

THE GRUENHAGEN GAZETTE • STATE SENATOR KERRY GRUENHAGEN

What do you think about raising speed limit to 60?

The tenth week of the legislative session was filled with debate in both chambers as we worked on bills to send to the House of Representatives for further discussion.

With the next legislative deadline approaching, we also began reviewing more House bills.

Throughout the week, the Senate passed several measures aimed at helping Iowans, addressing constituent concerns, and improving our state.

I had the honor of running Senate File 378 on the floor, which adjusts Iowa's default speed limit.

Under current law, the default speed limit for roads and highways is 55 miles per hour unless otherwise stated.

This bill increases the



Kerry Gruenhagen

limit to 60 mph, primarily affecting undivided, paved highways. The legislation also includes provisions allowing government

entities to update speed limit signs efficiently using overlay materials instead of full replacements.

Another step forward: Senate File 311 reforms the civil service discipline process and prohibits the use of civilian review boards in Iowa.

This legislation ensures a fair and objective disciplinary process for civil service employees, includ-

ing law enforcement officers.

Too often, civilian review boards have become platforms for political activism, depriving officers of due process.

This bill supports the professionals who work hard to keep our communities safe.

The Senate also passed Senate Joint Resolution 9, a proposed amendment to the Iowa Constitution aimed at protecting vulnerable victims in court proceedings.

This resolution allows children and adults with disabilities to testify outside the physical courtroom, a practice that was previously permitted but was overturned by a recent court decision.

Iowa is currently the

82ND INDIVISIBLE GROUP

Right or left? Stop fighting! We need to work together

There was a day, not so long ago, when we had room for everyone.

Live and let live, we said.

If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.

Now we go out of our way to tell someone what we think of them, and it's never good.

People provoke one another with insults fed to them from unverifiable but entertaining "news" sources or a politician with an agenda.

Let's try agreeing that most people who voted for Trump aren't "stupid" or

"uneducated" or "mean," as we've heard people say. In fact, a lot of them are pretty shell-shocked right now.

And let's try agreeing that the ones opposed to Trump aren't "overeducated elites" out to cut the boobs and gonads off of our kids or blow up Tesla dealerships (charge leveled at a recent listening post).

We all love our country. We all believe in our Constitution — the one that provides for equal rights, free speech and the rule of law.

We all want a better

future for our kids. Most of us believe that a good life includes good health, decent jobs and people we love.

Why has that good life escaped so many of us these last few decades?

Government policy driven by corporate interests have made of us afraid of losing everything we've worked for. And that fear keeps us at each other's throats and blaming the next guy over.

Jeff Bezos, Mark Zuckerberg, George Soros, Warren Buffett and Elon Musk don't stay up at night wondering if their

only state that does not allow this option, and this amendment seeks to restore an important safeguard for victims who face the difficult process of testifying against their abusers.

In addition to legislative work, the Iowa Revenue Estimating Conference (REC) met last week to assess the state's budget outlook.

This meeting provided updated revenue projections, helping lawmakers shape the upcoming budget.

Since 2017, Republicans have prioritized responsible and sustainable budgeting. This approach has ensured steady increases in funding for K-12 educa-

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everyone a voice.

College affordability — This bill requires tuition rates for each academic year to be set on or before April 30th.

The bill also directs each regent university to offer at least one work-study program where a student earns their degree while working part-time and getting their tuition paid by their employer.

K-12 education

Cell Phones in Schools — This bill requires school districts to implement a policy that, at a minimum, prohibits the use of cell phones during instruction times.

Schools can implement a more stringent policy and must contain medical exemptions for students who require it.

Improving Mathematics Instruction — This bill ensures that children struggling in math receive the personalized help they need by requiring schools to assess students in math three times per year from kindergarten through sixth grade.

If a student is identi-

Sweets

From Page 3

ning, organizing, and executing every detail.

Their hard work ensures that Sweets for Success continues to be a fun and vital fundraiser for Main Street West Branch.

Want to get involved? Here's how you can help:

- Reserve a Table: Seating is available in groups of 2-10, and tickets must be purchased in advance.

- Donate a Dessert: If you love to bake, consider donating a homemade dessert! To help us plan, we ask that all dessert donations be confirmed by April 1 using a short form on our website.

