

Opinion & Politics

Letters

Experience and temperament over affiliation

Dear Editor:

On Aug. 26 citizens have the duty of electing a County Auditor. Our previous Auditor had plenty of political support but came into the job with no Auditor office or public servant experience. She lasted less than 6 months in the job.

Current candidates are a listed as an Independent and a Republican. We have a lot of Republicans in our county. Unfortunately, recent Republican leadership in both the Treasurer's and Auditor's offices has been disastrous. The fighting in our Republican-led Board of Supervisors meetings has become a black eye for Madison County. I can't believe this is what most Republicans expected of their candidates.

I have always thought politics should play a

minor role in city or county government. We all want to get as much out of our tax dollars as we can – honestly and without drama. County offices should be led with competence, integrity, and the ability to follow procedure and protocol while making the most effective use of taxpayer resources in accomplishing the work of the office. There are simply not big opportunities to make decisions based on party stances.

While Auditors collect budget request numbers, they do not vote on the budget – that is the Supervisors' job. When you cast your ballot for Auditor, please let the experience and temperament of the candidates influence you more than their party affiliation.

The election is Aug. 26 and you can vote early at the courthouse.

—Laura Bertelson, Winterset

Special election: what's the primary issue?

Dear Editor:

The overriding issue Madison County voters face is not necessarily qualifications, experience, beliefs or political affiliation – it appears both candidates share similar views on the aforementioned. However Matthew Schwarz (MS) is running under the Republican banner and Michele Brant (MB), who was a registered Republican, and though she requested an opportunity to address and earn the support of Madison County Republican Central Committee (MCRCC) and its members, her request was denied by the Chairman of the MCRCC, against the policy and procedures put in place that allows for such to take place and in my view a dereliction in duty, obligation and disservice to Madison County Republican voters, thus Michele Brant was forced through no fault of her own, to run as a no party affiliation, even though she has strong Republican *bona fides*.

Recently by happenstance Michele Brant approached me and we engaged in an 45 minute discussion of her beliefs, experience, qualifications and she informed me of the aforementioned, which left me stunned. I assured her she would be heard. I assembled 17 business and political leaders, including six elected officials, all Republicans, and we interviewed Michele, grilling her with over 60 penetrating salient questions over two hours.

Upon conclusion of our interview we thank MB and she departed, then every one gave their opinion of her performance. We were all in unanimity in her excellent responses under the heat of questioning and in supporting her candidacy.

We make no judgment on MS, and we empathize with his untenable position, guilt by association by those few that created and brought the storms.

We were also all unanimous in our opinion that Michele Brant is best suited to bringing peace, harmony and extinguish the torrent of discord within our community for the betterment of all Madison County residents, irrespective of political party affiliation.

And that's the most important issue!

—Frank Santana, Winterset

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Brass Tacks from Rural Iowa

Guest Columnist Barb Kalbach
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Ground zero in Hardin County

I heard from some fellow CCI members up in Hardin County that on August 6, their County Supervisors voted to approve another factory farm in the area. This isn't good news for the folks living in Hardin County or for our ongoing water quality crisis. The only one smiling about this is corporate hog and ethanol baron, Bruce Rastetter, whose sprawling Summit Agriculture Group filed the application to build.

We stopped raising hogs shortly after the passage of House File 519 in the mid 90s which knocked down the door to the factory farm industry. While independent producers felt the squeeze, corporations like Summit Agriculture Group got bigger and bigger. Rastetter and Summit now have an ownership interest in 172 factory farms and hundreds of thousands of corporate owned hogs across the state.

Hardin County is home to 17,000 people and over 1 million hogs confined in one of its nearly 250 corporate hog factories. These hogs produce over 460 million gallons of manure each year – about the same amount of waste as the population of Iowa. Rastetter's latest proposed factory farm in Hardin County would be 4,999 head of hogs that would create 1,749,650 gallons of liquid manure each year. At this scale the manure is no longer a fertilizer that is absorbed into the ground, it's a waste product that is dumped on fields and runs off into our water ways.

Current farm policy incentivizes and subsidizes the factory farm industry. Even the application process for factory farm construction is rigged

in the industry's favor. Builders are required to fill out a 'Master Matrix' for their application to verify all the positive steps they intend to take to protect the environment & the community. It's essentially an open book test that applicants fill out themselves, grade themselves, and only have to get a 50% to pass. Rastetter's recent application scored 455 points out of 880, or 51%.

The points that Summit didn't take gives clues as to what kind of neighbors they probably are. No points for emergency containment area at manure storage structure pump-out area. No points for filter installation to reduce odors from confinement buildings. No points for groundwater monitoring wells installed near manure storage structure. No points for demonstrated support from property owners within a 1-mile radius.

