



## PRO TIPS

### ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU How is car insurance calculated?

Submitted by Matt Wegg  
State Farm Insurance

Learn how car insurance is calculated, what factors affect your rates and what you can do to help lower costs.

We'll start by discussing how car insurance rates are calculated. And then we'll take a closer look at why factors like your age and location can influence the price you pay.

How do car insurance companies determine rates?

Car insurance rates are generally determined by assessing the amount of risk being insured by the policy. Risk is calculated by using the probability of a particular event occurring and the potential impact of that event.

Probability – This refers to the likelihood of a specific event happening based on historical data. For example: to determine the probability of a car accident, factors like your age, location and your driving behavior could be used to estimate the likelihood of being in an accident.

Impact – This refers to the consequences or severity of the event if it were to occur. For example: the severity of a car accident could be measured in terms of property damage, personal injuries and financial loss.

By considering the probability and impact of certain events, car insurance companies can assess the amount of risk being

CONTINUED ON PAGE FIVE

## Pumpkin French Toast Casserole

By: www.krollskorner.com

### Ingredients

1 loaf (1 lb.) day old brioche bread\* cut into 1-inch cubes  
3 Tbsp. melted butter  
8 large eggs  
1 cup 100 percent pure pumpkin puree (not pumpkin pie mix)  
1 cup whole milk  
1/2 cup heavy cream  
1 recipe pumpkin pie spice mixture\*  
1/4 cup dark brown sugar, packed  
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract  
For the streusel topping  
1/2 cup all purpose flour  
1/2 cup dark brown sugar, packed  
2 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1/4 cup cold butter, cut into cubes  
1/2 cup chopped pecans  
Maple glaze  
2 cups powdered sugar  
4 Tbsp. melted butter  
2 tsp. pure maple syrup  
1-2 Tbsp. heavy cream  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract  
pinch of salt



### Directions

- Cut the brioche into 1-inch bite size cubes. It's best to use somewhat stale bread to prevent a soggy casserole, so I like to pop in the oven at 300°F for ~10-15 minutes if I don't have any stale bread lying around.
- Add the melted butter to the bottom of a 9x13 inch casserole dish and set aside. Three Tbsp. melted butter
- In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, pumpkin, milk, heavy cream, all of the spices, brown sugar and vanilla extract.
- Arrange the stale bread cubes into casserole. 5. Pour the egg custard over the bread and gently press the bread down so it's mostly covered. Cover and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or overnight.
- Combine the flour, brown sugar and cinnamon together. Cut in the butter using a pastry cutter or fork (but honestly I just use my hands to do this!) until mixture is crumbly. Refrigerate this too, separate from the casserole.
- When ready to bake, preheat the oven to 350°F. Sprinkle the streusel on top of the casserole and top with chopped pecans. Bake for 35-40 minutes or until the middle is set. Tent with foil if tops get browned at all. Remove from oven and let sit 5-10 minutes.
- Make the maple glaze by mixing all ingredients together in a medium sized mixing bowl until smooth. Taste and add more maple syrup or cream as desired.

### Information sought about recovered scooters in Hull

HULL — The Sioux County Sheriff's Office has recovered these two electric scooters in Hull.

Please contact us if you have any information about these or they if belong to you. Call 712-737-3307 and refer to call number 24-15633.

### Two people injured, one taken into custody following disturbance

HULL — On Monday, October 14, at 3:30 p.m., the Sioux County Sheriff's Office arrested Jorge Gomez-Badillo, age 28, of Hull.

The arrest stemmed from several 9-1-1 reports of a disturbance that occurred at the intersection of 5th Street and Division Street, in Hull.

Upon arrival, deputies discovered three people that had been involved in a disturbance, with two of those people having stab wounds.

## PARTICIPATE IN GrowOC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE



Heritage Museum and new shade structures at the Crittenton Center's Orange City Child Development Center to much-needed equipment for the Fire Department and improvements to Dunlop

Park, among many others.

We are deeply grateful to the organizations that have undertaken these projects and the many generous donors who made them possible. Now, we invite you to continue this tradition of community growth by participating in the GrowOC Utility Checkoff Program. Your contribution, regardless of size, can help fund future initiatives and ensure Orange City remains a vibrant, thriving place for generations to come.

To learn more or to sign up, visit <https://orangeicityiowa.com/grow-oc>.



## TRANSPARENCY NEEDED AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

In a July 17 email Woudstra also requested two-by-two discussions of the merger with Crittenton Center to manage the Orange City daycare. The public was first notified of the study in the minutes where Ryan McEwen, Community Developer director gave a report on July 15, but it was not included as part of the published agenda until August. The merger was quickly passed, and at the September 17 council meeting, it was announced the addition of the Crittenton Center immediately added 20 openings at the daycare. Further clarification at the October 7 meeting stated that enrollment rose from 160 to 165 spots, a significant shift from what was stated at the previous meeting.

Swift approval for a Crittenton Center welcome carnival was approved without discussion, violating the permit deadline ordinance of 60 days, recently adopted by the council on February 5.

### Chickens at the center of the discovery

The chicken ordinance debate triggered the freedom of information search. Initially, three council members voted in favor of exploring a chicken ordinance allowing residents to raise chickens in town, and two opposed. The tide shifted, and now three have consistently voted against it while two remain in favor. However, the shift was not discussed, and neither was the cause. And were there an overwhelming number of complaints causing the city to take action on an ordinance that is ten years old?

The request included emails, phone calls, and texts regarding chickens, specifically complaints about chickens. The request included a two-year search and a hefty \$347 fee yielded very few written complaints and one email in which Councilman Rod DeBoer states, "I would estimate I have had 12 people talk to me and not be in favor of allowing chickens." At a July 15 council meeting, the mayor and a council person revealed they had several emails opposing chickens, but neither produced emails when the request was made.

The swift action the city recently took against homeowners who have raised chickens is surprising, given the ten years ordinance has been in place and not acted upon. The controversy elevated realizing there were 50-60 chicken owners in town, most unaware they were illegal. But did the city properly notify the public when adding a livestock ban? Nothing banning livestock was on the books before 2014. While ordinance updates are standard, and a town will post every year when updates occur, it isn't reasonable for the public to be knowledgeable of the 300-plus page document and the ways it changed over a year.

