

NIACOG NEWS

Vol. 26 No. 1

NORTH IOWA AREA COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Dec. 2014 – Jan. 2015

IN REMEMBRANCE



Worth County Supervisor and Chairman of the NIACOG Board of Directors Dennis May passed away on November 15, 2014, after a short illness. Dennis will be remembered as kindhearted person with a passion for public service. Dennis served 14 years in the Iowa Legislature as a state representative before retiring from the State House to

pursue a seat on the Worth County Board of Supervisors. Dennis served four years as the NIACOG board chairman during his 12 years on the NIACOG board of directors and was instrumental in securing local support and funding for the construction of the new NIACOG/Region 2 Transit facilities in 2005. Dennis will be sorely missed.

NIACOG staff extends our condolences to the May family, friends and co-workers.

MAIN STREET IOWA PLANS SPRING APPLICATION WORKSHOPS

Main Street Iowa's network of 52 designated programs will grow in 2015. Regional application workshops are tentatively being planned for the week of March 23rd.



with applications due by June 30th. Communities interested in submitting an application in the upcoming round will need to first attend one of these workshops. Times, locations and final agenda will be announced in January 2015. The repeated workshops will provide an overview of the Main Street Approach® and Main Street Iowa program, the application, competitive designation process and strategies to complete the application. If you are interested in learning more about the Main Street program prior to the application workshops, visit the Main Street Iowa and National Main Street Center's websites.

UPPER MIDWEST PLANNING CONFERENCE IN MASON CITY

A big 'THANK YOU!' to all of you who participated in the American Planning Association's Upper Midwest Conference in Mason City. The conference exceeded our every expectation with its near record attendance, awesome speakers, sold out tours (2 of 3), and positive comments.

Here are some tidbits of information taken from the conference that may be of interest:

- Recent Court Rulings (presented by Gary Taylor, ISU Professor)
 - Courts are consistently ruling that starting city meeting with prayer is legal as long as the full scope of religious faith leaders in the community is represented.
 - Courts are ruling inconsistently on whether the reason for a zoning board of adjustment decision must be detailed in the minutes, so it is wise to include the reasoning to avoid litigation.

- Courts are ruling that 10 commandments plaques are passive and not an establishment of religion and are therefore allowed on public property.
- Transportation (Paul Trombino III, IDOT Director)
 - Iowa's economy is heavily weighted toward production of goods (factories, farming, etc.) and relies heavily on transportation to get its goods to world markets. The state is researching a supply chain network to combine transportation needs and reduce costs for smaller producers of goods.
 - A major expansion of the Panama Canal is nearly complete and will double the size of cargo ships it can accommodate to the equivalent of transporting a town the size of Algona. The change will have huge impact on worldwide transportation.
 - In the near future, the State of Iowa may be offering people the option to have their driver's license on their cell phones in place of a card format.
- Health (various speakers)
 - A variety of food cooperatives and farmers markets are popping up everywhere. Some agencies are working to connect local producers with restaurants or other producers. These networks allow for more end product uses and joint marketing to reduce cost.
 - Year round growing is also increasing with backyard greenhouses.
 - Helpful informative pamphlets being created through ISU: 'The Agricultural Urbanism Toolkit' promoting public interest in holistic foods, 'Zoning for Local Foods in Iowa' focuses on local foods and municipal zoning, 'Using Spatially Explicit Supply/Demand and Local Participants' Perspectives to Integrate Urban Agriculture with Community Planning'.
- Public Meetings (presented by Pat Boddy of RDG) – Sometimes a loud naysayer can detract from the purpose of a meeting. To prevent this, here are a few suggestions:
 - At the beginning of the meeting make rules for input clear. Rules might include: Be respectful. Stay on the subject matter. Time limits. Everyone gets a turn. Don't interrupt.

New information only (to respect your time involved in this meeting).

- Write down the naysayers point, and then indicate that their point has been recorded. Next, indicate to the crowd as a whole that we are now looking for any NEW ideas/information.
- If the naysayers point is not directly related to the subject matter of your meeting, agree that they have an issue (if appropriate) and ask them to come and talk to you about it at a future time indicating that you will provide a business card at the end of the meeting for them to set up an appointment.
- If someone is rambling on too long, encourage them to conclude their remarks by standing by them.