- Volunteer: From set-

fied as high-risk, schools must implement personalized mathematics plans and interventions.

It will also equip teachers with evidence-based professional development.

Iowa Education Teacher Salaries — This provides language for the implementation of year two of the teacher salary increase bill we passed last session.

Last year we passed a bill to increase the minimum teacher salary from \$33,500 to \$50,000 and ensure 12-year teachers make no less than \$62,000.

A request by the school in this bill also allows teachers who have retired to return to the classroom with a minimum salary of \$50,000 to be able to still collect their IPERS.

Definition of Harassment and Bullying — This bill defines bullying and harassment as repeated and targeting behavior that creates a hostile work environment.

This clear definition will allow bullying to be addressed consistently.

Again, all eight of these bills received bipartisan support.

You may contact Rep. Kaufmann at Bobby.Kaufmann@legis.iowa.gov, 563-260-3355 or 1527 330th St. Wilton, IA, 52778

ting up to helping during the event, there are many ways to lend a hand.

You can find all the details and sign up at mainstreetwestbranch.org/sweets.

Sweets for Success is more than just a fundraiser — it's a reflection of the incredible support and sense of community that make West Branch special.

Whether you're attending, bidding, baking, or volunteering, your participation helps ensure that our downtown remains a vibrant and welcoming place for residents and visitors alike.

Jessi Simon is the executive director for Main Street West Branch. You may contact her at 319-643-7100 or mainstreetwestbranch@gmail.com.

LEGALS

Motion by Sexton, second by Miller. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Dean, Stoolman, Horihan. NAYS: None. Motion carried. 2nd Reading Ordinance 823 – Granting to Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive Twenty-Five-year Franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa, and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee. / Move to action. Motion by Miller, second by Sexton to approve the second reading of Ordinance 823. AYES: Miller, Sexton, Horihan, Stoolman, Dean. NAYS: None. Motion carried. 3rd Reading Ordinance 823 – Granting to Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive Twenty-Five-year Franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa, and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee. / Move to action. Below is a summary of Ordinance 823. A full copy is available for inspection at the City Office.

ORDINANCE GRANTING TO LINN COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FRANCHISE TO ACQUIRE, CONSTRUCT, ERECT, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE AN ELECTRIC SYSTEM IN THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA, AND TO FURNISH AND SELL ELECTRIC ENERGY TO THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS, AND REQUIRING SAID COMPANY TO PAY A FRANCHISE FEE. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, CEDAR COUNTY, IOWA: Section 1. Grant of Franchise. There is hereby granted to Linn County Rural Electric Cooperative, its successors and assigns (the "Company"), the right and franchise, from and after the effective date of this ordinance codified in this chapter, to acquire, construct, operate and maintain in the City of West Branch, Iowa (the "City"), as provided herein, the necessary facilities for the distribution, transmission and sale of electricity for public and private use and to construct and maintain, over, upon, across and under the streets, highways, avenues, alleys and bridges, the necessary facilities, fixtures and equipment for such purposes. The franchise will be effective for twenty-five years beginning with the effective date of this ordinance. Either party may exercise an option to re-evaluate or amend the franchise by providing the other party written notice setting forth its proposed amendments or items that it desires to be re-evaluated no more than 180 days nor less than 90 days prior to the end of the fifteenth year of this franchise period. The purpose of this notice is to expedite discussions between the Company and the City and shall not be an exclusive list of the first party's issues. Upon delivery of such notice, the City and Company shall meet to attempt to consider the proposed amendments. If the City and Company are unable to agree to amend the ordinance and address other issues by the

end of the fifteenth year of the franchise period, either party may terminate the franchise agreement effective on the last day of the fifteenth year of the franchise period. If no written request to amend or terminate the franchise is delivered by either party to the other between 90 and 180 days prior to the end of the fifteenth year of the franchise period, the franchise will continue for another ten (10) years. Section 17. Notice. The City shall give the Company a minimum 6-months prior to the request to implement any adjustment in the percentage of franchise fee to be collected pursuant to Section 14 hereof. The City agrees to modify the level of franchise fees imposed only once in any 24-month period. When any such Ordinance increasing, decreasing, modifying or eliminating the franchise fee shall become effective, billings reflecting the change shall commence on an agreed upon date which is not less than ninety (90) days following written notice to the Company by certified mail. The Company shall not be required to implement such new percentage unless and until it determines that it has received appropriate official documentation of final action by the City Council. In no event may the percentage of franchise fee exceed the statutory amount authorized by Iowa law. Passed and approved this 17th day of March, 2025.