If the city council changes an ordinance, they are required by state law to hold a public hearing with a quorum -- and not a two-by-two gathering. Within the freedom of information request shows that city attorney Brad DeJong actually pointed this out to council members when one council member sought to remove the exemption clause in the current ordinance.

On August 18, 2014, the city held a public meeting to adopt the updated version of the city code of ordinances, but there was never a formal public hearing alerting the public of a complete livestock ban, which was a significant change from the previous policy; instead, there was only a blanket ordinance update. When blanket updates occur, an administrator will often highlight major changes to the council, but according to the minutes, notification of this significant update did not happen.

Dozens of citizens wrote to the council and showed up at meetings to support a chicken ordinance and the right to raise chickens in town. Citizens spoke at meetings, presenting workable resolutions, presented hundreds of signatures in support, and thorough research of more than 50 communities in Iowa with active chicken ordinances, all in an attempt to find a workable solution. The council has been unwavering and, without explanation, split in their decision, with three against and two in favor. A letter was sent to chicken owners on August 19, demanding the removal of chickens and threatening heavy fines.

Citizens were forced to remove beloved pets, income sources, and hundreds of dollars in food and equipment at the behest of the city authority. Discussion at the July 15 meeting was extensive, but open discussions quickly quieted in meetings following, with each councilperson firm in their decision regardless of the number of citizens speaking out.

### Planning and Zoning input

On September 25, the Planning and Zoning committee met to hear from property owners seeking rezoning motivated by the desire to continue to raise chickens. To rezone, citizens pay a \$150 nonrefundable fee to be considered for rezoning. Three requests were made: ten properties and the Dutch Colony neighborhood.

The committee only approved one of these requests, which included six properties, and the entire Dutch Colony neighborhood. The rezoning shifted zoning to RS-1, allowing cattle, horses, swine, sheep, goats, and miniature animals into these areas, extending Orange City's leniency toward its agricultural foundations.

While two of the three requests were denied, the Planning and Zoning committee sent a strong message to the city council to continue working on this issue; it is clear chickens are the heart of this issue, and continue working toward a workable resolution for citizens.

The denied requests and recommendation were not mentioned at the public city council meeting, so it is unclear if city council members are aware of the recommendation.

### City Involvement

A recent appointment of a sitting councilman drew out more concerns. Three names were presented to the council as potential candidates, all willing to take the position. The mayor requested the sitting council members discuss and rank the three candidates to aid her decision. Discussion continued over email, with one councilman expressing concern over one candidate and encouraging new voices to come to the table. Two of the three sitting members ranked the councilman chosen as the last choice, and all productive discussions about a future elected official happened outside of public knowledge. The public remains unaware and uninformed of the daily business of the council happening largely behind closed doors.

Former councilman Tony Vande Brake confirms this appointment, made outside a council recommendation, was a primary factor in his abrupt resignation from the council.

The initial response from the first freedom of information was the city refusing to provide information. Several email exchanges encouraged city transparency, but the result then involved the city attorney advising the city office not to speak to the requestor regarding the issue, interfering with the newspapers ability to accurately report the news.

As more details became public knowledge, a city official made several phone calls to the Sioux County Capital-Democrat with concerns about what the newspaper was publishing. It is a newspaper's responsibility to report the news; we are not responsible for making the news, only reporting it.

### Light ahead

Openness and transparency lead to good government practices. The October 7 council meeting was a packed house. Many citizens showed up in support of a RAGBRAI application. Others attended to support another citizen requesting an exemption to the chicken ordinance. One person spoke during public comment requesting easier accessibility to broadcast council meetings for individuals unable to make the council meetings and can't access the cable access channel at the designated time. More citizens are showing a desire to take part in local government.

Orange City is a growing, thriving community, but to grow and thrive, it has to move in the direction of the people. The current structure of local government denies the public the opportunity to be part of the process, but the government is at its best when it openly represents the people.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT NEWS

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The arrest stemmed from several 9-1-1 reports of a disturbance that occurred at the intersection of 5th Street and Division Street, in Hull.

Upon arrival, deputies discovered three people that had been involved in a disturbance, with two of those people having stab wounds.

Both victims were transported by the Hull Ambulance to Sioux Center Health for treatment of their injuries; deputies were able to apprehend Gomez-Badillo as the one male subject and he is now in custody.

Deputies later reported heavy black smoke coming from a residence at 1429 Division Street, near the original incident. Fire Departments from Hull and Rock Valley responded to and extinguished a fire that appeared to have started in a bedroom of the home; it is suspected the fire may have been intentionally started before the disturbance by the suspect taken into custody.

Gomez-Badillo was transported to the Sioux County Jail where he was charged with two counts of attempted Murder, first degree burglary, second degree arson, interference with official acts, possession of cocaine, possession of cannabidiol (THC oil), and possession of drug paraphernalia. There is the possibility of additional charges pending the ongoing investigation.

The sheriff's office was assisted by the Orange City Police Department, Sioux Center Police Department, Iowa State Patrol, Hull Ambulance, Rock Valley Ambulance, Hull Fire Department and Rock Valley Fire Department.

### Vehicles collide in high school parking lot

HULL — On Wednesday, October 9 at 3:41 p.m., the Sioux County Sheriff's Office investigated a motor vehicle accident that occurred in the parking lot of the Boyden Hull High School, 801 1st Street, in Hull,

Lucrecia Mendez-Niz, age 29, of Hull, was driving a 2011 Ford Explorer on the parking lot. Tyler Koerselman, age 15, of Hull, was driving a 2014 Jeep Wrangler behind Mendez-Niz. Mendez-Niz stopped in the parking lane to pick up a student and Koerselman struck the Ford.

No injuries were reported.

