



THE REVIEW

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STAFF RETIREMENTS

Jim Burns, Transit Director at the COG since 1985, retired on February 29, 2012. His 26 years of service marks him as one of the most tenured employees at the COG. During his time at the COG, buses and service have become more diverse, driver training more formalized, and buildings constructed for both maintenance and storage in three communities. Jim was asked to serve in leadership positions for the Iowa Public Transit Association on several occasions and has had a positive impact upon public transit service in our region. We wish him well in his next venture.

Connie Martens-Crawford retired on January 10, 2012 after 30 years with the COG. Connie spent her entire transit career in Crawford County providing service to senior citizens, Head Start children, people with disabilities, Denison Schools, Job Corps, and the general public. Since the 1990's, Connie acted as lead driver for Crawford County. Under Connie's direction, Crawford County has been one of the premier rural counties to watch concerning rural transit. We wish Connie well as she begins her retirement.

NEW TRANSIT VEHICLES HIT THE ROAD

Region XII is the first agency in the State of Iowa to purchase MV1s. These purpose-built ADA units are built by Vehicle Production Group in Indiana. One of these units is operated by WITS Driver Justin Meyer in Sac County and the other is based in Carroll. What makes the MV-1 different is that it has been designed and built from the ground up to be ADA accessible, using a true body on frame design for a more rigid and durable structure.



ELECTROLUX UPDATE

The Electrolux Grant is in its final stages and will end on June 30, 2012. In the course of the grant program, a total of 713 people were served in closings that affected both Greene and Hamilton counties. A total of 569 people received support services to remove barriers to employment or the completion of training and 493 people are participating in training activities. An additional 56 people have completed their employment plan and 55 of these individuals left the program employed.

For more information about the workforce services offered by Region XII, please contact Beth Winquist, Workforce Director, at 712-792-2685 ext. 32 or Beth.Winquist@iwd.iowa.gov.

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To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326 W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (Voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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REGION XII PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The COG's Partnership Program is an opportunity for private, non-government businesses and organizations to become a part of the COG's mission to provide various needed services to the region's cities and counties. The Partnership Program philosophy is that all groups making up a community, including non-government entities like local businesses, are essential to promoting, advancing, and developing the community. The COG appreciates the investment made by 2011 Partners listed below. For more information on the Partnership Program, contact Rick Hunsaker at rhunsaker@region12cog.org.

GOLD MEMBERSHIP—\$1,000

West Central Cooperative, Ralston

SILVER MEMBERSHIP - \$500

Amaizing Energy, Denison

JEO Consulting Group, Inc, Carroll

Mid-Iowa Insurance & Real Estate, Carroll

Scranton Manufacturing/New Way, Scranton

Snyder & Associates, Atlantic

BRONZE MEMBERSHIP - \$250

Ace Hardware, Audubon

Agri-Drain Corporation, Adair

Aspinwall Cooperative Co, Aspinwall

Audubon State Bank, Audubon

Badding Construction, Carroll

Bank Iowa, Denison

Carroll Area Development Corporation, Carroll

Carroll County State Bank, Carroll

Commercial Savings Bank, Carroll

Coon Rapids Municipal Utilities, Coon Rapids

Denison Job Corps Center, Denison

Drees Company, Carroll

Farmers State Bank, Lake View

Farmers State Bank, Yale

Farner Bocken Company, Carroll

The Graphic Edge, Carroll

Guthrie County State Bank, Guthrie Center

HGM Associates, Council Bluffs

Home State Bank, Jefferson

Iowa Savings Bank, Carroll

Iowa State Bank, Sac City

Landmands National Bank, Audubon

Marne & Elk Horn Telephone Co., Elk Horn

Panora Telecommunications, Inc., Panora

POET Biorefining, Coon Rapids

Quality Machine, Audubon

Raccoon Valley Bank, Perry

Sundquist Engineering, Denison

Templeton Savings Bank, Templeton

Templeton Telephone Company, Templeton

Wells Fargo Bank, N.A., Denison

Western Iowa Networks, Breda

Westside State Bank, Westside

DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UPDATE

Region XII received \$500,000 in HOME funds last year from the Iowa Finance Authority (IFA) to complete a total of 15 projects throughout twelve participating communities. The assistance helps first time homebuyers with a down payment and also provides funds to bring their newly purchased home up to the Iowa Minimum Rehabilitation Standards. The end result is a safe, energy-efficient, and affordable home. The assistance is a grant secured with a forgivable lien for a 5 – 10 year term.