Sponsor displays at Music Man Square

HOUSING ACTIVITY

Next month, two cities in the NIACOG region will be submitting CDBG Iowa Housing Fund grant applications that would fund owner-occupied housing rehabilitation programs. These are the Cities of Bancroft and Leland. Eight homeowners in Bancroft and six homeowners in Leland would be given rehabilitation assistance. These grant applications are for the Housing Fund Program Year 2015. The 2015 grant awards are tentatively scheduled to be announced by the Iowa Economic Development Authority in April of next year. NIACOG staff is assisting these cities in the preparation and submission of their grant applications. The housing committees in both communities are spending many hours in helping to develop their respective grant applications. NIACOG staff appreciates their efforts.

The CDBG Housing Fund provides funding from the U.S. Department of HUD in order to expand and preserve the supply of decent and affordable housing for

low and very low-income households in Iowa through owner-occupied rehabilitation programs.

For other communities in the NIACOG region who are considering applying for Iowa Housing Fund assistance for Program Year 2016, please contact the NIACOG staff if you have not done so already. It's never too early to begin the grant application planning process.

American Community Survey

NIACOG planning staff recently attended a U.S. Census Bureau workshop facilitated by Ryan Dolan from the Chicago Regional Office. One of the items discussed was the Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS).

The ACS is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, housing, social, and economic data every year. Each completed survey is important because it is a building block used to create statistics about communities in America. People who receive the ACS have the responsibility of responding so that the statistical portrait of their community is complete and accurate as possible.

Who uses the ACS and why?

- **Federal Agencies:** Throughout the federal government, agencies use ACS estimates to inform public policymakers, distribute funds and assess programs.
- **State and Local Agencies:** Planners and policymakers use the up-to-date estimates to evaluate the need for new roads, hospitals, schools, senior services and other basic services.
- **Nongovernmental Organizations:** These groups produce reports, research papers, business plans, case studies, datasets, and software packages. Some of these activities are designed to inform the public, some are designed to further business ventures, and some are used to apply for funding in the form of grants and donations for community projects.
- **Emergency Planners:** They use ACS estimates to find local statistics critical to emergency planning, preparedness and recovery efforts.

- **Educators:** The ACS provides estimates for teaching statistical literacy, social studies, geography and mathematics.
- **Journalists:** They use the ACS estimates to highlight and investigate the issues that are important to each community.
- **Public:** People use the ACS estimates to answer questions they have about their own community and other communities. If a person wants to see how they compare with their neighbors or find a new place to live, they can look the ACS to provide a wealth of information. The ACS provides useful statistics about the median income of an area, the median age of the residents, the median house value and monthly household expenses. The ACS is a good source of information on commute to work times and types of transportation used by the community.
- **Businesses:** Businesses use the ACS estimates to inform important strategic decision-making. ACS statistics can also be used as a component of market research. They can provide information about desired markets to provide products and services.



Did you know...

- Each year more than 3 billion Christmas cards are sent in the U.S. alone.
- All the gifts in the Twelve Days of Christmas would equal 364 gifts.
- Approximately 30-35 million real (living) Christmas trees are sold each year in the U.S.
- Christmas purchases account for 1/6 of all retail sales in the U.S.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

- 8th – NIACOG Executive Committee Meeting,
 NIACOG Office at 12:00 pm
- 25th – Christmas – NIACOG Office Closed

January

- 1st – New Year’s Day – NIACOG Office Closed
- 12th – NIACOG Board of Director’s Meeting
 Bennigan’s Grill, Clear Lake, 7:00 pm
- 14th – Haz-Mat Meeting – NIACOG Office,
 1:00 pm
- 14th – Transportation Policy Board Meeting
 NIACOG Office, 2:30 pm
- 16th – North Iowa City Clerk’s Meeting
 NIACOG Office, 9:30 am

TRANSPORTATION & TRANSIT HAPPENINGS

The RPA 2 Policy Board, Technical Committee and Transportation Alternatives Committee will soon be soliciting applications for transportation projects in RPA 2. The projects are funded with two different funding sources.

Surface Transportation Program or STP funds as they are more commonly known are funds that are typically used for road and bridge projects, but can also be used for Planning and transit projects. In RPA 2, STP funds are just over \$3,000,000 per year.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds for RPA 2 include both TAP and TAP Flex funds. This funding is what most would recognize as the former Enhancement Funds. TAP funds can also be used for Safe Route to School type projects as well as Scenic Byways. There is just over \$300,000 per year in TAP funds.

The RPA 2 TAG will soon be undertaking a survey to get input into the development of the Passenger Transportation Plan (PTP). The PTP is a required document as a part of the RPA 2 Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP). The PTP is used as a planning tool for capital (bus) or operational expenses for the Region 2 Transit Service and the Mason City Transit Service.

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