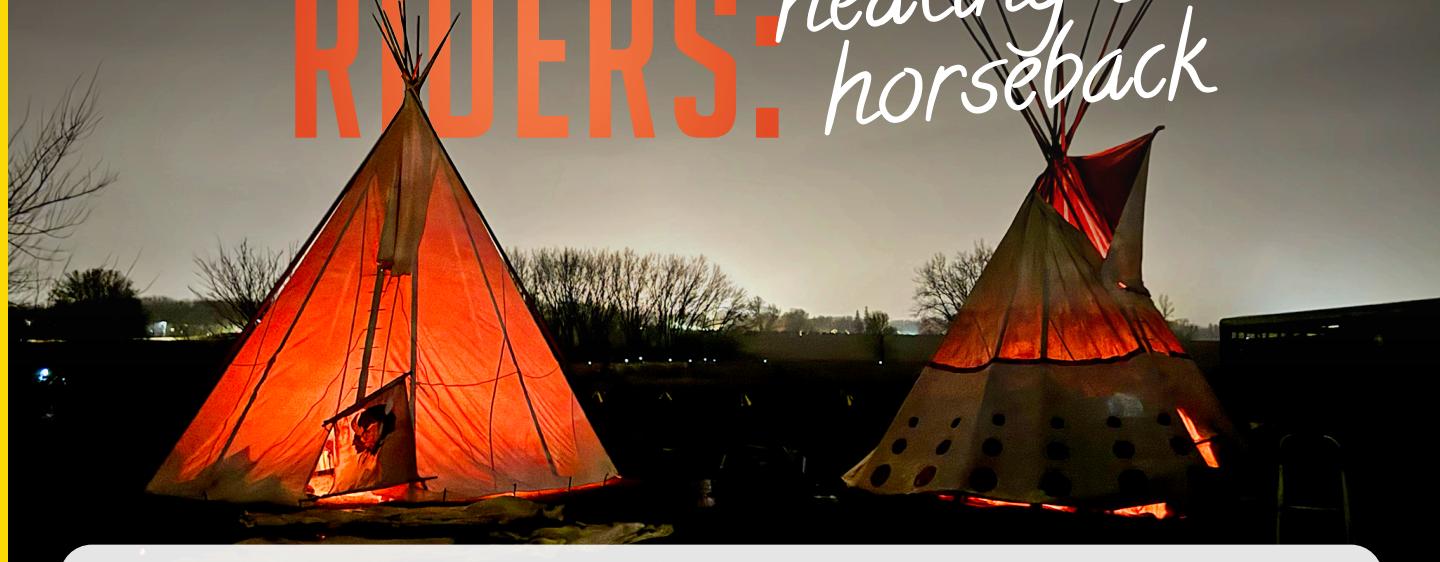
The Ford sustained approximately \$7,000 in damage; the Jeep sustained approximately \$1,000 in damage.

FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
LOW 45	HIGH 30	LOW 42	HIGH 27	LOW 43	HIGH 28	LOW 39
LOW 39	HIGH 23	LOW 29	HIGH 16	LOW 23	HIGH 12	LOW 24
LOW 24	HIGH 13	LOW 23	HIGH 12	LOW 24	HIGH 13	LOW 24

# SIOUX COUNTY CAPITAL-DEMOCRAT

December 26, 2024

## the DAKOTA EXILE RIDERS: *healing on horseback*



By SARAH WEBER  
Editor

ORANGE CITY — On Tuesday, December 17, the riders of the Dakota Exile Ride of Remembrance passed through Orange City, on a journey deeply rooted in history and resilience. This year's ride, titled the Dakota Exile Ride, honors the memory of the Dakota people exiled from Minnesota after the U.S. Dakota War of 1862.

The war's aftermath saw the U.S. government imprison over 2,000 Dakota people at Fort Snelling under brutal conditions where disease and mistreatment claimed countless lives. In 1863, Congress nullified treaties with the Dakota, confiscating their lands and declaring their presence illegal in Minnesota. Survivors were forcibly relocated to desolate reservations like Crow Creek in South Dakota, where starvation and death awaited due to unavailable resources. Many were later scattered to reservations such as the Santee Reservation in

Nebraska, enduring harsh policies aimed at erasing their culture and identity.

The Dakota Exile Ride retraces these paths of forced removal, beginning on December 14 in Santee, Nebraska. Riders traveled through Crofton, Nebraska; Vermillion and Alcester, South Dakota; and Orange City, before continuing through Sibley, Worthington, Windom, St. James, and Lake Crystal. The ride will conclude

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Photos by Sarah Weber



## OKSANA BARANOVSKA'S INSPIRING JOURNEY TO A NEW LIFE IN AMERICA

By SHARON VERMEER  
Correspondent

ORANGE CITY — Oksana Baranovska had a good life in Ukraine. "I was the senior manager for the business loans department at a bank in Ukraine and a fitness trainer. I could travel wherever I wanted, so I visited places like New York, Washington D.C., Miami, and Los Angeles. But when the war first came in 2014 to southern Ukraine, my bank closed. Then, I took a job as Special Projects Manager for small personal loans. Odessa was being bombed every night, and there was devastation all around me. For a time, we lived with my parents, but my son Vlad was sixteen years old, and we knew that when he turned eighteen, he would be taken to fight. We had to flee."

"The man that owned the small business loan company invited me to Barcelona, Spain, to work at the main office in 2022, so Vlad and I went to Spain. When my next contract ran out in 2024, I decided to come to the United States to make a better life for my son. Because I could work online, I could continue with my job but would need to supplement it."

Baranovska spent everything she had getting to Miami. At first, they lived in Parkland, Florida, at a friend's home. After a couple of months, they moved closer to Miami and rented an apartment.

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Join us as we celebrate the holiday season  
from 9:00AM - 3:00PM on December 18-20  
at our annual Holiday Open House.

Iowa State Bank

105 Albany Avenue SE  
Orange City, Iowa 51041  
(712) 737-4818

Member  
FDIC

HOLIDAY HOURS: December 24 - Closing at Noon • December 25 - Closed • January 1 - Closed

December 26, 2024

See page 6 for more details

\$1.00 • THURSDAY

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**Sports:**  
CLOSE GAMES MARK CROSSTOWN BATTLE

See page 6 for more details

Open meetings in question: IPIB investigates Orange City Council practices

By SARAH WEBER  
Editor

ORANGE CITY—On Thursday, December 19, the Iowa Public Information Board met to review findings by the IPIB staff attorneys regarding violations of open meeting laws by the Orange City Council. The Iowa Public Information Board is an independent agency established by Iowa Code Chapter 23. It is governed by a nine-member board appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Iowa Senate.

