, 2005, at the Mason City City Hall, beginning at 5:30 p.m. A list of dates and locations for all other workshops, workshop agenda, registration form, and additional information can be found at www.extension.iastate.edu/communities/pandz.html.

SMALL CITY WORKSHOP 2005

The 2005 Small City Workshop sponsored by The Iowa League of Cities and the North Iowa Area Council of Governments will be held on Wednesday, June 15th at the North Iowa Area Community College from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The workshop will focus on community vitality and nuisance abatement for communities with 1,500 or fewer population.

A registration form has been inserted in this month's NIACOG newsletter.

REGION 2 - CITY TAX RATE FY04-05

As a result of us publishing the consolidated tax rates for the region in our last newsletter, we have received several requests by City Mayors to publish only the municipal levy.



On the inserted page is information on tax rates for all cities in the NIACOG Region.

IOWA GRANTS SYMPOSIUM: EXPLORING PRIVATE FUNDING RESOURCES FOR GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

August 18, 2005 @ Iowa State Historical Building, Des Moines, Iowa

The Iowa Grants Symposium, sponsored by the Iowa Grants Enterprise Management Office (GEM\$), has been developed with the goal of making private funding sources more comprehensible and accessible to Iowa's state and local government entities.

The day will begin with a discussion of Community Foundations and the County Endowment Fund legislation. This will be followed by a panel discussion featuring representatives from The Wellmark Foundation, the Iowa West Foundation and the Alliant Energy Foundation. They will each discuss various aspects of their grant process, such as the qualities they look for in successful grant applications, the importance of building relationships with potential funders and their reasons for denying applications.

Four breakout sessions are planned for the afternoon. Attendees will choose two sessions from the following:

- ▶ Endow Iowa
- ▶ 501(c)(3) Status for Government Affiliated Entities
- ▶ How to Begin! A proactive approach to seeking grants
- ▶ Locating Private Funding Resources

There is a \$25 registration fee which includes morning refreshments, lunch and an afternoon break. Please refer to the GEM\$ web site, www.iagem.gov, for additional information and to register.

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS



NIACOG is assisting the City of Mason City in updating its Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). The final draft HNA report is nearing completion. The presentation of the report for adoption by the City of Mason City is tentatively scheduled for the June 7, 2005 City Council meeting.

NIACOG is also assisting the nine other communities in Cerro Gordo County in updating their Housing Needs Assessments. In addition, a comprehensive county-wide report will be completed. All 10 HNA reports will be compiled upon return of the input packets from all of the cities.



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NIACOG Calendar of Events

JUNE

- 13- NIACOG Board of Director's meeting 6:00 p.m. @
Ridgestone Country Club, Sheffield
- 15- Small Cities Workshop 7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m. @ Muse
Norris Conference Center, NIACC, Mason City
- 22- Planning and Zoning Workshop, 5:30 p.m. @ Mason City
City Hall

JULY

- 4- Independence Day Holiday, NIACOG Office closed

NO NIACOG BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING IN
JULY

NEW IOWA GRANT RESOURCE AVAILABLE



There is a new grant resource available specifically for Iowa. The Iowa Grant Enterprise Management Systems (GEM\$) was created in 2003 by the Iowa Department of Management to bring grant funds to the state of Iowa. The best way for grant seekers to access Iowa GEM\$ is through their website at: www.iagems.gov.

Grant seekers will find grants, which are offered through numerous state agencies including the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Department of Economic Development. The website also offers a list of grant writing training workshops offered in Iowa. For a list of federally funded grant programs, follow the www.Grants.gov link on the Iowa GEM\$ website. The federal website is a centralized online grant process for over 900 grant programs from 26 federal agencies. Private funding resources such as foundations, corporations, and trusts, are also available through the Iowa GEM\$ website. Contact the North Iowa Area Council of Governments with any questions or assistance needed with grant programs.

NIACOG STAFF

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