



Pen City Current

Friday, Oct. 27, 2017 | 11 pages | Volume 1 • Issue 250

Candidates talk streets, safety, and taxes

Forum helps separate goals, candidate priorities

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - Four candidates for two open city seats discussed a variety of issues in a mostly cordial exchange prior to the city's general election in less than two weeks.

Mayoral candidates Chris Sorrentino and Brad Randolph and 2nd ward candidates Brian Wright and Bob Morawitz were quizzed in council chambers in front of about 25 people by Fort Madison Partners Executive Director Tim Gobble at the event sponsored by Fort Madison Partners and the Fort Madison Daily Democrat.

Randolph is seeking his third term as mayor after being appointed in 2013 and reelected in 2015. He was on the Fort Madison City Council from 2006 to 2013.

Sorrentino is a regional truck driver and has been critical of recent moves of the city with regard to new parking regulations and is campaigning on new trust with city leaders.

Wright was appointed to the council in 2011 and won a special election in 2013 and then was re-elected in 2015 with Morawitz as his opponent that time as well.

Morawitz is an electrician and veteran of the U.S Navy who has sought several offices including state senator and Fort Madison City Council.

STREETS

Wright said the last annual city planning meeting with the city focused on streets.

"My number one priority will be Avenue F, from 2nd through 22nd streets, specifically the 900 block to the 1500 block has the most deterioration going on. We've already done 13th and 14th streets, but I think the city has done a lot with streets."

Wright said the city has been answering the call of the residents, but decisions have to be made with regard to the city as a whole.

Randolph clarified the city budget for streets comes out of road use fund funds from the state.

"We get a percent of money based on per capita and fuel tax. We also have the Local Option Sales Tax which used to be 60-40 and is now 80-20. The 80 percent goes to tax relief and 20 goes to capital improvement so we're tasked with using 1.4M to 1.5M the best way we can," he said.

He said the city passed a quality of life bond in 2014 to help offset some of the costs of getting the roads cleaned up and was able to complete 15th, 24th, and



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Candidates vying for seats on the Fort Madison City Council, including the Mayor's position, were at a forum sponsored by the Fort Madison Partners and the Daily Democrat.

Fort Madison Mayoral Race



SORRENTINO



RANDOLPH

48th streets and was able to do seal coats and overlays.

Sorrentino said he agreed with the mayor on the funding.

"When it comes to

streets you do have to prioritize the right ones from the wrong ones and which are in most disarray and have the highest volume of traffic," he said.

Morawitz said he commended the city's Public Works Director Larry Driscoll on doing the best he can with the resources he has.

"I think we should leave that up to Larry and the citizens should have some input," he said. "We've been doing better, but we did borrow against the general fund for the road repair program, but I don't think next year we'll have the ability to do that. I think we're going to have a budget issue next year."

Morawitz was talking about the state's backfill obligation on commercial property taxes that may not be backfilled next year.

CITY PRIORITIES WITHIN A TIGHT BUDGET

Randolph again brought up taxes and said the state set the city's general levy of \$8.10. The city's part of

2nd Ward City Council



WRIGHT



MORAWITZ

residents' property tax bill is a total of \$15.91 and he said the \$8.10 goes to the general fund levy.

"That's all we have in the general fund," he

said. "That's police, fire, parks, policy administration, pools - all the things we like. It becomes difficult at times when you have only a basket of money that we cannot tax more for, to keep things the way they are and that's been a challenge since I've been on the council."

Sorrentino said the city should be prioritizing departments and prioritizing funding to figure out which departments get which funds.

"You can't say this department's going to get this and that department's going to get that. You have to look at the 5-year plan. But one of my goals is emergency services such as police and fire. Those have to be our number one priority. Without those, we cannot function."

Morawitz said the number one priority is making sure the residents are safe and then the fire department and water and sewer would be the top priority.

"I know we're going to have issues next year," he said.