The complaint was first filed in October, stating that City Administrator Earl Woudstra engaged in private two-by-two meetings and that Woudstra and council members engaged in numerous email exchanges that violated Chapter 21 of open meeting laws.

Sarah Weber, editor of the Sioux County Capital-Democrat, filed the complaint concerning violations surrounding the livestock ordinance debate. The email correspondence and 2x2 meeting discovery followed a freedom of information (FOIA) request obtained in late August.

The conduct of the city administrator led to the need for further information. The findings in the FOIA are extensive, consisting of over 500 pages.

### FOIA email findings

The debate began when citizens inquired whether chickens were legal in Orange City, a question first asked in September 2023. In an email obtained in the FOIA request, Kurt Frederes states in a March 6, 2024 email, "We have not received nuisance complaints on the issue." However, in an April 2 email, Earl Woudstra writes, "At a staff meeting Kurt brought up the concern regarding chickens, he shared there has been a significant increase, and there have been complaints shared about chickens in neighborhoods." The two emails contradict one another.

The confusion is based on the fact that while the ordinance changed in 2014, there was no formal public hearing alerting the public. A blanket ordinance update was provided, but a formal public hearing is required when significant changes happen. An email dated July 31, Mr. DeJong looked up "Iowa Code Section 380.10.3 stating, if the council substantially amends the code after a public hearing, notice and hearing must be repeated before the amendment may be adopted." This was in reference to the council discussion of removing the exception portion of the chicken ordinance, which states that the livestock ban should be limited "with the exception by written consent of the council." This language remains in the ordinance, and Earl Woudstra, in a September 15, 2023, and Kurt Frederes in the March 6 email, confirmed the council regularly allowed chickens for "kids for pets or fair projects."

The livestock ban in 2014 constituted a significant change to prior ordinances, but no public hearing was ever noticed to the community when this change took place. Only notification of the new 2014 ordinance as a whole, a 400-page document, was provided.

In another FOIA email obtained dated August 6, 2024, City Attorney Brad DeJong provides both Earl Woudstra and Kurt Frederes's legal advice regarding the issue. He first states that "anyone who had chickens prior to the passage of the original ordinance are grandfathered in." This affected several

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Merry Christmas  
— and —  
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

HOLIDAY HOURS: December 24 - Closing at Noon • December 25 - Closed • January 1 - Closed

December 26, 2024

# 04 news PRO TIPS

ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU

## Protecting yourself and your finances in a digital world

By NATHAN WEDEL  
Iowa State Bank

In today's digital age, banking fraud is a fast-growing concern. With increasingly sophisticated scams, it's crucial to stay vigilant and learn how to spot fraud before it affects you. Here's your go to guide on recognizing and avoiding banking fraud:

**Be Wary of Unsolicited Communications.** Fraudsters often pose as legitimate institutions, like your bank, to trick you into revealing personal information. Hanging up the phone or ignoring unsolicited emails and contacting your banking institution directly.



What for phishing scams. Phishing attacks use fake websites or emails to steal your personal information. Never click on links in emails or text messages unless you're sure they are from a trusted source. Look for misspellings, and never open strange attachments can also protect you from these phishing attacks.

Monitor your bank statements and transactions. Set up transaction alerts with your bank so you can monitor your spending in real time and report any suspicious activity immediately.

Secure your devices. Use strong, unique passwords for all banking-related accounts. Also, enable two-factor authentication whenever possible.

Educate yourself on common scams. Keep yourself up to date on common scams, as well as talking with your banking institution on tools they offer to help protect you from these different forms of attack.

Fraud is a constant threat, but with the right knowledge and tools, you can protect yourself and your finances. Stay vigilant, keep your personal information secure and always trust your instincts when something doesn't seem right.

## Honor roll

### University of Sioux Falls fall 2024 Dean's List

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — The University of Sioux Falls congratulates 550 students who made the Fall 2024 Dean's List.

Cadence DeJong of Orange City, majoring in Art  
Aryana Dokter of Orange City, majoring in Music Ministry  
Carson Jager of Maurice, majoring in Accounting and  
Business Administration

Addaly Miller of Hospers, majoring in Criminal Justice  
Tyeson Vaas of Orange City, majoring in Business  
Administration

Cole Venema of Orange City, majoring in Theology and  
Biblical Studies

## INCN Classifieds

### Miscellaneous

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### Miscellaneous

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### Miscellaneous

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# IPIB ACCEPTS COMPLAINT AT RECENT BOARD MEETING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

community members, yet this information was never stated at the council table. Jon and Glenda Grossmann stated several times they have raised chickens for over twenty years. They petitioned the council on several occasions and paid \$150 to attempt to rezone in an effort to continue to raise chickens. Still, based on legal advice provided in the FOIA, they were within their right to have them, but this legal interpretation was never offered.

### Council room discussions

In June 2024, council began the process of creating an ordinance allowing small flocks of backyard chickens in town. As stated above, Earl Woudstra and Kurt Fredericks maintain it has been the practice for years to allow animals for projects and education and this would further extend to families wanting to raise a small number of birds on their property.

The council presented a draft of a potential ordinance, as part of the agenda for a council meeting. However, the six-page draft of the proposed ordinance prompted many questions from the public. Exercising their right to speak, many members of the public came to address concerns over some of the language and work toward what they thought was a mutually agreed-upon workable solution for the people who are currently raising chickens in town.

What happened after that prompted the FOIA request.

