



The Burlington

# BEACON

Vol. 4 No. 28

Burlington, Iowa

Friday

April 4, 2025

\$2



## Taking time to celebrate

Photo by John Lovretta

The Burlington High School girls' soccer team celebrate after scoring a goal against Davenport North High School on March 31 at Bracewell Stadium in Burlington. The game ended in a tie, 1-1. See the story on page 2B.

## Seeing a brighter future

Lions offer vision screenings.

By Chris Faulkner  
Burlington Beacon

Many people may know that the local Lions Clubs is involved with vision issues when they see boxes around the community to collect used glasses.

However, Lions Clubs also offer early childhood vision screens to preschoolers in their community using a special camera.

The Burlington and West Burlington Lions performed those screenings using their special camera at the Day of the Child event on Saturday, March 22, at Westland Mall.

Bryan Bross, Sierra Huggins, and

Eva Castillo represented the Burlington Noon Lions chapter, and West Burlington's club helped out in a second shift.

Bross said the Lions do the screenings, collect the results, and send them off to the University of Iowa, along with paperwork that the

See KidSight/page 8A

## 'Survival budget' goes before public

By William Smith  
Burlington Beacon

The Burlington City Council will hold a public hearing for the 2025-2026 budget at 5:30 p.m. on Monday.

The proposed budget increases the property tax levy by 40 cents, which will go toward city employee salaries and benefits. At previous council meetings, city manager Chad Bird told the council that the city's pay is behind that of other similar-sized Iowa cities. That makes employee retention difficult.

Mayor Jon Billups agreed with Bird, saying the raise is necessary.

"That is one reason we are losing employees to other cities," Billups said.

Billups said the city had avoided a levy increase for years. That is no longer possible in the current economic climate, he said.

"The city has kept our city levy the same for the last seven years until this year. We lowered it 90 cents a few years ago when we changed the Descom emergency dispatch funding," Billups said.

The budget also proposes cutting \$1.1 million in services, though none are from public safety.

The most significant cut is the closure of Dankwardt Park Pool, which had been leaking up to 10,000 gallons of water per day when filled. That would save the city \$126,000. Another \$80,000 will be saved on a new pool deck and chairs.

The other significant budget reduction is a \$75,000 cut to the Burlington Public Library.

"There's some stuff in here that hurts, for sure. But I don't see what choice we have," Billups said.

Facing a budget shortfall of \$1.147 million, the council proposed the following budget adjustments:

- Cutting an annual \$10,000 contribution to the Art Center.
- Cutting an annual \$3,000 contribution to the Burlington Municipal Band.
- Cutting an annual \$3,000 contribution to the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra.

See Budget on page 5A

## Citizens demand answers about property taxes

By William Smith  
Burlington Beacon

Some local residents started receiving their property tax assessments for 2026 earlier this week, and many aren't happy with their property valuations.

Those same locals flooded the Des Moines County Board of Supervisors Tuesday morning, asking

for answers from the county board.

Tom Upton of Mediapolis said he is against any property tax increase.

Des Moines County Supervisors Shane McCampbell and Tom Broeker said they feel the same, which is why the supervisors did not raise the property tax levy.

Des Moines County Supervisor Jim Cary was not present at the meeting.

"We did not raise property taxes," McCampbell said.

Part of the property tax confusion was caused by a mailer sent out by the state, assuming a 10 percent increase in property valuation for everyone. Broeker and

other elected county and city officials said that 10 percent is not based in reality – it's just a figure the state came up with to estimate taxes.

"It (the state) executed that very poorly," said Burlington Mayor Jon Billups, who was in attendance at the supervisor meeting.

Property valuation is deter-

mined by the Des Moines County Assessor's Office, which is independent of county offices and the board of supervisors. Valuations are meant to reflect market value, but those assessments can be appealed by the property owner.

Burlington resident Martha

See Taxes on page 4A

## A lifetime of leadership, service, and optimism



Photo by John Lovretta

Jerry Rigdon, former mayor, business owner, and artist, has lived a life less ordinary.

By Chris Faulkner  
Burlington Beacon

Jerry Rigdon has served in many different roles in his 86 years.

He's been a business owner, a professional window cleaner, an artist, a pastor, and even the mayor, as well as his various family roles.

But one thing that can tie all those things together is that Rigdon is an Optimist (little 'o' as well as big 'O').

Rigdon came to Burlington in 1967 from his hometown of Dunkerton. He opened Brite-Way window cleaning service and kept working there several years after selling the business to Richard Luckinbill.

He had been a charter

Only In  
The Beacon



52  
Faces

member of the Dunkerton Lions Club but never found time to go to the meetings.

However, seven years after arriving in Burlington, he was recruited to be a charter member of the Optimist Club.

"They needed 32 people to charter, and I was No. 32," Rigdon said, finishing with the infectious laugh that follows many of his stories.

More than 32 started the club, and it was there he first heard the Optimist creed.

"Promise yourself to be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind," Rigdon quoted one of the 10 lines of the creed. "Promise to talk health, happiness, and prosperity to every person you meet. Look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true."

"I just fell in love with that," Rigdon said. "It's reinforcing on a weekly basis the attitude to have."

From there, he said, he

See Rigdon  
on page 8A

## Inside This Week's Beacon

- Business Spotlight: Uppers in downtown Burlington, 2A.
- Obituaries, 6A.
- Faces & Places, 7A.

- Sports, 1B.
- Puzzles & Comics, 4B.



8 60008 49320 0