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Obituaries/For the Record

For the Record

Fort Madison Police report

10/24/17 - 11:46 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident in the 2600 block of Avenue G.
 10/24/17 - 1:35 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a larceny/theft in the 1700 block of Avenue D.
 10/24/17 - 4:00 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Ashley Ranae Enger, 33, of Fort Madison, in the 600 block of Avenue G on four charges of aiding and abetting forgery. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 10/24/17 - 4:06 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a stolen bicycle in the 1200 block of 33rd Street.
 10/25/17 - 4:24 a.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested James L. Jackson, 45, of Fort Madison, at the police

department, on a charge of serious assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 10/25/17 - 10:32 a.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a property damage accident reported at the police department.
 10/25/17 - 4:13 p.m. - Fort Madison Police arrested Robert Alan Ulik, 37, of Fort Madison in the 2300 block of Avenue G, on a charge of driving while barred. He was taken to Lee County Jail and released on a promise to appear.
 10/25/17 - 5:31 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a burglary in progress in the 1100 block of 48th Street.
 10/25/17 - 5:35 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit and run in the 2700 block of Avenue K.
 10/25/17 - 8:13 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded

to a report of larceny/theft in the 2600 block of Avenue L.
 10/25/17 - 8:33 p.m. - Fort Madison Police responded to a report of a hit and run in the 2700 block of Avenue M.

Lee County Sheriff's report

No incidents were reported on 10/24/17
 10/25/17 - 7 p.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested David Lee Spring, 34 of Keokuk, at the Lee County Sheriff's office on a charge of simple assault. He was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
 10/26/17 - 12:09 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Jacob Dustan Mills, 31, of Montrose in the 100 block of 2nd Street on warrants for children endangerment-no injury and eluding police. He was taken to the Lee

County Jail and released on a promise to appear.
 10/26/17 - 5:41 a.m. - Lee County Sheriff's deputies arrested Heather May Cook, 32, of Fort Madison in the 2000 block of Hwy. 61 in Fort Madison, on a warrant for 5th-degree theft. She was taken to the Lee County Jail and held.
Those named above are presume innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

Fort Madison Fire and Rescue

10/23/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to three medical calls and one assist.
 10/24/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to six medical calls.
 10/25/17 - Fort Madison firefighters responded to two medical calls.

OBITUARIES

WILLIAM "BUSS" COLLISON

William "Buss" Collison, 97, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 8:20 a.m. on Thursday, October 26, 2017 at the West Point Care Center. He was born on Decem-



ber 4, 1919 in Wilmington, DE to William & Laura Riker Collison. He was a truckdriver for 42 years, mostly at JTL Trucking Company in St. Louis, MO. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during WWII in the Pacific Theater. He also served in the Philippine Liberation under General Douglas MacArthur. He was a 53 year member of the Florissant, MO Elks Lodge and was its oldest member.



COLLISON

He is survived by: 2-daughters: Lolly (Bob) Orozco of Fort Madison, IA & Diane (D.W.) Counts of Florissant, MO; 1-son: Steve (Kim) Collison of O'Fallon, MO; several grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by: his parents, 3-wives, 1-son: Buddy Schilling, 3-grandsons and 1-sister: Pansy.

Cremation has been entrusted to King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory. A graveside service will be held at a later date at Keokuk National Cemetery. A memorial has been established in his memory and contributions may be sent to: Lolly Orozco, 819 30th Street, Fort Madison, IA 52627. Online condolences may be left at the King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory website: www.kinglynk.com.

DEATH NOTICES

GEORGIA L. STANSBERRY

Georgia L. Stansberry, 90, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 3:50 p.m. on Thursday, October 26, 2017 at Fort Madison Community Hospital. Arrangements are pending at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory.

BYRON ELLIS

Byron Ellis, 91, of Fort Madison, IA, passed away at 3:17 p.m. on Thursday, October 26, 2017 at Great River Medical Center. Arrangements are pending at King-Lynk Funeral Home & Crematory.

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Area News/Lottery Numbers

IFC gives \$50K in goods to Burlington schools

BY PCC STAFF

BURLINGTON - As part of its ongoing commitment to support schools throughout southeast Iowa, Iowa Fertilizer Company and Orascom E&C USA, Inc. (Subsidiary of OCL) recently provided \$50,000 worth of supplies and equipment to the Burlington Community School District.

"Since we broke ground on the Iowa Fertilizer project nearly five years ago, Iowa Fertilizer Company and Orascom E&C USA, Inc. has worked to improve the economic and educational landscape in southeast Iowa," said Nabil Ghanous, Executive Vice President of Orascom E&C USA, Inc. (Subsidiary of OCL). "Through this most recent donation, we are proud to provide valuable equipment, resources, furniture and appliances that the Burlington Community School District will be able to utilize for years to come."