The council became divided based on the discussion that arose from the council meeting. Citizens who believed they were advocating for their animals and sharing the purpose and drive behind why it is important were penalized twice. In another email dated August 30, 2024, Esther Diekveen inquired with code enforcement, Kurt Fredericks as to why she received a notice of future citation in the mail for raising chickens because she is not currently a chicken owner. Fredericks confirmed that "a letter was sent to current owners of chickens and residents that spoke at the recent council meeting." Because citizens chose to come to the Orange City Council and advocate for a position, the city took it as an opportunity to just shut down all further conversation by consistently voting down any additional actions and penalizing those advocating with threats of a citation, fines, and prosecution. While discussions in the council were limited, that wasn't the case behind the scenes.

The FOIA revealed several very long conversations on the topic outside council chambers, a direct violation of open meeting laws.

A number of emails, all of which are available upon request, revealed that four of the five council members favored an ordinance allowing backyard chickens in some capacity. Only after repeated exchanges of emails, two meetings, and citizen advocacy did the council divide and decide not to allow the practice. But very little discussion as to why was ever revealed publicly.

Iowa's open meetings law, as the law itself states (Chapter 21.3), states: "to assure, through a requirement of open meetings of governmental bodies, that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions, as well as those decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people. Ambiguity in the construction or application of this chapter should be resolved in favor of openness."

The law also defines specific and easy-to-understand legal terms: Chapter 21.3 outlines, "Meetings of governmental bodies shall be preceded by public notice as provided in section 21.4 and shall be held in open session unless closed sessions are expressly permitted by law. Except as provided in section 21.5, all actions and discussions at meetings of governmental bodies, whether formal or informal, shall be conducted and executed in open session." Further definition of the word "meeting" highlights, "a "meeting" means a gathering in person or by electronic means, formal or informal, of a majority of the members of a governmental body where there is deliberation or action upon any matter within the scope of the governmental body's policy-making duties."

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in Mankato, Minnesota, on December 26. The riders brave winter weather, sleeping in teepees and enduring the harsh conditions their ancestors once faced.

For many participants, the ride is more than a historical tribute; it is an act of resilience and cultural preservation. Each mile represents reconnection with ancestral ways, a reminder of survival and to ensure future generations understand their heritage.

Jim Hallum, a member of the Santee Sioux Nation and the oldest rider in the group, shares how the ride has become deeply personal. "I take my grandkids on this ride because they don't know their history. We have to keep doing things like this to heal ourselves and share our stories," Hallum said. "The ride has been healing for me, an ongoing part of my recovery. It inspires us to share our culture and pass down stories. For so long, our people wouldn't talk about it, and intergenerational trauma was formed. We ride to ensure their sacrifices are never forgotten."

The riders were hosted in Orange City by Mike and Val Stokes. Val, a social work professor and advocate for racial justice, has a personal connection to the Dakota people. Her father, Dr. Ted Roman, dedicated much of his medical career to serving Native communities, first at the Rosebud Reservation and later at the

### IPIB Findings

As more community members continued to advocate to council, councilman Rod DeBoer, in an email dated July 17, 2024, stated, "I have asked Earl if we can have 2x2 meetings with council members to get a direction as to how people will vote." This meeting was granted. During the IPIB process, the city maintained only a few meetings occurred; however, in an email dated June 1, 2023, Mayor Deb DeHaan referenced, "receiving exciting updates for Orange City in this weeks 2x2, suggesting the practices is not only a weekly occurrence, but a regular practice. Throughout the FOIA discovery, council members, city administrators, and city council members regularly discussed voting, the consensus of thought, policy-sharing options, and more in email correspondence. This violates open meeting laws. The two months of discovery at the IPIB board resulted in the Acceptance of the complaint from the IPIB board.

The IPIB process begins with a complaint filed and reviewed by two IPIB staff attorneys. If they find fault, they move for Acceptance of the complaint, and the complaint is then sent to the IPIB board, which is made up of representatives from the government, the media, and public citizens across the state.

At the December 19 meeting, available on YouTube on the Iowa Public Information Board channel, Sarah Weber was present and Kley DeJong on behalf of the city. After brief discussions and a review of materials, the board discussed the case. They agreed that 2x2 meetings are a terrible practice and that meetings in that capacity should rarely happen, if ever. Further, such meetings appear to skirt the law, avoiding the transparency the public deserves. Other board members agreed. Two board members called city actions disingenuous, one speaking directly to the letter filed by Earl Woudstra, calling his comments about the complainant both disingenuous and disappointing. When the discussion continued, looking at both the repeated email practices and 2 x 2 meetings, one board member suggested, "Why not do this in an open meeting?" That is the overarching question: why was all this conversation necessary if open meetings are an option? Another member reiterated, "Every board member should be cautioned against this practice, it is a terrible practice." The board voted unanimously to accept and move on to the next step.

### Next steps

The findings are not conclusive findings of guilt. Accepting the complaint confirms concerning allegations, allows the IPIB to investigate further, and helps ensure that open meeting laws are followed.

The next stage involves an informal resolution process with both parties. The IPIB website states they have the right to "issue orders with the force of law, determining whether there has been a violation of chapter 21 or 22, requiring compliance with specified provisions of those chapters, imposing civil penalties equivalent to and to the same extent as those provided for in section 21.6 or 22.10, as applicable, on a respondent who has been found in violation of chapter 21 or 22, and imposing any other appropriate remedies calculated to declare, terminate, or remediate any violation of those chapters." They can also "Make training opportunities available to lawful custodians, governmental bodies, government bodies, and other persons subject to the requirements of chapters 21 and 22 and require, in its discretion, appropriate persons who have responsibilities about chapter 21 to receive periodic training approved by the board." Also, "Disseminate information calculated to inform members of the public about the public's right to access government information in this state including procedures to facilitate this access and including information relating to the obligations of governmental bodies under chapter 21 and lawful custodians under chapter 22 and other laws dealing with this subject."

The Iowa Public Information Board's investigation into the Orange City Council's practices continue as both parties enter into informal resolution working toward further transparency in local government.

## RIDERS CONTINUE THROUGH THE AREA UNTIL DEC. 26

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE



Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. His compassion and advocacy deeply influenced Val, who now works to foster reconciliation and educate others about the intergenerational trauma faced by Native peoples.