An eligible homebuyer must meet an income test of less than 80% of median income, be able to secure conventional financing, and be a first time homebuyer. A first time homebuyer is defined as someone who has not owned a home for three years or is a displaced homemaker.

The 2011 Region XII Down Payment Program included the cities of Auburn, Denison, Glidden, Guthrie Center, Jefferson, Manilla, Manning, Perry, Scranton, Templeton, Westside and Willey. The 2011 program has been deemed a success with funds remaining for only two more projects. Homebuyers wishing to apply should contact Cindy Rae McIntosh at 712-775-7822 for an application.

Following the success of this program, Region XII has submitted a grant application for the second round of funding through IFA. The 2012 grant application requested \$596,000 to assist 15 first time homebuyers in the participating communities. Each participating community has committed to a match of \$2,500 per project completed in their community. The cities that participated in the application include Arcadia, Auburn, Audubon, Breda, Carroll, Coon Rapids, Denison, Early, Glidden, Guthrie Center, Jefferson, Manning, Panora, Templeton, Wall Lake, and Westside.

Region XII expects this to be an annual application in the future. If your city would like to participate in next year's application, contact Brandon Vonnahme at 712-775-7823 or bvonnahme@region12cog.org. A city must commit to a cash match for each project completed in their community but can designate the maximum number of projects.

**THE REVIEW HAS GONE ELECTRONIC**

Region XII's newsletter is now available electronically as well as in print. Many of our partners are currently receiving both versions of the newsletter. If you have not yet received an electronic version, or if you would like to receive only the electronic version, please send us an e-mail at region12@region12cog.org with your preferred method of delivery indicated.

We are also sending out periodic updates as grants and training opportunities become available. To be added to this e-mail list, contact Karina Ward at 712-775-7814 or kward@region12cog.org.

RELOCATION OF WORKFORCE STAFF

Region XII WIA and Promise Jobs staff relocated to the Carroll Workforce Development Center at 619 N Carroll Street in January 2012. The move was a response to a statewide effort to integrate Workforce Services. The new integrated service model will blend all workforce services and offer a more seamless delivery of a variety of job seeking activities. The Carroll Workforce Development Center is tentatively scheduled to launch fully integrated services in May of 2012.

To reach Lisa Smith, WIA Career Development Specialist, Holly Espenhover, Promise Jobs Career Development Specialist, and Beth Winquist, Workforce Director, call 712-792-2685.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Brandon Vonnahme joined Region XII as a Housing Specialist in October 2011. Brandon is originally from Carroll and holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business with a specialization in Finance. He is currently working towards an MBA with a specialization in finance. Brandon provides information and technical assistance to local governments, clients, and others interested in the development of affordable housing and funding programs. He also works on grant applications and assists with administration of funded programs.



Holly Espenhover joined Region XII as a PROMISE JOBS Career Specialist in October 2011. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and is working on becoming a Wellness Coach. Holly joins our team with a move from Georgia where her husband Adam continues to be active duty Army until this fall. They have two children and are enjoying being close to family and friends after 6 years of living abroad and 3 years stateside.



Stacy Lentsch joined Region XII as a Regional Planner in December 2011. Stacy is a Fort Dodge native and received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Iowa. Stacy joins our team with a move from the Quad Cities where she worked for the Bi-State Metropolitan Planning Organization. She works on a variety of planning projects, including hazard mitigation and transportation planning.



CONNECT IOWA PROGRAM

Connect Iowa, the Iowa Association of Regional Councils (IARC), and Region XII announce a new partnership to launch a statewide "Connected" community program aimed at increasing broadband access, adoption, and use. Broadband, in its most basic definition, is a high-speed internet connection. Broadband is the key to attracting quality jobs, improving education, putting people in touch with government services and building an all-around better quality of life.