The equipment Orascom E&C USA, Inc. (Subsidiary of OCL) and Iowa Fertilizer Company donated will improve the overall aesthetic of each building in the district, and provide staff with additional resources to further enrich the educational setting. The donation allows the district to replace older furniture with new, modern options to be used in classrooms, common areas, meeting rooms, and offices. Additionally, several storage options were received, along with microwaves and

refrigerators. Donations are ready to be used by staff and students right away.

"I am delighted that Orascom E&C USA, Inc. and Iowa Fertilizer Company generously donated to our learning community," said Burlington Community School District Superintendent Pat Coen. "Having quality resources available for staff and students is often overlooked and not easy to do with decreases in funding. This donation will save the district funds for many years and is greatly appreciated."

Iowa Fertilizer Company has previously contributed donation to Southeastern Community College, the Fort Madison Sports Complex, Wever Fire and Rescue, the Fort Madison Public Schools, United Way, Fort Madison Fourth of July Celebration, the public libraries in Keokuk, Burlington, Fort Madison, and Mt. Pleasant, and more.

Iowa Fertilizer Company is a leader in the fertilizer industry. The plant in Wever, Iowa is the first greenfield nitrogen fertilizer facility constructed in the United States in more than 25 years. Utilizing its state-of-the-art production, industry-leading technology, and environmentally sustainable processes, Iowa Fertilizer Company will help provide farmers in Iowa and around the country with a stable, domestic supply of fertilizer. For more information, visit Iowa Fertilizer Company at iowafertilizer.com.

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Sports

HTC advances to regional final Tuesday

Crusaders rebound from skittish first game to win

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR



Thursday night at New London. HTC, who had breezed past Burlington Notre Dame and Seymour in two three-set affairs leading up to Monday night's Class 1A Region 8 semifinal, got off to a shaky start in the first game. The Crusaders trailed by as much as six points on several occasions in the raucous New London Junior/Senior high gymnasium.

The Lady Tigers jumped to a quick 6-1 lead on senior Savanna Sutherland's five service points. Seniors Emily Box and Madison Mohrfeld both hit long

kills in the New London rally and a defensive error forced Head Coach Melissa Freesmeier to use a time out. The Crusaders got the next point and were able to stay within six points, eventually closing the gap to 8-10 on a Box kill.

But New London started reading Box at the net and were able to block HTC's main threat in the middle. But at 8-12, Box, junior Eryn Anderson, and Mohrfeld all hit long to push the Tigers' lead back to six at 8-14. Holy Trinity closed to three again when the Tigers' senior Ashley Birdsell's attack went long at 11-14. Birdsell and senior Breanna Mettler took control of the net, sending three attacks back for points, and the Tigers had pushed the lead to 7 at 12-19.

Mettler had two more kills to give New London a 24-14 lead. Box and junior Taylor Boeding had kills to bring it back to 8 points 24-16, but a missed attack by Anderson gave the game to the Tigers.

"We made a lot of mistakes in that first game



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

The Holy Trinity Crusaders mob each other after a 4th game 25-18 win over New London in the New London Regional semifinals Thursday night. HTC will play Southeast Warren-Liberty Center on Tuesday in Ottumwa for a right to go back to state. Above Head Coach Melissa Freesmeier gives some guidance during a time out.

and a lot of it was adrenaline," Head Coach Melissa Freesmeier said after the game. "The kids were psyched and pumped up all day. As much as you tell them to stay cool, that's not going to happen, they're kids. "But we made some adjustments and they settled in. This group believes in each other and I guess it didn't matter how much we were down tonight."

The two teams started trading points in the second game to a 4-4 tie and then Box went to the service line and ripped off five straight with two kills from Anderson and one from Boeding from

the outside to make it 9-4 Crusaders. At 11-8, senior Maya Rashid had a pretty fake set that went halfway down the net behind her and dropped in for a 12-8 lead. That play seemed to spark an extra jolt of momentum as HTC went on a 6-3 run and held a 16-12 lead.

But New London battled back to a 19-18 deficit, but Anderson recorded another kill and forced a New London time out at 20-18. HTC didn't let the Tigers back in after the timeout and went on a 5-2 run to win the game with a Box kill.

"We started moving Emily around in the second game because they were blocking her well," Freesmeier said. "Then Taylor hit some balls for

us and, look at Eryn, she was a different player in the middle tonight. We had Elyse come in and serve for us, and Sam's the best server on our team but we gave up that serve for defense, and tonight that worked. It was awesome."

