

Board of Regents respond to letter from City of Vinton

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Correspondent

VINTON – The saga of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS) continues with no firm plans in place.

That was the update that Chris Ward, Vinton city administrator, gave council members during a meeting Thursday evening.

Ward had sent a letter to Bruce Rastetter, President of the Iowa Board of Regents, earlier this month asking that the city receive an official written determination from the Regents as to the future plans for the IBSSS campus.

"I appreciate the city's desire for official confirmation of the proposed transfer as it considers its options with regard to the campus," Dr. Robert Donley, Executive Director and CEO of the Regents, expressed in the letter.

"I assure you that Board office staff, including the individuals you

have been working directly with, have the authority to negotiate an agreement to transfer the property to the City of Vinton

"The Board and the City have just begun the negotiation process, and considerable work remains to determine whether the parties can reach a mutually satisfactory agreement," Donley continued in his letter.

Donley's letter confirmed that further discussions would continue to be with office staff, however "while Board office staff have the authority to negotiate with the city and reach agreement as to the terms of the transfer, it is understood that any proposed transfer agreement is subject to the approval of both the Board of Regents and the Vinton City Council.

"Additionally, the Board of Regents is committed to ensuring all statutory requirements are fully satisfied as necessary to permit a transfer

of the property to the City of Vinton."

Donley concluded his letter for city officials to reach out to Regents staff to meet and "to discuss any questions or information requests the City might have."

Ward had approached council members earlier in the month about getting written confirmation from the Board of Regents and possible transfer of the IBSSS campus. Because of the related expense of taking on a property the size of the IBSSS campus, Ward shared that city officials would need to start exploring options related to a possible transition.

"We've all seen the letter," John Watson, mayor, said during the meeting. "Before we do anything else, I would like to see a citizens committee created to be a part of any future discussions." He stated that he had been approached by members of the community with ideas about the property and he would like to get that input as discussions continued.

"I would to talk to some people and report back in a couple of weeks to let you know what arrangements have been made," Watson said.