First Reading: March 3, 2025
Second Reading: March 17, 2025
Third Reading: March 17, 2025

Tom Dean, Mayor Pro Tem
ATTEST:

Leslie Brick, City Clerk
Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve the third reading of Ordinance 823. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Stoolman, Dean Horihan. NAYS: None. Motion carried. 2nd Reading Ordinance 824 – Repealing Ordinance No. 533, and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action. Motion by Sexton, second by Stoolman to approve the second reading of Ordinance 824. AYES: Sexton, Stoolman, Dean, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Motion carried. 3rd Reading Ordinance 824 – Repealing Ordinance No. 533, and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to acquire, construct, erect, maintain and operate an electric system in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to furnish and sell electric energy to the City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action. Below is a summary of Ordinance 824. A full copy is available for inspection at the City Office. ORDINANCE NO. 824 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING

ORDINANCE NO. 533, AND GRANTING TO INTERSTATE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FRANCHISE TO ACQUIRE, CONSTRUCT, ERECT, MAINTAIN AND OPERATE AN ELECTRIC SYSTEM IN THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA AND TO FURNISH AND SELL ELECTRIC ENERGY TO THE CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS, AND REQUIRING SAID COMPANY TO PAY A FRANCHISE FEE TO THE CITY. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, CEDAR County, Iowa, hereinafter referred to as the "City": Section 1. There is hereby granted to Interstate Power and Light Company, hereinafter referred to as the "Company," its successors and assigns, the right and non-exclusive franchise to acquire, construct, reconstruct, erect, maintain and operate in the City, works and plants for the manufacture and generation of electricity and a distribution system for electric light, heat and power and the right to erect and maintain the necessary poles, lines, wires, conduits and other appliances for the distribution of electric current along, under and upon the streets, alleys and public places in the said City to supply individuals, corporations, communities, and municipalities both inside and outside of said City with electric light, heat and power for the period of twenty-five (25) years; also the right of eminent domain as provided in Section 364.2 of the Code of Iowa. This franchise is limited to electrical service. No other services shall be provided to the public by the Company hereunder.

Section 15. This Ordinance sets forth and constitutes the entire agreement between the Company and the City with respect to the rights contained herein, and may not be supplemented, superseded, modified or otherwise amended without the written approval and acceptance of the Company. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in no event shall the City enact or maintain any Ordinance or place any limitations, either operationally or through the assessment of fees other than those approved and accepted by the Company within this Ordinance, that create additional burdens upon the Company, or which delay utility operations. Passed and adopted by the West Branch City Council on the 17th day of March, 2025. First Reading: March 3, 2025
Second Reading: March 17, 2025
Third Reading: March 17, 2025

Tom Dean, Mayor Pro Tem
ATTEST:

Leslie Brick, City Clerk
Motion by Miller, second by Sexton to approve the third reading of Ordinance 824. AYES: Miller, Sexton, Stoolman, Dean, Horihan. NAYS: None. Motion carried. 2nd Reading Ordinance 825 – Repealing Ordinance No. 695 and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to erect, construct, reconstruct, maintain, and operate plant and systems for the distribution of natural gas in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to sell, distribute, and supply natural gas to said City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action. Below is a summary of Ordinance 825. A full copy is available for inspection at the City Office. ORDINANCE NO. 825 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 695 AND GRANTING TO INTERSTATE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FRANCHISE TO ERECT, CONSTRUCT, RECONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, AND OPERATE PLANT AND SYSTEMS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL GAS IN THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA AND TO SELL, DISTRIBUTE, AND SUPPLY NATURAL GAS TO SAID CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS, AND REQUIRING SAID COMPANY TO PAY A FRANCHISE FEE TO THE CITY. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, CEDAR County, Iowa, hereinafter referred to as the "City": Section 1. There is hereby granted to Interstate Power and Light Company, hereinafter referred to as the "Company," its successors and assigns, the right, privilege and non-exclusive franchise for the term of twenty-five (25) years from and after the passage, adoption, approval and acceptance of this Ordinance, to lay down, maintain and operate the necessary pipes, mains and other conductors and appliances in, along and under the streets, avenues, alleys and public places in the City as now or hereafter constituted, for the purpose of distributing, supplying and selling gas to said City and the residents thereof and to persons and corporations beyond the limits thereof; also the right of eminent domain as provided in Section 364.2 of the Code of Iowa. The term "gas" as used in this franchise shall be construed to mean natural gas only. This franchise is limited to natural gas service. No other services shall be provided to the public by the Company hereunder. Section 13. This Ordinance sets forth and constitutes the entire agreement between the Company and the City with respect to the rights contained herein, and may not be supplemented, superseded, modified or otherwise amended without the approval and acceptance of the Company. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in no event shall the City enact or maintain any ordinance or place any limitations, either operationally or through the assessment of fees, that create additional burdens upon the Company, or which delay utility operations. Passed and adopted by the West Branch City Council

