

City Administrators Report

January 8-22, 2026

Resource Recovery Center

I have spoken with representatives from both the Hardin County Landfill and the Marshall County Landfill regarding the possibility of accepting our community's waste at their facilities. Additionally, the Mayor and I attended the Marshall County Landfill Commission meeting to discuss this matter directly with the board. Marshall County indicated that they would likely not be interested in accepting our waste due to the volume we generate, as well as the amount of waste they are already receiving from other smaller communities. Hardin County, on the other hand, expressed interest but stated that they would not make a final decision until their board meeting scheduled for February 17. During our discussions, Hardin County also addressed potential costs, estimating a tipping fee in the range of \$70–\$75 per ton. They noted that there may be an additional charge on top of that amount due to the increased workload associated with handling extra waste, though this has not yet been determined. Based on these factors, I recommend continuing to utilize the Ames facility. Ames is only approximately 15 minutes away, compared to a 40-minute drive to either Hardin or Marshall County. This shorter distance is especially important for residents who may need to drop off trash themselves, as traveling to a farther facility would be a significant inconvenience. Additionally, switching facilities could result in the loss of some local haulers, which would require residents to find new waste service providers. While the Ames facility will be increasing tipping fees for haulers, potentially leading to higher service costs for residents, the per capita cost to the City will remain the same. As a result, we would not need to increase resident bills. Another key advantage of continuing with Ames is the expanded list of materials they plan to accept in the future, which provides additional long-term benefits. I plan to place the agreement on the February 9 agenda, depending on how the discussion with the Council goes on Monday. Once a decision is made regarding waste disposal, we will then need to move forward with addressing the recycling portion of our services.

Drainage

We are continuing to work on obtaining additional quotes for the stormwater drainage improvements on West 18th Street. Once we receive another quote, we will be able to determine whether the project will be required to go out for formal bidding. Staff has been actively working to address this issue and identify a viable long-term solution. At this time, we believe the proposed approach will effectively resolve the drainage concerns. Additionally, the County has agreed to contribute toward a portion of the costs associated with the necessary work, which will help reduce the overall financial impact of the project.

CIRTPA

We currently maintain a healthy balance in our Central Iowa Regional Transportation Planning Alliance (CIRTPA) account, which is administered by CIRTPA. The current balance is approximately \$1.9 million, and projections indicate that it will increase to roughly \$2.4 million by 2029. It is important to note that the City does not have direct access to these funds. In order to use the money, any proposed project must first be approved by the CIRTPA Board and then receive approval from the DOT. Approximately \$215,000 is added to our CIRTPA balance each year through a combination of federal, state, and local transportation funding sources. To be eligible for these funds, road projects must be listed in the Federal Functional Classification

Database and be classified as Minor Arterial, Collector, or Principal Arterial roadways. The City has previously allocated \$1 million from this account toward improvements on West 18th Street, which are planned to coincide with the DOT's interchange project scheduled for 2027–2028.

After this allocation, the account balance is expected to be approximately \$900,000 beginning in fiscal year 2026. Because these funds are considered federal dollars, they follow the federal fiscal year, which begins in October. As a result, funding becomes accessible in October for any projects that have been submitted to and approved by both CIRTPA and the DOT.

I am providing this information as background for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects that I will be discussing below.

CIP update

In our previous Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), we identified three roadway projects that were planned for completion this year. These projects included:

1. Lincoln Highway between 15th Street and 19th Street,
2. E Avenue between 8th Street and 11th Street, including one block north on 11th Street, and
3. N Avenue between 5th Street and 8th Street.

After further discussion with Andrew Collings of MIPA, who also represents CIRTPA, we are proposing to adjust the list of projects in order to better utilize available CIRTPA funding sources. We will still proceed with the N Avenue project from 5th Street to 8th Street as originally planned. However, in place of the E Avenue and Lincoln Highway projects, we are proposing to complete the following segments instead:

- 2nd Street from Lincoln Highway to N Avenue, and
- 11th Street from Lincoln Highway to H Avenue.

These changes will allow us to align the projects with CIRTPA eligibility requirements and maximize the use of the funding available in our CIRTPA account. We will then work through the CIRTPA approval process to schedule the remaining projects—South 11th Street, E Avenue, and Lincoln Highway—for construction in the spring of 2027. This approach will enable us to fully leverage the CIRTPA funds that have been accumulated. You will see information on the agenda related to bonding, which corresponds to the roadway projects we are proposing to bond in order to complete them. Of these projects, the segment from Lincoln Highway to N Avenue will be the most costly, as it will require a full reconstruction. This reconstruction will include the replacement of water, stormwater, and sanitary sewer infrastructure in addition to the roadway improvements.

I and I

Earlier this fall, the City conducted smoke testing throughout the sanitary sewer system. The results indicated that the majority of the identified issues were located along the trunk line sewer near the creek. These areas were found to be a significant source of infiltration, contributing to the excess water entering the system. WHKS has since developed a plan to mitigate the infiltration issues identified during the testing. This plan focuses on addressing the areas where the greatest infiltration is occurring. Staff will continue to review the proposed approach to determine whether a more cost-effective solution may be available; however, at this time, a viable plan is in place. The current strategy involves excavating and replacing several manholes along the trunk line that are older structures and no longer functioning as intended. In addition, other manholes that do not require full replacement will be rehabilitated by applying grout to seal cracks, joints, and holes where infiltration is occurring. This work is intended to significantly

reduce groundwater infiltration and improve the overall performance and reliability of the sanitary sewer system.

