

Council stands firm on ISU study for IBSSS

by Faith Ann Brown
Correspondent

VINTON - Communication from the Iowa Board of Regents was the center of discussion during last week's meeting of the Vinton City Council.

At a meeting in November representatives from the Regents told council members that the Board would pay for a facilities' study at the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School (IBSSS). The study is one part of an agreement between the two parties as related to the sale of the grounds to the city.

At the meeting Chris Ward, city administrator, shared that he had received word from John Nash that because the cost of such a study (\$23,000) was outside of the Regents' budget, that they were proposing a school employee conduct the study and then send the results to Iowa State University for review.

"That's not what we agreed on," Tami Stark, council member, said. "They said that Iowa State would be doing the study

and I would like to see that happen."

Other council members agreed with that sentiment.

"I have had people tell me that having someone local conduct the survey could be beneficial," John Watson, mayor, stated. "This person would know the skeletons and be able to pinpoint problem areas that others may not know of."

While some agreed that having a local person may be a plus, council members agreed that they would like further discussion on the matter before agreeing.

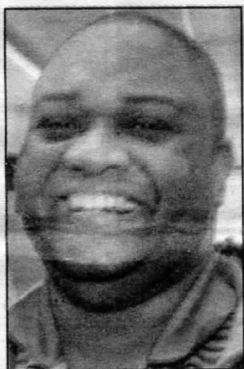
Ward was asked to invite Nash and Saunders back to discuss other possible solutions to the survey.

As part of the original discussion, Nash and Keith Saunders also told the council that the Institute of Decision Making from the University of Northern Iowa would also conduct a survey at the school.

This study is still going to happen Ward told council members.

"That meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, Dec. 21. As part of this meeting, that is when the citizens' advisory committee would be discussed."

When discussion of the sale of the Braille School first arose, several with-



Chris Ward

Study

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in city hall and outside wanted to make sure that there was input from the community.

"This is going to be a difficult decision," Watson stated. "While the actual purchase may be a political decision, ultimately this will belong to the community, and we will be on the hook."

Kurt Karr and Don Eells, both from Vinton, visited with the council regarding the studies and negotiations related to the purchase.

Karr asked if the council was considering people outside the community to be a part of the advisory committee.

He expressed that there were people with ties to the community who had expertise in areas that would be beneficial to planning for the future.

Stark explained that when the idea of a citizens committee was first discussed the idea of having a pair of citizens from each city ward was discussed.

"But we put that idea aside," she said. Because of the scope of the purchase it was felt there should be more input from the community.

Karr also expressed concerns about the size of the committee. Having a large committee could make it difficult

to come up with any decisions.

Eells urged the council to be open for negotiations when working with the Regents.

"You need to be on the offensive," he said. "The city needs to be looking at options and come up with some plans of what can be done," Eells stated.

Karr added that he while he understood the council needed to be mindful of the city's best interest, "I am always concerned when you slow down," he stated.

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rection the city wants to proceed.

Nathan Hesson, council member, agreed in theory with the idea.

"We need to understand the need to slow down this process, but we need to think about AmeriCorps.

"That contract comes up for renewal in a year," he said. The city will want to consider what its part is in the negotiations of that new contract.

Following discussion on the matter, council voted to have Ward extend an invitation to the pair to come to the next council meeting so the two parties can discuss the facilities study.

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