"This ride is important," Hallum explained. "It shows the world we have never forgotten our ancestors, our culture, or our way of life."

A documentary is following the ride, creating content to share with the world. His work, Humanizing Through Story, can be viewed at [humanizingthroughstory.org](http://humanizingthroughstory.org) and follow along on Instagram at [@humanizingthroughstory/](https://www.instagram.com/humanizingthroughstory/). The whole purpose of my time spent with them is to highlight, center and celebrate their story. Helping give space for this journey to be known by more and in hopes more will know our full history and be better connected to indigenous people." He adds, "Centering Indigenous voices, movements, and stories is critical to moving forward as humans in this world. Healing our land and confronting our dark history begins with using our spaces, voices, and platforms to uplift and center Indigenous people."

The Dakota Exile Ride of Remembrance is more than a journey—it is a symbol of resilience and a testament to the enduring spirit of the Dakota people. By honoring their ancestors and sharing their stories, the riders ensure that the sacrifices of the past are not forgotten, but instead become a foundation for healing, unity, and hope for the future.



## EDITORIAL

### Openness shouldn't be this hard



In the spirit of openness, I must be open about the events that transpired at last night's city council meeting.

Since October, I've been working with the Iowa Board of Public Information with one goal: to improve communication and transparency between the city council and the public. From what was revealed through a Freedom of Information request last August, it's clear there are many areas that need improvement.

Right at the beginning of Chapter 21 of the Open Meetings Law, it states, "Ambiguity in the construction or application of this chapter should be resolved in favor of openness."

Openness.

Last night's meeting was anything but.

The city maintained that no wrongdoing had occurred and insisted that I had blindsided them with a last-minute request. But my request was simple: update the city's policy to ensure all future council and city members are properly educated on open meeting laws. That should be standard practice, not a controversial ask.

Instead, it was treated as an overreach.

The mayor and city administrator maintained that all current members already receive training and are up to date on Robert's Rules of Order—as if that addressed the issue. It doesn't. Robert's Rules govern meeting procedure, not open meeting compliance.

If everything were truly in order, we wouldn't be here.

There have clearly been lapses—whether intentional or not—that demand correction. Updated training is necessary. Continued training for new members should be automatic.

When I appeared before the IPIB board with the city months ago, the board described the city's actions—and the way they characterized both me and the claim—as "discouraging and disingenuous." Last night felt much the same.

That said, since raising these concerns, I have seen real improvement: meetings are now broadcast, and the council debates and discusses issues openly. I commend them for that progress. It goes a long way toward restoring public trust and is truly appreciated.

But the way last night's meeting was handled leaves much to be desired.

The city attorney's choice not to read the resolution aloud to the more than 40 constituents present, and to speak about it only vaguely, was not in the spirit of openness. Worse, the resolution was omitted from the agenda packet. While it technically remains public record, the local public was left in the dark, confused, and full of questions.

The following morning, at 7:30 a.m., the city attorney emailed the IPIB board to notify them that the council had passed the resolution. It included an updated policy stating that the city administrator will provide open meeting law training to new members.

In the end, it wasn't a big ask—and it was easily resolved.

But the way it was handled raises serious questions about whether the city is committed to true transparency and openness moving forward.

Last night's meeting suggested otherwise.

— SARAH WEBER

Editor

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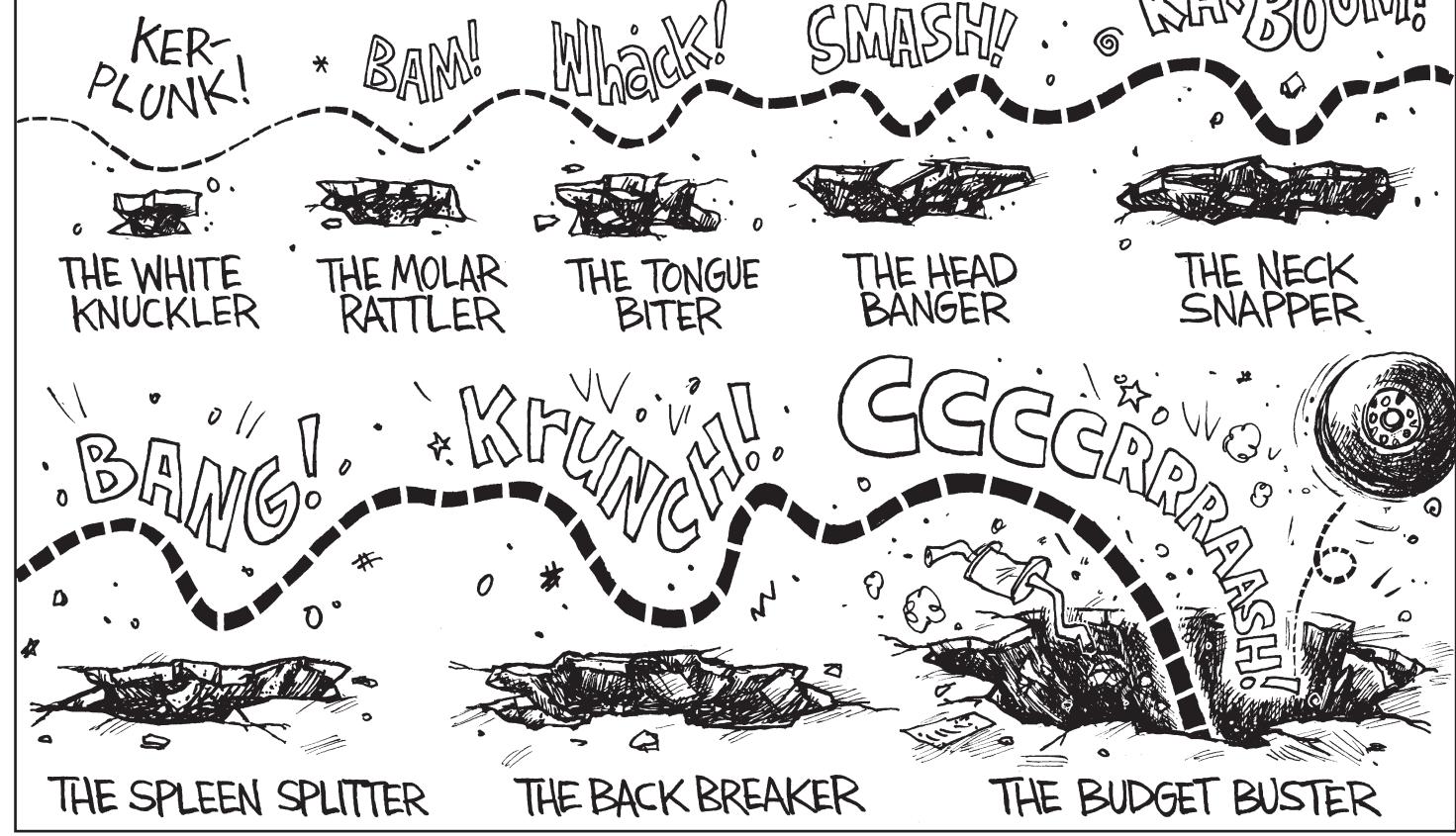
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# OPINION

