

# Community input needed in Braille school consideration

by Faith Ann Brown  
Correspondent

VINTON - Input from the community is the next step in the process of the City of Vinton taking possible ownership of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS).

That was part of the update given by Nathan Hesson and Tami Stark, council members, who are members of a planning committee to inves-

tigate the acquisition.

Hesson told those present at last Thursday's council meeting that a committee of approximately 30 people from the community and the surrounding area is needed.

"As a group, we are hoping to get together and take a look at the building and the grounds and see if it is feasible for Vinton to purchase the campus" from the Iowa

Board of Regents, Hesson explained.

"We are looking for the committee to come up with ideas" and possible plans for ways that the city may utilize the facilities, Tami Stark, council member, added.

"Ultimately, it is the council's decision, but we would like to have the feedback from the community," she added.

Both pointed out that

there will be additional meetings in the future where the committee will ask for public input.

"We will need to watch for some 'extreme questioning'," Hesson added "because at this point, it's really too early to know what is going to happen.

"We would like for the committee (with input from the community) to come up with possible ideas for uses for the

space and steps that could be taken to make those things happen," Hesson stated.

Bud Maynard, Vinton resident, echoed that sentiment.

"We need to come up with options but also need to come up with the fiscal parameters to make those things happen."

John Watson, mayor, reminded those people in attendance that the

discussions of this committee will be about the buildings and grounds at the facility. For this discussion, "the school is gone and we need to focus on the facility," he added.

In other business:

-Taking the next step to creating the city's own telecommunications system, council members

**Braille**  
**continued on A4**

# Braille: City splitting cost of feasibility study for telecommunications effort

Continued from Page A1

agreed to split cost of a feasibility study with the Vinton Municipal Electric Utility (VMEU).

Council members reviewed a request from Tom Richtsmeier, general manager of the VMEU, asking for the financial assistance.

At a December meeting, Watson spoke to council members about the city sharing in the cost of the study to see if it is feasible for Vinton to have its own

system.

The VMEU Board of Trustees approved a proposal to enter into an agreement with FARR Technologies to conduct the study at its' meeting in December.

Richtsmeier's letter to the council stated that the study's anticipated cost is about \$60,000 which would include the study and an initial legal review.

The council agreed to pay half of

the cost, approximately \$30,000 of the study.

FARR Technologies is expected to provide the necessary information to determine if it is economically viable for Vinton to engage in a fiber-to-the-premise project.

Richtsmeier pointed out that in addition to the study, proper legal counsel from a firm experienced in telecom utility organizational structuring will also

be required.

Voters approved a measure a couple of years ago for the city to begin investigating the creation of its own telecommunication system.

Currently, residents are dependent on outside sources for telecommunication systems. If the results from the feasibility study are positive, at some point in the future the city would be able to provide the service to the community.