Rashid said the team wasn't connecting in the first game and some changes were made in the second.

"We really had to be disciplined with our defense. We knew we could pick up those balls and we weren't talking, didn't cross very well and we didn't read their blocking hands very well in the first game. Their blocking was very solid tonight," she said.

See WIN, page 10



Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Junior Emily Box (3) sends an attack at New London's Sophie Lounsbury on Thursday night at New London High School.



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Please include photo (color or black & white), veteran's name, branch of service, tour(s) of duty, your name and contact information in case of questions. A brief personal message is also welcome.

Submissions are due by the end of the day Tuesday, November 7th.

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Lawlor scores four aces in crucial 2nd game run

WIN - Continued from Page 4

The Crusaders trailed again in the early going of the third game, being down by as much as six 2-8 on a kill by Tigers'



LAWLOR

sophomore Addie Pry. Freesmeier called another stop and the Crusaders responded with Mya Lawlor, playing in just her second match this year, at the service line.

Lawlor went on a tear serving for nine straight points including four aces and had the Tigers on the run. Box had a kill and a shared block with Rashid in the run that wasn't broken until Lawlor missed on her 10th attempt and took the Crusaders from a 4-9 deficit to a 13-10 lead. At 14-12 HTC put together another 6-3 run with kills from Hoenig, Rashid, and Box. Two defensive errors by New London had the Crusaders with a 20-15 lead.

At 22-16, Boeding registered another kill from the outside, Box scored from the middle, and Mohrfeld put the game away with a kill at 25-19.

The fourth game saw HTC in control at the start, but New London brought the game to a tie

at 10-10 on a kill by junior Kaylor Schulte. They took an 11-10 lead when Mohrfeld's attack went long. Box faked an attack and scored, dumping the ball over the blockers to tie it back up at 11. Lawlor served long to put New London back on top 11-12 and Mettler and Birdsell teamed up to block and score at 13-11.

Box had a kill on the next service point to make it 12-13 and then recorded an ace to tie the game at 15. The Crusaders then went on a 10-3 run to win the match including a nifty series of five straight points won at the net by Anderson, three attack scores by Box, and a Box block that scored.

Freesmeier said after the game she didn't think it was fair that these teams met this early in the post season.

"It's too bad because there's going to be teams at that state tournament that New London's better than. I don't think it's fair. There's nothing I can do, it's a state decision."

The two teams are in the same conference, but Freesmeier said Janesville and Tripoli are closer than New London and Fort Madison and they are in different regions to keep the top teams at the tour-

namment.

"They do that for Tripoli and Janesville and they're 20 miles apart. The state says they want to get the top eight teams there and last year they did, but this year they did not," she said.

Rashid said she knew the Crusaders were capable of putting some runs together.

"We knew that we had to start running runs. We would say Emily would run this or that and I would set it somewhere else and then Taylor came up with some bombs. She was on it tonight, so was Eryn. Everyone was solid."

Box, who finished 53-60 attacking with 25 kills, and was icing her right shoulder and knee after the match, said she was frustrated in the first game.

"The first game I was getting flustered and I just had to fix that. I needed to get around the block," she said. "My teammates were behind me the whole time and they really picked me up and that was the big turnaround after the first game."

She said this was one of the toughest matches HTC will face all year.

"This is one of the toughest games we'll play. It's a huge rivalry and we both put it all out there tonight."

Anderson said after the nerves settled in, things came more naturally.

"We finally got it together. The first game I think the nerves shook us up and the crowd obviously. We finally played within ourselves and we really started to trust each other especially on defense," she said. "We have so much respect for them. They're a great team, hands down - they have great coaching, great girls, and we knew it was going to be a dog-fight."

Anderson finished with 27-32 attacks and 11 kills and Boeding was 25-29 at the net with 10 kills. Elyse Pothitakis was 11 of 11 serving with one ace and Lawlor ended the game 20 of 21 serving with four aces.

Tuesday's game begins at 7 p.m. at the Evans Middle School in Ottumwa against 25-7 Southeast Warren-Liberty Center.