natural gas to said City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action. Motion by Sexton, second by Stoolman to approve the second reading of Ordinance 825. AYES: Sexton, Stoolman, Dean, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

3rd Reading Ordinance 825 – Repealing Ordinance No. 695 and granting to Interstate Power and Light Company, its successors and assigns, a non-exclusive twenty-five-year franchise to erect, construct, reconstruct, maintain, and operate plant and systems for the distribution of natural gas in the City of West Branch, Iowa and to sell, distribute, and supply natural gas to said City and its inhabitants, and requiring said company to pay a franchise fee to the City. / Move to action.

Below is a summary of Ordinance 825. A full copy is available for inspection at the City Office. ORDINANCE NO. 825 AN ORDINANCE REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 695 AND GRANTING TO INTERSTATE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY, ITS SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS, A NON-EXCLUSIVE TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FRANCHISE TO ERECT, CONSTRUCT, RECONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, AND OPERATE PLANT AND SYSTEMS FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL GAS IN THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, IOWA AND TO SELL, DISTRIBUTE, AND SUPPLY NATURAL GAS TO SAID CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS, AND REQUIRING SAID COMPANY TO PAY A FRANCHISE FEE TO THE CITY. BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WEST BRANCH, CEDAR County, Iowa, hereinafter referred to as the "City": Section 1. There is hereby granted to Interstate Power and Light Company, hereinafter referred to as the "Company," its successors and assigns, the right, privilege and non-exclusive franchise for the term of twenty-five (25) years from and after the passage, adoption, approval and acceptance of this Ordinance, to lay down, maintain and operate the necessary pipes, mains and other conductors and appliances in, along and under the streets, avenues, alleys and public places in the City as now or hereafter constituted, for the purpose of distributing, supplying and selling gas to said City and the residents thereof and to persons and corporations beyond the limits thereof; also the right of eminent domain as provided in Section 364.2 of the Code of Iowa. The term "gas" as used in this franchise shall be construed to mean natural gas only. This franchise is limited to natural gas service. No other services shall be provided to the public by the Company hereunder. Section 13. This Ordinance sets forth and constitutes the entire agreement between the Company and the City with respect to the rights contained herein, and may not be supplemented, superseded, modified or otherwise amended without the approval and acceptance of the Company. Notwithstanding the foregoing, in no event shall the City enact or maintain any ordinance or place any limitations, either operationally or through the assessment of fees, that create additional burdens upon the Company, or which delay utility operations. Passed and adopted by the West Branch City Council

on the 17th day of March, 2025.

First Reading: March 3, 2025
Second Reading: March 17, 2025
Third Reading: March 17, 2025

Tom Dean, Mayor Pro Tem
ATTEST:

Leslie Brick, City Clerk

Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve the third reading of Ordinance 825. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Dean, Stoolman, Horihan. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-28 - Approving Pay Estimate Number 7 in the amount of \$79,311.39 to Midwest Underground Contractors Inc. for the Phase 2 Eastside Water Main Replacement Project. / Move to action.

Eric Gould of Veenstra & Kimm that the contractor will be coming back in the spring to address settling and seeding issues from over the winter. Upon completion of that, the city will then accept the final pay estimate and release the retainage on the project.

Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve Resolution 2025-28. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Stoolman, Horihan, Dean. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-29 - Accepting the public improvements constructed in association with the Phase 2 Eastside Water Main Replacement Project. / Move to action.

Motion by Miller, second by Dean to approve Resolution 2025-29. AYES: Miller, Dean, Stoolman, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-30 - Amending the West Branch Employee Handbook (Amendment #4). / Move to action.

Stoolman stated that she had no issue with the City observing Juneteenth as a new holiday, but didn't feel that employees needed an "extra" day off, Sexton agreed with her. Miller suggested that in lieu of Juneteenth, that employee's "give-up" another pre-determined City holiday.

Dean suggested tabling the item for more discussion and have the employees give their input. Koford expressed his opinion on the importance of the proposed holiday and resigned to let the Council make the final decision on what day the employee "gives up". Stoolman stated that employees get the day after Thanksgiving (Friday) off and it is not a "federal" holiday, so that day should be sacrificed in lieu of Juneteenth. Sexton made a motion to amend Resolution 2025-30 to add Juneteenth to the list of City holidays and remove the day after Thanksgiving (Friday).

Motion by Sexton, second by Stoolman to approve (the revised) Resolution 2025-30. AYES: Sexton, Stoolman, Dean. NAYS: Miller and Horihan. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-31 - Authorizing early partial redemption of General Obligation Corporate Purpose Bonds, Series 2016A. / Move to action.

Van Auker explained that the city requested an additional \$150,000 in TIF for FY24 that was to be used for an interfund loan. Van Auker found out after the fact, that an interfund loan was not needed. In speaking with the City's financial advisor, it was decided that the city could use those funds to pay down TIF debt rather than return it to the County.

Motion by Miller, second by Sexton to approve Resolution 2025-31. AYES: Miller, Sexton, Stoolman, Dean, Horihan. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-32 - Resolution authorizing

ing partial early redemption of Taxable General Obligation Urban Renewal Bonds, Series 2016B. / Move to action. Van Auker stated that an additional \$55,000 payment (from the excess TIF funds) will pay off this bond one year early than planned.

Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve Resolution 2025-32. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Horihan, Stoolman, Dean. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-33 - Accepting a quote for tree felling in conjunction with the Cedar-Johnson Road Reconstruction Project. / Move to action.

Miller questioned the difference in quotes from the three companies. Gould of V&K confirmed that the low bidder is aware of the requirements for the work that needs to be done.

Motion by Sexton, second by Dean to approve Resolution 2025-33. AYES: Sexton, Dean, Stoolman, Horihan, Miller. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-34 - Accepting bids and awarding the construction contract for the Cedar-Johnson Road Reconstruction Project. / Move to action.

Dean suggested that the Council table this agenda item pending direction from the City Attorney (who is on vacation). Dean said the item could be brought back to the April 7th meeting.

Motion by Dean, second by Miller to TABLE Resolution 2025-34. AYES: Dean, Miller, Stoolman, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Discussion – Nuisance Enforcement Priorities Koford asked the Council for direction on nuisance priorities. Council discussed and provided their priorities to Koford to carry out.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT – No report
CITY ATTORNEY REPORT – Absent
CITY ENGINEER REPORT

Scheehring stated that Neuzil & Son's will start cutting down trees along Cedar-Johnson Road as part of the project as a deadline of April 1st is required due to bat habitat. He also said that temporary easements have been delivered to affected property owners. Scheehring said that Meadows Part 6 is continuing to grade for the new subdivision and utility work has begun. Eric Gould, of V&K said he will be resubmitting the final plans for the Wapsi Creek project to FEMA this Friday, and that he has been assured that the review is not expected to take ninety days.

STAFF REPORTS
Library Director Jessie Schafer reported on the spring break activities at the library and said today had good attendance and that more fun was planned for the remainder of the week.

COMMENTS from mayor and council members
Dean asked Public Works to investigate why no overnight parking signage was not replaced on N. Downey Street. Dean said he noticed quite a bit of overnight parking in front of businesses early the mornings. adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Miller, second by Sexton. Motion carried on a voice vote. City Council meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.

Tom Dean, Mayor Pro Tem
ATTEST:

Leslie Brick, City Clerk
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