Region XII will assist counties and communities through the process of completing a broadband assessment. The assessment will include general information about the community's technology resources as well as information about the access, adoption and use of broadband in the community. Upon completing the assessment, communities may become "certified" under Connect Iowa. The certification process benefits communities through a process of benchmarking and planning by helping participants identify their community's technological strengths and weaknesses and helping community partners match up with local opportunities.

Over the next few months Region XII staff will facilitate community meetings in Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Dallas, Greene, Guthrie and Sac Counties to work through the Connect Iowa certification process. Further information about the project can be found at www.connectiowa.org or by contacting Stacy Lentsch at 712-775-7812 or slentsch@region12cog.org.



BUSINESS LOAN PROGRAM UPDATE

Region XII Development Corporation's Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) is available to assist with business startup and expansion costs. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis and reviewed monthly by a Loan Review Committee that consists of lenders and economic development professionals from throughout the region. The goal of the RLF is to create or retain jobs and leverage private investment. Most types of business that will create or retain jobs as a result of a startup or expansion project are eligible. Certain types of projects are not eligible, including new businesses that directly compete with existing established business that provide the same service or product. Refinancing of existing debt is also ineligible. The interest rate on loans varies depending on the Wall Street Journal Prime rate, but rates are very favorable right now. In 2011, \$533,450 was approved for seven projects throughout the region.

For more information, contact Joe Behrens at jbehrens@region12cog.org or (712)775-7810.

WESTERN IOWA ADVANTAGE 2012 ANNUAL MEETING

The Western Iowa Advantage (WIAD) Partners are preparing for their 2012 Annual Dinner Meeting, which will be held on Tuesday, April 12, 2012 at the Carrollton Center in Carroll. The speaker for this year's event will be David Ivan, an Extension Specialist with Michigan State University. Mr. Ivan will present "Can Small Towns be Cool?" at the dinner, which focuses on success stories of numerous small communities who have been able to grow and improve their local economies. The WIAD partners will also unveil a new logo and marketing slogan for the group. Limited seating is available for each partner county, so if you are interested in attending please contact Rick Hunsaker at rhunsaker@region12cog.org.

UPCOMING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

FUNDING PROGRAM	PURPOSE	DEADLINE	ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS
Land and Water Conservation Fund (Iowa DNR)	Conservation and recreation projects and land acquisition	March 15	Local governments
Build with Bags	Up to \$2,000 for the purchase of benches, tables, or playground equipment made of recycled plastic	March 30	Local governments, non-profit organizations, service clubs
Rural Energy for America Program (USDA)	Renewable energy system and energy efficiency improvement grant; renewable energy system feasibility study	March 30	Agricultural producers and rural small businesses
Keep Iowa Beautiful Beautification Grant	Flower, tree and shrub planting, painting & fix-up and general landscaping; public nuisance abatement; litter prevention and recycling education, implementation, and public awareness	April 2	Local governments and non-profit organizations in communities of less than 5,000 residents
Iowa Community Cultural Grant	Staffing support for wide array of cultural organizations and projects	May 1	Local governments, tax exempt nonprofits, others with a willing fiscal agent
State Recreation Trails Fund (Iowa DOT)	Acquisition, construction or improvement of recreational trails	June 1	Local governments, non-profit organizations
Resource Enhancement and Protection (Iowa DNR)	City parks and open space; county conservation, including land acquisition, facility repair and upgrades, and equipment; and private/public open space acquisition	August 15	Local governments and County Conservation Boards

Additional grants are available through private foundations and ongoing programs. If you are looking for funding for a specific project, please contact Joe Behrens at 712-775-7810 or jbehrens@region12cog.org for assistance in locating funding opportunities.

RECENTLY AWARDED FUNDING

FUNDING PROGRAM	RECIPIENT	AMOUNT	PROJECT
Iowa Finance Authority	COG Housing	\$219,671	Local Housing Trust Fund
Safe Routes to School	Dow City	\$45,960	Safety Improvements
CAT	Friends of Rippey	\$28,500	Community Room
Carroll County Foundation	Carroll Athletic Association	\$5,000	Carroll Merchant Park Score Board
Solid Waste Alternatives	Webster County Facility Recycling	\$2,688	Recycling Containers

PLANNING AND ZONING WORKSHOP

The 2012 Introduction to Planning and Zoning Workshops, offered by Iowa State University Extension Community and Economic Development, includes a workshop in Carroll. The workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, April 4th at the Carrollton Inn. The workshop begins with registration and a light supper at 5:30 p.m. The program begins at 6:00 p.m. and concludes by 8:45 p.m. The registration fee is \$55 per individual. This fee is reduced to \$45 per individual if a city or county registers 5 or more officials to attend. The fee covers the workshop instruction, workshop materials, and supper.

