



Brooklyn City Council approves new city treasurer and hears from public health manager

The Brooklyn city council met in regular session on Monday, Jan. 20, at Brooklyn City Hall.

Mayor Les Taylor, councilmembers Sam DeGeorge, Willy Wonick, Matt Goodrich, Bill McLain, city clerk Sheri Sharer, and superintendent of public works Brian VanTomme were present. Councilmember Skip Solem was absent.

Taylor shared with the council the position of city treasurer was offered to Marcy Van Wyk-Haddrell, and her hiring was unanimously approved by the council.

In other items for consideration, the council approved the TIP/REC tax abatement and minimum assessment agreement and discussed updates to the employee handbook.

Brooke Holder, Poweshiek County Public Health Manager, shared with the council her goal to expand the resources of Poweshiek Public Health beyond Grinnell. She outlined the different programs of Public Health, including the new village closet for pregnant or new moms. Holder works closely with Brian Paul, EMA in the area of emergency preparedness. Holder said there are currently warming centers open at the hospital, and floated the possibility of town-wide training to help prepare in case of emergency.

The council will meet again on Monday, Feb. 3, 6 p.m. at Brooklyn City Hall.

State Senator Annette Sweeney recaps week 1 of legislative session

Republicans have expanded their majority in both the House and the Senate. With a 67-33 majority in the House and a 34-15 majority in the Senate, the party is positioned for continued influence in Iowa's state government. However, there was a slight reduction in this majority when Senator Cournoyer stepped down to assume the role of Lieutenant Governor.

Governor Kim Reynolds, in her recent address, highlighted the state's strong condition, emphasizing Iowa's national leadership in key areas such as retirement attractiveness, millennial home ownership, and fiscal responsibility. She pointed to the state's efforts in tax cuts—totaling \$24 billion over 10 years—and praised the sustainability of these cuts, which she attributed to the state's ongoing government realignment efforts. These efforts, she said, have saved Iowa taxpayers over \$200 million by streamlining and reducing unnecessary regulations.

Governor Reynolds also turned attention to education, following last year's improvements to reading education. She outlined plans to address math proficiency next, announcing upcoming legislation aimed at returning to proven methods of teaching math. Additionally, she proposed a measure to curb smartphone use in classrooms, citing the distraction they cause as one of the top challenges for teachers. This new policy would restrict smartphone use during instructional time, ensuring classrooms remain focused on learning and student development.

Another key proposal from Reynolds was a bill banning texting while driving, which she believes is crucial to reducing highway fatalities caused by distracted driving. Her speech also touched on the need for expanding childcare and preschool programs through new grant initiatives.

Addressing healthcare, Reynolds spoke about the importance of increasing the number of medical residencies in Iowa, announcing a partnership between HHS, Broadlawns, and the University of Iowa to secure \$150 million in federal funds. This investment is aimed at creating 115 new medical residencies. She also stressed the need for more nurses and called for a review of the state's Medicaid reimbursement models. On the topic of cancer, Reynolds proposed more funding for research and the creation of an epidemiology team to investigate rising cancer rates in Iowa.

Governor Reynolds concluded by urging lawmakers to act on these pressing issues, underscoring that these proposals are essential to Iowa's continued growth and prosperity.

Next week, we'll hear from State Representative Dean Fisher. Stay tuned!

Davis Elementary teacher honored with National Milken Educator Award



Davis Elementary teacher Holly Hunter is surrounded by her students after she is awarded the National Milken Educator Award, which comes with \$25,000 for Hunter to use however she chooses. Photo credit: Milken Family Foundation

On Thursday, Jan. 16, third grade teacher Holly Hunter was recognized as the newest Milken Educator, at a surprise school-wide assembly at Davis Elementary School in Grinnell. The prestigious award comes with a check for \$25,000 which Hunter can use however she chooses. Milken Educator Vice President Jennifer Fuller presented Hunter with the award.

"Holly Hunter's outstanding leadership and commitment are reflected in every endeavor she pursues, from her creative classroom curriculum to her mentorship of other educators at Davis Elementary and throughout the district," said Fuller. "Holly's passion empowers her young students to thrive and instills the value of lifelong learning in her school, district, and the broader community. We proudly welcome Holly into our national Milken Educator Network."

Iowa Education Director McKenzie Snow was present to congratulate Iowa's only recipient for the 2024-25 season.

"Across Iowa, dedicated educators like Holly are ensuring every student receives evidence-based instruction that empowers them to be proficient readers by the end of third grade," said Snow. "Holly is a leader in school-wide Science of Reading implementation, modeling best practices that have the greatest impact on student achievement and growth. She inspires fellow educators, builds strong relationships with students and families, and delivers results for all learners. On behalf of all of us at the Department of Education, congratulations, Holly!"

Hunter is the first recipient from Poweshiek County in the nearly 40-year history of the award. Congratulations!

Three Lions receive recognition for years of service



ALL SMILES – thanks in part to help from the cheering section behind the photographer – are from left: Lions club president Boyd Sparks and Lions members Dick Gregory, Linda Boeding, and Bill Schultz. At the Lions' Jan. 13 meeting, recognition for longevity as Lions was presented, to Dick Gregory for 50 years of membership, Linda Boeding for 25 years, and Bill Schultz for 15 years. They received pin chevrons and a letter from the Lions International President. The recognition is given in five-year multiples of membership. PHOTO BY ROGER ALLEN

Free tax assistance program now taking appointments

We're officially in tax-preparation season. Poweshiek County Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) began accepting appointments on Jan. 10.

To qualify for free tax preparation, household income must be \$67,000 or below.

To sign up for assistance this year, you can call Drake Community Library in Grinnell at 641-236-2661. Please tell the library staff member you are interested in volunteer tax assistance. The staff person will take your name and phone number. A VITA leader will then call to schedule your appointment.

Volunteers will be available for one-hour face-to-face appointments or 15-minute drop-offs on the following dates and times: Wednesdays, 5-8 p.m.: Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26; Mar. 5, 12; and Saturdays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.: Feb. 8, 15, 22; Mar. 1, 8, 15.

*Returns that cannot be done through VITA include: Farm income, rental income, contract sale of property, business operating expenses exceeding \$25,000, depreciation schedules, moving expenses, debt cancellation due to bankruptcy, loss from a business, or payment in or sale of digital assets.

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