Joe Heller  
jelos.peterjohn.com

## A FIELD GUIDE TO POTHOLES



## Ramblings LOVE, HATE, AND SOCKS

Submitted by  
CAROL VAN KLOMPENBURG

I have long known I both love and hate technology. I suspect many in my generation do. Perhaps other generations as well. This morning, however, before I even face my technical devices, I realize I also experience an enduring love-hate relationship with socks. I wonder if others have these same mixed feelings about socks. I wonder what launched this internal paradox in me. Hmm. Paradox, pair o' socks. I wonder if a short poem hides here.

In childhood, I didn't think much about socks. I wore them six days a week, but not inside my Sunday dress shoes. Socks simply offered comfort year-round. They kept my feet warm in winter and dry in summer. Some classmates chose bare feet inside their shoes, but I didn't like cold or sweaty feet. I wore socks. Mother laundered them, rolled pairs together, and put them back in my drawer.

My mixed feelings began in my first adult-life apartment. Sock gremlins invaded my dryer. During drying they selected single socks and sneaked them from the dryer. They hid socks under beds, in couch cracks, and inside clothing on closet hangers, even in my housemates' closets. Eventually the singles reappeared for joyous reunions with mates.

A week into our New Orleans honeymoon, sock management suddenly confused me. I was rolling my socks and my new husband's on our hotel-room bed. The maid spied me from the bathroom, rushed toward the bed, and instructed, "Oh, honey, y'all don't want to do that. Y'all are fixin' to stretch out the tops and wreck 'em."

She picked up an unrolled pair and demonstrated how to place one atop the other and simply fold the pair in half. "This here way is much bettuh." I decided to thereafter fold socks her way.

With new-bride excitement, I told Mother about my sock discovery. She frowned and said through pursed lips, "But they stay sorted in the drawer much better when they are rolled. And I've never had any trouble with sock tops stretching. Never." An extended discussion followed. Without resolution. After she left, I retained my new sock-folding habit.

As three youngsters entered our family, the sock gremlins multiplied. In fact, they became aggressive. They stole socks, stuffed them in their pockets, and kept them. Socks disappeared for months, sometimes forever.

I threw the single socks into a cardboard box in the closet. Those singles rapidly accumulated. When my parents visited and Mother asked what work she could help with, I handed her that box. She rolled the pairs together. I choked back any words about folding and put those rolled socks in my drawers. I preferred stretched-out socks to another long confrontation.

But socks also continued to provide pleasure. I loved the softness of a new pair of socks as I took them from the drawer, unfolded them, and tugged them over my feet. I enjoyed deciding which pair to wear. What color? Striped or solid or tweedy?

When downsizing to a retirement duplex, Marlo and I decided to be a shoes-off couple indoors. I discovered the greater pleasure of cuddling my feet into thick, warm, soft, fuzzy slipper socks, especially in the winter. They protected and warmed my feet without the stiffness of shoes.

This cold morning, with my feet surrounded in the cozy comfort of slipper socks, I consider again my love-hate relationship with them. I love wearing socks. I do. But what about that other feeling?

A new thought rises slowly from my toes, snuggled in my fuzzy socks. I don't hate socks. Not at all. What I really hate is... is....

A new insight floods me: I really hate family confrontations and sock gremlins. But I enjoy socks themselves.

As I relax into this discovery, a limerick rolls around and then unfolds itself in my head. (And, yes, my middle name is truly Jane.)

There once was a wench, Carol Jane,  
Whose socks made her often complain.  
One day when a cough  
Had popped her shoes off,  
She found the true cause of her pain.

With the limerick complete, I wonder, Would I also make a new discovery if I examined my love-hate relationship with technology? I wonder if I can tackle these questions in next week's column.

## squints

Weekly local, state and national thoughts

By DOUG CALSBEEK  
Correspondent

**Disappearing:** It seems official secrets aren't enough. After all, those declassified secrets can someday be brought to public light. Federal authorities are now adopting a secure social media application to conduct secret business. It's bad enough that it's social media, even with robust security. What's even more troubling is those messages can vanish entirely, never to be tucked away in a secret vault for later declassification.

'What did you say I said? Prove it...'

**Back door:** Our state lawmakers are considering bills that have some potential residual negative back doors. To legislate that pesticide companies can't be sued for failing to warn consumers of health risks by following label requirements handcuffs the public and gives big corporates another loophole.

Our state post-secondary schools offer plenty of opportunities

to study "historical ideas, traditions and texts that have shaped the American constitutional order and society." A school of "intellectual freedom" will be more than duplication; it will enable setting up a shill alternate, propagandistic revisionism.

Do legislators really think that library associations that "promote federal and state legislation related to libraries and engage in advocacy efforts at the federal, state or local level" are a threat to dollars meant to "Enrich Iowa?" Apparently, these associations that promote lifelong learning don't qualify.

**A little more light:** I wish agendas for the meetings of our local governments were a little easier to find on their websites. Kudos to the Sioux County Board of Supervisors, whose agendas are posted on the first page of siouxcountyiay.gov.