5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST

FRI 27 Oct	Light Rain High - 43.7° F Low - 39.7° F
SAT 28 Oct	Broken Clouds High - 41.3° F Low - 26.5° F
SUN 29 Oct	Light Rain High - 44.9° F Low - 40.8° F
MON 30 Oct	Light Rain High - 47.3° F Low - 40.1° F
TUE 31 Oct	Light Rain High - 43.9° F Low - 42.5° F

[OpenWeatherMap](#)

From the Front

Forum puts candidates front and center on issues

FORUM - Continued from Page 1

“The economy has not improved, as the state has indicated, and we’re going to lose that \$97,000 backfill. They did the same thing in the 1970s with the machinery tax that they said they would backfeed and after about three years they stopped backfilling and left us to our own.”

Wright added that the city has had a balanced budget and has had that for several years and has increased the general fund. He said the past couple of years the backfill has been paid by the state and he thinks it will stay in place for the next couple of years. He said Driscoll has been very good at getting grants to help offset some of the infrastructure costs to the city.

“I think we’re good here for the foreseeable future, but I agree that we need to be fiscally responsible and make the best decisions for the city,” Wright said.

CRIME

Sorrentino said Fort Madison doesn’t have the bigger crimes of the bigger cities, but he said the problem is that people are getting bored in the city and getting into mischief.

“We need to start implementing programs for the youth and getting some of the entertainment businesses back here so we as adults and our children have something to do. I’ve lived in big cities and without nipping it in the bud now, it won’t get better, it will get worse.”

Morawitz said citizens need to be more proactive in their safety and do their part to help the city police itself.

“I had a resident from across the street talk to me about our crime and asked if I would help get a Neighborhood watch program, which we did. We’re not going to get more money in our coffers for more police officers, so the city residents have to step up and chip in,” Morawitz said.

Wright said neighborhood watch groups are going to be another set of eyes to keep crime at bay. He also said working to eliminate nuisance properties would help reduce crime.

“Our new police chief, Chief Sittig, works well with the county and Lee County Task (force) and they have weekly meetings to talk about what’s going on in the community and we are working with certain individuals in the community to keep their eyes and ears open.”

Randolph said he was a reserve police officer for 18 years and has a unique perspective on how hard it is to police a community. He said neighborhood watch groups are good, but being good neighbors is also good.

“While the Police department does a great job in trying to be proactive, they can’t do it by themselves. You need a partnership with residents in the community to help create a safe environment. It’s a combination of things and the policing needs to evolve with your community,” he said.

RIVERFRONT/ MARINA

Morawitz said the marina and the riverfront are one of his biggest concerns. He also said tourism is lagging and in his travels around the state he doesn’t see any information for Fort Madison in the hotel racks or tourism racks.

“We have a beautiful riverfront and marina and we don’t use it. We have a pavilion that sits idle way too much. I don’t know if the rent is too high or what, but we need to have more activity there.”

He also said the marina restaurant is vacant and two entities had approached the city with renovating the restaurant but the city has turned them away.

“I don’t understand that,” he said. “We need to be putting people in there and getting some activity in the riverfront.”

Wright said the river is a great asset and the marina has had tournaments and boats that use it. He said dredging the silt that settles is a problem and he said there needs to be a total renovation of the jetty to help thwart the sediment settling that’s going on. He also mentioned cruise lines looking at possibly docking here.

He mentioned the American Cruise Lines and Viking Cruise Lines have been talking with the city about

docking here.

“As Bob mentioned the pavilion and we do need more activity there, but if Vikings Cruise Lines come in they can use that as a stopover and there are a lot of assets down there.”

Randolph said water is an attraction and our location provides us one of the most unique spots in the country on the river.

“Our marina is a problem. It’s in the flood plain. I’m unaware of Mr. Morawitz’s claim that there are people wanting to come in down there. If there is, we’d be more than happy to talk with them. We need to have someone come in a private/public partnership where we lease the land and they run it. The city probably needs to get out of the marina business, we’re ok at it, but we’re not great.”

Morawitz said Randolph is the one who told him about the potential buyers, but Randolph clarified that he told Morawitz the inquiries were into the public/private proposal and not specific to the old Captain Kirk’s facility.

He said three people have inquired about the partnership with the city and he’s waiting for proposals. He also said the entrance to the park, dealing with the trains can be problematic.

Sorrentino said the marina is a wonderful aspect of the community. Sorrentino said he too was aware of entities since the flood that were interested in going into the marina restaurant but nothing has come of it.

“There needs to be a key focus on tourism, with the history this city has, especially in the summer months, there’s no reason why our city isn’t flourishing,” Sorrentino said.

FORCED ANNEXATION

Wright said any annexation requires the provision of infrastructure to benefit all the individuals being pulled into the city.