Trunk Line Stilling Structure

Approximately two weeks ago, I sent out an update indicating that the filter within the stilling structure had been replaced. The new filter has been effective in helping to mitigate the odor issues that were previously occurring. However, due to recent cold weather conditions, the filter froze earlier this week. City staff have since removed the filter to allow it to thaw properly and will reinstall it once conditions allow. In the meantime, we are actively evaluating potential solutions to prevent the filter from freezing in the future, to ensure the odor issue does not return.

Access Control

We have now received all estimates for the access control improvements at both City Hall and the Water Plant. Staff will review the submitted proposals and prepare an action form for the Council's consideration. This information will be included on the agenda for the February Council meeting, at which time the Council will be able to review the options and make a decision.

CDBG

The lead and asbestos testing has been completed, and we expect to receive the results within the next one to two weeks. In the meantime, the historical review process will begin shortly; however, all materials must first receive approval from the State before the formal review can proceed. While we are hopeful that the State's approval process will move quickly, an initial on-site review is scheduled to begin on Friday. Representatives from Eocene will be coming to town to inspect the buildings and gather the information necessary to develop a plan of action. This preliminary visit will allow them to prepare for the work once all approvals are in place and they are authorized to proceed.

Monthly Meetings

IAMU-Legislative Review
NEDC
Mainstreet
Rotary
PPL



STAFF MEETING AGENDA
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 @ 9:00 A.M

- i. CDBG- Historian/Lead/Asbestos
- ii. Legislative Review
- iii. Access Control
- iv. Splashpad
- v. Decommission- 1st phase of testing
- vi. W. 18th Street drainage
- vii. Internet Services
- viii. Oak Park Trail
- ix. Housing Development
- x. Resource Recovery Center
- xi. ICAP
- xii. WWTP
- xiii. Ordinance Changes/Fee Appendix

City Communications Update

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***They encourage at council meetings for council members and City leaders, when speaking, to think about using language that makes it easier for people to know what they are talking about when they are referencing a document. For example – “In the document handed to us by Brenda Dryer on housing statistics, my question is...” This is important for those listening to videos later.**

***I learned during this webinar how to better provide alt text on images to bring them into “context” rather than just naming or describing them, and that not all images need or should have alt text. This will be something I can begin working on.**

***Suggestions were made about our YouTube settings and I checked that we are already in the correct settings, as far as I can tell.**

***It was noted that in any presentation materials we have on our website or are creating for our website – such as budget presentation, etc., we include summaries of each page or a summary at the end that can fully explain the content.**

Moving Forward

My plan is to begin working on these issues, and taking advantage of any other webinars provided that I know about. It’s encouraging to know that there are many things we can do or “learn to do” to increase our accessibility, and while it’s a lot of work and we may need some assistance from others, I look forward to tackling it and making things more compliant for our residents who need it.

The biggest take-away from all the things I’ve learned about this mandate is that we must show progress ... it isn’t that we are ever 100 percent “issue-free”, but that we are working toward any issues we have to meet guidelines, and responding to any resident concerns about our presentation of information.

There are a number of companies who work with accessibility specifically and at some point in time, we may need to have one of those companies work with us. The City of Decorah has a great accessibility tool on its website, provided by Accessibe, which partners with SalTech, so that may be something we want to consider down the road. I continue to review other City websites and talk with other City officials, and some aren’t even thinking about this mandate yet, so I’m glad we are at least starting to plan for it.

If you have any questions, please reach out to me.

City Communications Update
Re: Website Accessibility Mandate
From: Marlys Barker

Over the past year, I've been looking into the new website accessibility requirements for all Cities to meet by 2026 and 2027. Cities with over 50,000 in population will have to implement action by April 26 of this year. Cities under 50,000 in population will have to implement action by April 26, 2027.

Kerin referred me to a webinar offered by League of Cities on Jan. 21 and I sat in on it. Information was presented by staff at DeNovo (a company that works with government communication). It truly helped with some of the questions I've had about this mandate and about how we can move forward.

Some important things I learned about the federal mandate, our ability to comply by April 26, 2027, are as follows:

*There is a free evaluation tool we can utilize to get a report on our website's accessibility rating. The errors that appear are the most important compliance issues to try to resolve. I ran ours on my own and we are at a 6.4 on a scale of 10, with 5 being average in compliance. I plan to let DeNovo run our website again to be sure they get the same score. (They offer a free check.) Most of our current errors are with contrast.

*There is a resource tool/website provided by the government that gives a "how" on resolving a lot of these issues. I also asked and was told I could reach out to DeNovo with questions on how, without them charging me, and they might also be able to supply more resources. So my goal is to work on learning how to resolve and keep up with many of these issues.

*Any websites affiliated with the City – our payment website, planning and zoning Cloud website, parks and rec programming website, all must also be compliant or working toward compliance by the same deadline, April 26, 2027. They said most city payment sites are in compliance, but if there are any problems, the responsibility lies with the City.

*They suggested we create a timeline page or report on accessibility on our website to show what we have done and are doing to continue to work toward better accessibility. Even my participation in this webinar or if we get any other training, are things to mention on that page, along with things we are in process of correcting, to show that we are working on this matter. This is something I can certainly do.

*All PDFs going forward need to be in compliance, and I need to ask how we make sure those are in compliance by next year.