The Sioux County Capital-Democrat is on e-mail lists for upcoming meeting agendas for the city council, the school district board of education and the health system trustees. Apparently, there are private citizens receiving those e-mails, as well. That's a good thing. The city council puts its meetings up on YouTube. That's another great idea.

Meeting agendas are posted for the public prior to meetings in the buildings in which they place. That's good.

Perhaps a more prominent place to click for upcoming meeting agendas?

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## EDITORIAL

### Transparency is essential

Chapter 21 of the Iowa Code clearly outlines the heart behind public meeting laws. It states, "This chapter seeks to assure, through a requirement of open meetings of governmental bodies, that the basis and rationale of governmental decisions, as well as those decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people. Ambiguity in the construction or application of this chapter should be resolved in favor of openness."

At the Monday, October 7 meeting of the city council, an Orange City resident requested just that: an opportunity for the council to commit to transparency and accessibility, taking the recordings of the council and posting them on an online sharing site. Residents can easily access current and former meetings on one platform and at convenient times. Council meets on the first and third Monday at 4:30 p.m., which is a difficult time for working residents and residents with young kids or kids who participate in school activities. The meetings are broadcast on a cable access channel at a set time. Still, this information isn't even posted on the city council and mayor page, and the recordings aren't accessible; they are only rerun at the set time. If a resident wants to be informed, only two windows of time allow for participation in local government. With all the advancements in technology, this isn't enough.

After the request was made, Mayor Deb DeHaan shared that the idea had been discussed, but no further discussion continued. That is often the case at the council. Returning to the purpose of open meetings, the public must understand the thoughts and processes of our leaders. When we don't hear discussion or questions, and council members don't take the time to deliberate and dissect essential issues at the table, the public can come to unclear conclusions. Are conversations happening outside of the table? What does it say to our community when critical discussions happen behind closed doors? Do our representatives not care enough to vet issues publicly?

Another resident spoke at the meeting requesting an exception to the chicken ordinance due to her certification for an emotional support animal. This was an unusual request. She provided information, signed approval from all of her neighbors, and presented well. One council member asked one question. It is a unique request met with almost no discussion. The decision was to table the vote and return to it at another time.

Transparency matters. The city attorney was present, as were all members of the council and the requesting party. It was the perfect opportunity to dig in at the meeting, vet questions, and make a decision. Everyone was in the room. But the decision was tabled so materials, that she fully explained, could be reviewed. I hope to see a lot of discussion at the next meeting.

Chickens continue to be a topic of conversation; the Orange City Planning and Zoning recently had three requests to rezone properties to allow chickens, and one was granted. The committee put ownership back on the council to continue to work on this issue, as it matters to the residents. This request wasn't even mentioned at the meeting. When is the work happening? Without transparency, the public is left to wonder.

As we move forward, it is crucial for residents of Orange City to demand the transparency they deserve. Attend the next city council meeting, voice your concerns, and advocate for open discussions. Together, we can ensure that our local government is a reflection of the community it serves.

**Sarah Weber**  
Co-Editor



#### Firehouse open house in Maurice

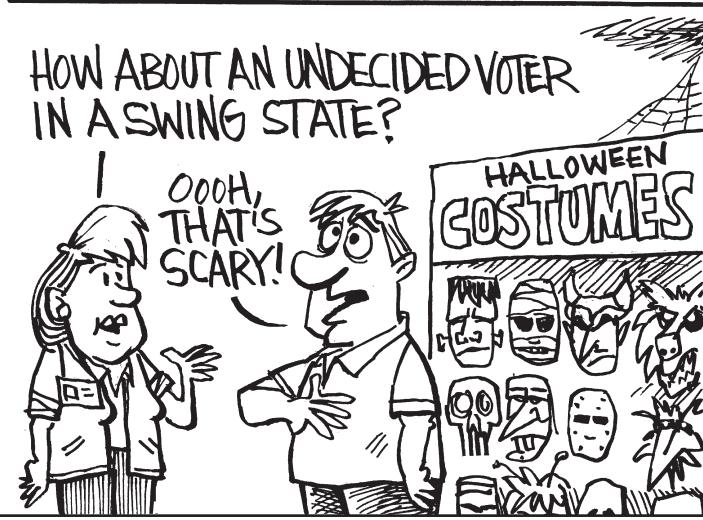
Celebrating her 87th birthday by pretending to be a fire fighter with four year old Bennet Vermeer, Dar Obbarius from Arden Hills, Minnesota enjoyed a meal and the fire trucks at the Maurice Fire Station open house October 7. The Department, with fire chief Jeff Vander Weide, is raising money for a new fire truck. (Photo by Sharon Vermeer)

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## RAMBLINGS

### AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

By SHARON VERMEER  
Correspondent

I have a confession. Sometimes my body and my mind do not agree on how old I am. My mind thinks I can still do all the stuff I could do in my younger years. My body just laughs and says, "Yeah, you'll see how good THAT goes." Such was the problem a month ago when I decided to run to get something.

In all honesty, I'm a terrible runner. I always have been. The rest of my family was out for cross country and track, while I (as one of my sons succinctly put it) "run like a girl." I'm not sure what that means, but it wasn't a compliment.

I took off with high hopes...and then my body said, "I don't think so." My lower back seized up and my feet stopped dead. My body did not. I landed on hands and knees. Obviously, the first thing I did when I recovered from the shock that I had actually FALLEN, was look around to see if anyone saw me. No? Good! I got up and...walked quickly, holding my lower back...to finish my task.

Unfortunately, my bursas (small, fluid-filled sacks that cushion the bones, muscles and ligaments) took the brunt for my knees and rebelled. It only hurt when I got down on my knees, but then it felt like cut glass. Recently I went to a doctor at OCAHS.

He did x-rays and then ultra-sound, finally concluding that there was some fluid back there, and until that dissipated my knees were going to hurt. He suggested wryly that I stay off my knees for a while. And then added with surprise, "Your knees are in remarkably good shape for a lady of your age." First, I'll take that as the compliment it was meant to be, although he could have left off that "of your age" part. