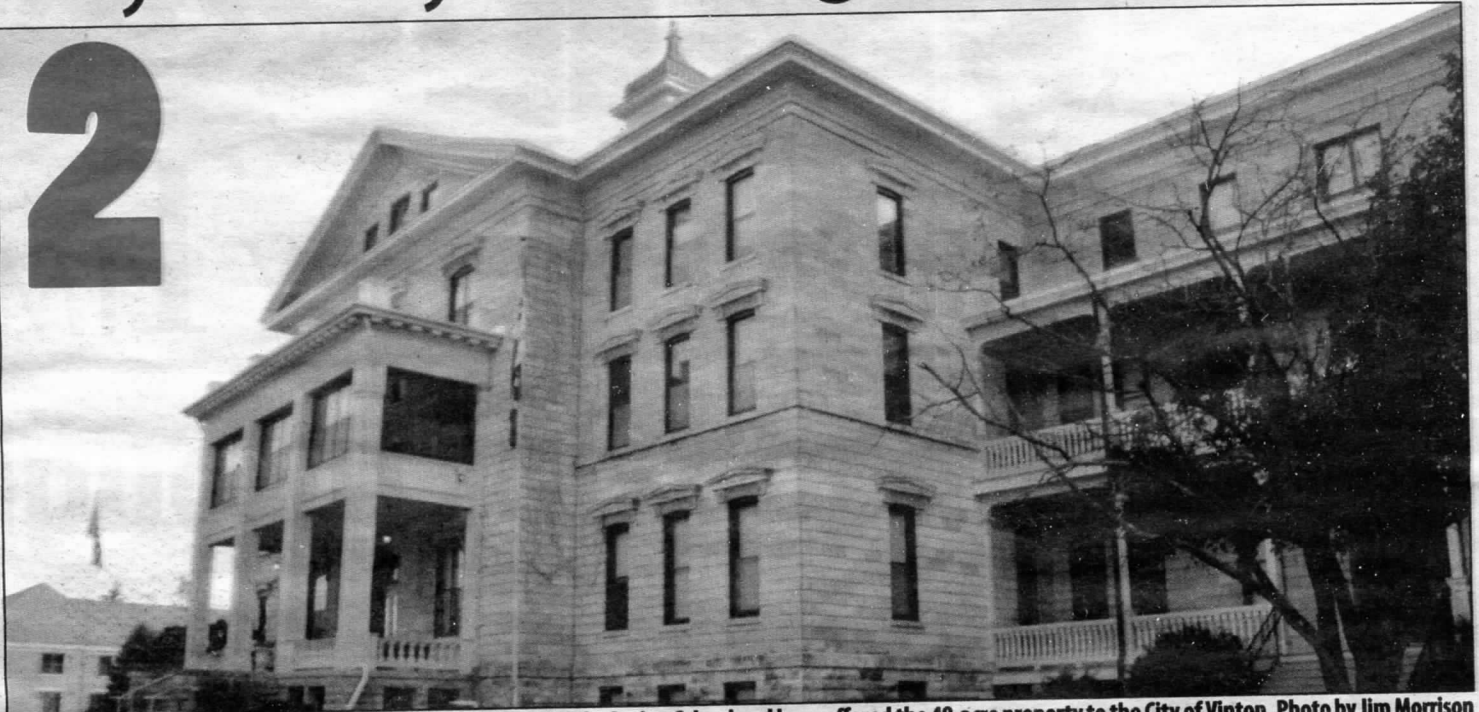


Mayor: 'only with long-term partner'

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The Iowa Board of Regents plan to close the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School and have offered the 48-acre property to the City of Vinton. Photo by Jim Morrison

City offered Braille School property for \$1

by Jim Morrison
News Editor

VINTON – Mayor John Watson favors obtaining the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School property only if NCCA/AmeriCorp commits to a long-term lease.

“This can’t happen unless we have a

solid partner – someone who is going to be there to help defray the cost to the citizens of that,” said Watson. “It just can’t happen. Three hundred thousand dollars is just way too much for us to absorb.”

The partnership would have to be for no less than 10 years,” according to Watson.

“... If the council decides it wants to be involved and all of their constituents decide that we ought to do everything that we can to save this, at least then we have a chance to make it all work.”

The Iowa Board of Regents have proposed the City of Vinton purchase the Braille School 48-acre property for \$1.

Can Vinton afford to lose, keep Braille School campus

Vinton Cannot Afford to Lose the Braille School Campus, but Can We Afford to Keep It?

Several years ago, I sat with Dawn Pettengill at a hearing when the Board of Regents decided to consolidate all of the students at the Vinton facility with the other students at the Council Bluffs facility. I hoped at the time that this was a temporary situation. I hoped that somehow the school would be returned to its former use. I grew up visiting my mother on campus when she worked as House Parent. We had wrestling practice and winter swimming there as well. I hoped that it would return, but unfor-

tunately that is not going to happen. So what do we do now?

I served 11 years on the Vinton City Council. I have spent countless hours with other council members in budget meetings trying to ensure that services and infrastructure of Vinton were the focus of the spending. This facility has the potential to be a great asset or an incredible burden on the residents of the city.

There are many upsides to the acqui-



sition.

A new splash pad on the west side of Vinton.

New softball and soccer fields for the Vinton Park and Rec and other local club teams.

Commercial development of the vacant land along Hwy 218.

The swimming pool at the Braille school is the only available facility for the Vinton-Shellsburg High School swimming program. The Vinton Aquatic Club (VAC) has used this facility for 20 plus years to coach and train literally hundreds of young swimmers.