

Opinion & Politics

Winterset City Government Update

By Tom Leners
Winterset Mayor

Hello everyone. Since we are in the summer season, I thought a reminder of the Winterset fireworks code would be helpful. The City of Winterset only allows fireworks on the following dates and times: (1) July 2nd and July 3rd between the hours of 12:00 Noon and 10:00 p.m.; (2) July 4th between the hours of Noon and 11:00 p.m.; and (3) Dec. 31st from Noon through Jan. 1 at 1:00 a.m.

I have received complaints about fireworks which I believe are being discharged in the county. Sound travels. Fireworks have been legal in the county since June 1st according to the Iowa State Code. I hope we can get through the season without having to revisit this issue at the city council. For those of us who enjoy fireworks please be considerate of your neighbors and stick to the authorized dates and times.

Thankfully, the City of Winterset's water supply is separate from the Des Moines Water Works. Cedar Lake is full to the point of overflowing the spillway. Our nitrate levels

have been stable at approximately 4 mg per liter of water, the water in the Raccoon River (Des Moines regional primary water source) has been close to 20 mg/liter and well above the federal standard of 10 mg/liter. The investment in the Cedar Lake dredging, spillway replacement and dam improvements continue to pay dividends. Also, a note of thanks to the farmers and landowners in the Cedar Creek Watershed that have installed conservation practices and structures to help Winterset Municipal Utilities keep our water quality high.

Monday evening the Winterset City Council heard a presentation on the Winterset Street repair plan from Jordan Kappos from V&K Engineering. Phase One will have a public hearing and receive bids next month.

Had a Winterset moment last Friday after installing American flags for the Flag Day display. I offered to take a photograph of a couple of visitors at the entrance to City Park. They had been in Winterset for a few days and had seen all the local attractions. One of the visitors was a huge fan of the movie "The Bridges of Madison County." It is so wonderful hearing what a lovely place Winterset and Madison County are from visitors. We do have so much to be thankful for here in our community.

All for now.

Brass Tacks from Rural Iowa

Guest Columnist Barb Kalbach
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Houston, we have a problem

Avoca, Persia, Panama, Portsmouth, Westphalia, Kirkman, Tennant, Earling, Exira, Brayton, and now, Iowa's largest metro, Des Moines. These are just some of the communities I've seen recently with water advisories or restrictions in place.

Given the seriousness of the situation, I'm glad it's getting attention. Because we're reaching a breaking point, and in desperate need of a solution. The problem is, nobody seems willing to name the culprit – corporate agriculture and the "get big or get out" mentality that is now polluting our land and water.

Our current, corporate-driven system of farming isn't working – not for our farmers, the land, or our water. Farmers are expected to tap into unfair and rigged markets, and federal farm programs force farmers to prioritize production over conservation. Add to this that we're "fueling the world" just as much if not more than feeding the world. About 30% of Iowa's cropped land is corn used for ethanol. That's a lot of corn that isn't being used for food, and it uses billions of gallons of precious groundwater annually. And a heck of a lot of nitrogen fertilizer.

How many more closed beaches will it take? How many boil advisories will it take? How many watering bans will it take? How many new cancers or birth defects will it take? What will it take to get real about the very serious problem we've created that is affecting us all?

Lawmakers last year voted to defund the Iowa Water Quality Information System and

it's now running out of money. Our state's voluntary Nutrient Reduction Strategy isn't working because, well, it's voluntary. Rob Sand seems reluctant to address the impacts of corporate ag, and Governor Reynolds sure hasn't done anything about it for years. Political donations and corporate influence do seem to run deep.

Back in 2015, then Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) CEO Bill Stowe tried to do something about it and Iowa CCI members were in support every step of the way. DMWW had sued drainage districts in three northwest Iowa counties over high nitrate levels in the Raccoon River – Des Moines metro's primary drinking source. Instead of heeding this clarion call, politicians and power brokers all across Iowa labeled it a war on agriculture, abdicated all responsibility, and once again swept a problem under the rug. And we, rural and urban, continue to pay the price for those in power not listening.

There is another way, but we have to be willing to do something about it. That requires us talking about it – naming the problem, discussing solutions, and coming together to solve it. And it sure would help if our elected officials and candidates, all of them... or any of them, would acknowledge this and be willing to take action. But they're not.

So I guess it's up to us regular folk to do it. And I believe we can, because our lives are literally on the line. We can force the people in power to do something about our water crisis and enact policies that create a food and farm system that works for eaters, farmers, workers, and our environment. If not, this won't be a problem, it'll be an unmitigated disaster we can't come back from. The time is now.

Barb Kalbach is a 4th generation family farmer, Registered Nurse, and Iowa CCI Board member in Adair County.

Relatively Minor

Vicki Minor, Editor
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Laughter does not have to come from a major source. It could indeed be ... relatively minor.

...

Who Left the Dog Treats Out?

Life moves quickly, and it's easy to go through our days on autopilot, lost in thought. However, having a routine can be beneficial; it provides a structured framework that helps us complete the same tasks at the same time each day. When our minds become cluttered, we can rely on this established sequence of actions to keep us organized and ensure everything gets done.

Dogs, much like humans, thrive on their daily routines. They expect breakfast at dawn and delight in receiving treats for being their adorable selves or mastering a new trick. It's a perfect arrangement until you realize they have trained us just as much as we have trained them.

Exhibit A: Daisy, our Aussiedoodle with beautiful brown eyes and the negotiation skills of a used car salesman, is relentless, overly confident, and somehow always closing the deal. She instituted a new household policy: no treat, no entry. She will not, under any circumstances, walk through the door without receiving her complimentary snack. Standing at the threshold as if saying, "I will not pass ... unless you pay the toll."

Naturally, we caved. To accommodate her whims, we placed a container filled with morsels of her food on the counter, like a shrine to Daisy's demands. We even keep a few kibbles on standby to toss ceremoniously in the kitchen to coax her in.

But Daisy isn't the only creature of habit in the house. My husband also thrives on routine. His personal reward system is chocolate stars. He eats a few when he feels accomplished – or, you know, when it's one of those days of the week ending in "Y." Ironically, the dog food container sits atop a larger one filled with these sugary snacks.

Recently, while navigating the day on autopilot, my husband walked into the kitchen one afternoon, reached into the treat container, tossed three morsels into his mouth, and immediately realized something was ... off. Less "sweet treat" and more "kibble crunch."

Yes, you guessed it. Man's best friend had unknowingly shared her snack stash. He had just eaten dog food.

The lesson here? Routines are great, but sometimes they bite back – especially when they smell like liver and chicken – whether you're a dog waiting for a treat or a grown adult accidentally eating one.

The best surprises usually come when we stop paying attention.

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The Winterset Madisonian (USPS 687-260) is published weekly on Wednesdays by MadCoMedia Group, Inc. Periodical Postage paid at Winterset, Iowa 50273. Entered as Periodical at the Post Office at Winterset, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

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Elsewhere in the United States \$53.00 per year;
Half-year subscriptions also available. Temporary Changes of Address \$2.
Postmaster: Send all changes of address to:
The Winterset Madisonian, P.O. Box 350, Winterset, IA 50273-1506
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