

# Regents attempt to gain OK for Braille School sale blocked

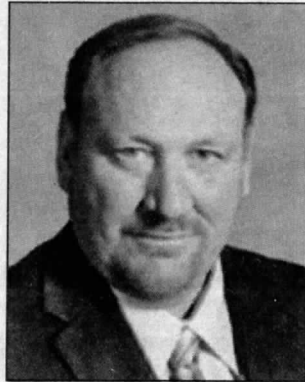
by Faith Ann Brown  
Correspondent

VINTON - A move by the Iowa Board of Regents toward the end of the recent legislative session brought a result which has members of the Vinton city council taking a deep breath.

Chris Ward, city administrator, explained to council members at a meeting last week, that the Board of Regents attempted to change the language to Iowa Code 270.10

"The proposed change within the education appropriations billed stated: 'Notwithstanding section 270.10, the state board of regents may, at its discretion, sell or otherwise dispose of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School in Vinton, and the land on which the property is located, by any procedure that is adopted by the board.'" Ward shared with council members in a memo.

He explained that State Rep. Dawn Pettengill and



**State Sen. Tim Kapucian**  
R-Keystone



**State Rep. Dawn Pettengill**  
R-Mount Auburn

State Senator Tim Kapucian worked on a compromise that would allow the City of Vinton to have time to look at the options as well as having the before mentioned language stricken from the bill.

"Thanks to Rep. Pettengill and Sen. Kapucian, and also a huge thank you to Robert Fischer, city attorney,"

Ward said "the city was able to get some changes of our own put in."

Ward shared there were several discussions regarding the bill and that the Speaker of the House of Representatives was involved in the discussions as well. "There was a mistake made by the bill drafters on the language," Ward said. "The mistake which remained in the bill keeps Vinton as the location of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School, and also added a new section to Iowa Code 270.10," he stated.

"The new section gives the City of Vinton the right of first refusal to the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School property," Ward said. "The bill is now on Governor Branstad's desk to be signed."

"What does this do for us," Brian Parr, council member, asked.

"Gives us time," Tami Stark, council member, and

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# Regents: Affected right of refusal

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Ward replied to Parr's question.

Both explained that with 'first right of refusal' it allows the city to take its time and look at all the options before making any decisions, rather than putting the city on a time clock to decide if the city wanted to take over the facility.

Staff members for the Iowa Board of Regents approached the city nearly a year ago with the proposal of the city taking possession of the grounds and the all the buildings for the cost of a \$1.

With the operating budget of nearly \$1 million dollars at the school, city leaders and staff have been hesitant to take the offer.

A visioning committee was formed and has met twice to gain input from the community on different ways that the city may be to utilize the facility and the grounds, along with the possibility of keeping the AmeriCorps program as a renter.

During the past meetings a number of ideas have been shared in the areas of 1) location for business; 2) tourism destination; 3) education; 4) indoor outdoor recreation; 5) government service complex; and 6) housing.

The next meeting of the visioning committee will be at the Kirkwood Center Tuesday, May 2, beginning at 6 p.m.