The Introduction to Planning and Zoning for Local Officials is a three-hour workshop designed to introduce the basic principles of land use planning and development management to elected officials, planning and zoning officials, and board of adjustment members without formal training in the subjects. Using case scenarios in a highly-interactive format, the workshop highlights issues frequently faced in the land use process, including variances, special uses, nonconforming uses, spot zoning, hearing procedures, and conflicts of interest. The workshop is intended primarily for local officials new to planning and zoning issues, though it also will serve as a refresher for veteran members.

For more information, contact Gary Taylor at gtaylor@iastate.edu or 515-290-0214.

HOUSING FUND APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED

Region XII assisted with Housing Fund Grant applications through the Iowa Economic Development Authority for the City of Guthrie Center, the City of Stuart, and the City of Arcadia. All three applications were for owner-occupied rehabilitation programs ranging from six to ten projects per city. The applications were submitted on December 7, 2011 and award announcements are expected in early March. If your community is interested in applying for this grant next year, please contact Brandon Vonnahme at 712-775-7823 or bvonnahme@region12cog.org.

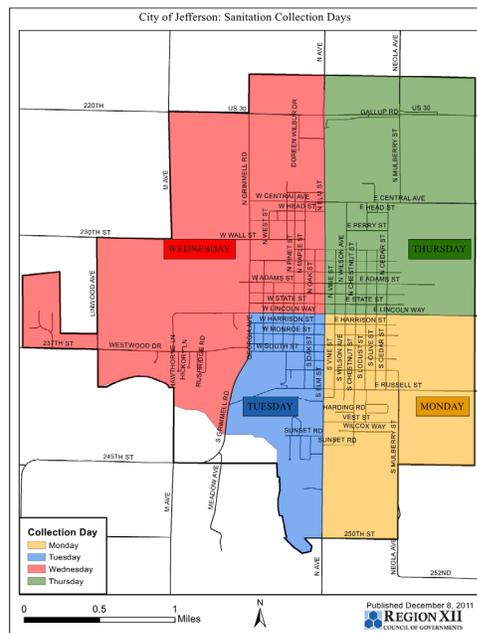
GIS SERVICES AVAILABLE

As part of Region XII's GIS program, Karina Ward has been working with the City of Jefferson to create a comprehensive GIS system. The project started with a zoning and address map that could be made available to the public online and used by city staff on a daily basis. Copies of the completed map are used by staff at the post office, city hall, various city service offices, and the Greene County courthouse. In the process of completing this map, a comprehensive database was created that would become the basis for future projects.

Following the successful completion of the initial project, Karina created a map of the City of Jefferson's water system. City staff had been using a map that was completed in 1985 along with separate plans and maps for each expansion. Throughout the project, Karina worked extensively with the staff at the city water plant to ensure that all information was included and verified. In addition to providing a large scale printed map that is used by staff at city hall and the water plant, the city now has a database that can be easily updated to track maintenance and modifications to the existing system as well as future expansions.

The next project was a map of the sanitary sewer system. Once again, city staff were using an outdated map that included only the original portion of the system. Using the original map and individual plans and plats, Karina created a single map that included the entire system. She is now working on mapping the storm sewer system throughout the city.

One benefit of creating a comprehensive GIS system has been the ability to create additional maps. The City of Jefferson recently applied for, and was accepted into, the Main Street Iowa program. The application required a wide variety of maps showing building condition, land use, and landmarks. Using the information collected for the zoning and address map, Karina was able to quickly put together the necessary maps. She has also created maps for the city's sanitary collection schedule and is working on a map showing restaurants, activities, and lodging options throughout the city.



If your community is interested in developing or updating a GIS system, please contact Karina at 712-775-7814 or kward@region12cog.org.



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