“To benefit the city, there has to be some factor of expansion. Companies that look at Fort Madison want to know about schools parks, etc., but also want to know if we’re growing.

He mentioned the new infrastructure to RiverRidge and Woodland Heights.

“If we can do that and sell the benefits of fire and police, which already serve them anyway, it can be a good thing definitely.”

Randolph said he doesn’t support forced annexation because the city should be able to market itself to those property owners and make them see the benefits of coming within the city limits.

“I’d rather people come to us and say we love the city and we want to come and we give them a big hug and welcome ‘em in,” Randolph said.

Sorrentino said he wouldn’t commit to agreeing with forced annexations, but indicated that those cases should be decided individually based on the city’s infrastructure and how they can benefit future residents

Morawitz said he didn’t favor the idea either, but he wouldn’t rule it out because there could be a situation where it was in the city’s best interests.

“There are circumstances that could come up and I don’t want to rule it out, but I would rather they want to come into the city.”

BUSINESS ATTRACTION/ EXPANSION INCENTIVES

Randolph said there are parts of our town that are suffering when it comes to retail and offerings.

“If you try to peel back the layers and find out what’s causing that and what keeps a business in town, it comes down to shopping local where we can, and granted Fort Madison doesn’t have everything, but if we keep that thought in mind whenever we can that money goes to sales tax and general fund and infrastructure. It feeds itself,” he said.

He said improving infrastructure and keeping focused on that will entice economic development.

Sorrentino said this was another of his key goals as mayor.

“We have to physically go out and find these companies and show them what we have to offer. If we can get these businesses in here and the city can have a better stream of revenue from industries and retail stores, the city’s general fund from every aspect will continue to grow.”

He said at some point the city will have to answer for the loans it has out with the state and federal government and sooner or later the city’s going to have to answer for that.

Morawitz said he’s upset at how much money governments are paying companies to come into our town or state. It’s become a competition between cities in how much money you can hand out to get them in and I don’t always think it pays back.

A lot of businesses when they come to town look at infrastructure, we have a beautiful highway with east and west connections, we have railroad. 25 to 40% of interstate traffic goes across our bridge through to Chicago. We need to promote those things.

He said TIF works if used properly but he said it’s been abused. He said he’s still upset about the money the state gave Apple when they were going to come anyway.

Wright said when you look at what you offer an industry to come to town, it’s not always what the city will get out of it, but the quality of life that can be gained.

He said the rehab going on downtown will help with variety and housing. He also said Fareway has been good for the city in giving another option to citizens and has cleaned up the corner of 18th and Avenue H. He said the Baxter Sports Complex has added quality of life to help attract new business and the new Highway 61 project will also be an asset to the city.

ENGAGEMENT

Sorrentino said he’s been asked numerous times about getting people engaged in the community again.

“We have to create more of an open door, and when I say open door we have to make it more accessible for the public. Have cameras in here and have it broadcasted. There’s no reason 10,000 people shouldn’t be watching this,” he said.

“It’s broken. there’s no trust left between the city government and the residents. Look at the election numbers maybe 2,000 people show up to vote out of 6,500 registered voters. It’s broken. They need to know their voice does matter, otherwise we’re just spinning our wheels.”

Morawitz said communication between the city and its residents is poor.

“The individual doesn’t think they have their voice heard or their voice doesn’t carry any power. I’ve had people say it’s just a good ol’ boys club and whatever the city wants, the council rubber stamps it and it goes on through.”

Wright said communication is improving from the city’s side. He said that’s why there is representation, but he does have people come up to him and he welcomes those conversations.

“We do have our meetings broadcast just like we are tonight so everyone can view them and they can go back and watch past meetings. The city website also has been kept up-to-date by John Luna. I believe the communication is open and transparent and it is there. I commend Bob for stepping up and running because few people do.”

Randolph said the feeling isn’t just local, it’s at the state and national level as well.

“People in general just feel disenfranchised with the way things are being conducted. For us, I have to say we’ve made some big strides to make local government open and transparent. We’ve tried to improve technologically to the point where we’re trying to make each representative up here more accessible. I hope we keep looking at that and finding our shortfalls,” he said.

Two other candidates for Fort Madison City Council, including Rusty Andrews and Mark Lair were in attendance, but didn’t participate in the forum because they are running unopposed.

Absentee voting is now open and early voting is available at north Lee County courthouse.