The recent Central Iowa Source Water Research Assessment from Polk County painted a grim picture if we don't correct course soon. Not surprisingly, it pointed to factory farm runoff as a major contributor to the problem of nitrates in our drinking water and E. Coli in our recreational lakes. It pointed out that voluntary regulations don't work when there's no teeth to them.

So what bold actions are our current elected officials taking to address this dire situation? Trying to sweep a problem under the rug by reducing our state's water quality sensors by 75% in the coming year. Taking away our only water quality sensors solves nothing!

We can have clean water to drink, swim, and fish in. We can have diversified, thriving family farms. And we can have vibrant rural communities with lively main streets. But it's going to take standing up to folks like Bruce Rastetter and demanding government at the local and state level to work for us to hold corporate ag accountable.

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

Editorial Page Guidelines: We want to hear your perspective and views on local issues. We welcome letters with a unique viewpoint that are supported by facts and offer a solution if applicable. Send your letter to the editor to editor@wintersetmadisonian.com. Letters to the editor should be no more than 600 words. Submissions 200-300 words have the best chance of being published. You must include your name, address, and a daytime phone number for verification. All submissions of letters to the editor become the property of The Madisonian and may be edited for length, redundancy, clarity, civility, and accuracy and may be published or distributed in print, electronic, or other forms. Our intent in editing is not to change your opinions expressed, but to ensure your views are clear, concise, and easy to understand. We will try to contact you if we need to edit your letter, but cannot guarantee we will be able to do so because of time constraints. Not all letters submitted will be published. Typically, we will only publish one letter per writer every 30 days. We will not print letters that make false or damaging statements about another person or that are factually inaccurate.

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.

Water You Waiting For?

Water is that magical, transparent liquid with no color, taste, or smell, and yet, it falls from the sky, fills our lakes and oceans, and keeps every living thing on Earth alive. It's the quiet hero of our planet, constantly cycling through the air, land, and sea, shaping the world around us.

Making up 50% to 70% of our body weight, we literally can't survive without it. Still, when someone suggests we drink more of it, we often aren't quite ready to go with the flow, unless, of course, it's been magically turned into coffee, tea, or something fizzy.

Well, well, well... welcome to the wild world of powdered drink mixes and flavor boosters. These days, you don't have to make a "pour" decision by reaching for a sugary soda. What started as a simple squeeze of lemon or lime has turned into a full-on flavor explosion, with endless options to make your water anything but boring.

"Take the refreshing taste of the islands with you wherever you go to quickly escape." That's the catchphrase for Margaritaville's Strawberry Daiquiri Mix. With flavor packets labeled "singles to go," it already feels like you're on your way to a tropical paradise, no ID required. With only a trivial amount of sugar, what's not to love? Pair it with Sonic's Ocean Water powder, and you can practically feel the sand between your toes and the waves at your feet. This isn't just a drink, it's H2-Whoa. *Water you waiting for?* Add a packet and boom, flavor explosion.

Throw a Hawaiian Punch at your hydration routine. With so many bold flavors on the market, boring water doesn't stand a chance. You'll be the envy of your cat or dog, stuck with the same old bowl of plain refreshment, because, unfortunately, they can't open a flavor packet with their paws.

Winterset City Government Update

By Tom Leners
Winterset Mayor

The amount of precipitation and its effects has been a problem in Winterset lately. Sunday morning July 20 Winterset had 5 + inches of rain fall on saturated soil. My phone application showed 6.5 inches of rain in June 2025. Followed by 6.5 inches of rain in early July preceding the July 20 deluge. In some cases, the sewer system backed up into people's homes.

The initial step the Iowa DNR tells us to take is the removal of sump pumps from the sanitary sewer. Sump pumps pumping water into the sanitary sewer is against our local municipal code. The Winterset City Council and I have discussed a sump pump removal program from sanitary sewer. I expect more details on the sump pump program in the next 30 – 60 days. As you know work has begun on the new waste water treatment facility to replace the existing non-compliant plant.

It doesn't seem possible, but school starts in Winterset in just over two weeks – August 25 is the first day of school. Let's keep our eyes open as we drive for the children walking to school and the school buses as they navigate our community.

I want to remind everyone about emergency vehicle etiquette. In the past couple of days, I have observed absent-minded auto drivers impede ambulances on two separate occasions. In Iowa, drivers are required to yield the right-of-way to emergency vehicles by moving over to the right and stopping until the vehicle has passed, as outlined in Iowa Code section 321.324.

Finally, we have an election on Aug. 26 for Madison County Auditor. A lot of back and forth on social media has accomplished exactly nothing. Early voting is available at the Madison County Courthouse now. Poll locations have been announced for election day. If you have questions call the Madison County Auditor's office at 515-462-3914.

Democracy requires participation. Get out and vote! All for now.

Have something to say?
Send your letter to the editor to
editor@wintersetmadisonian.com

Letters must be signed by the author. Please see our editorial page guidelines below.



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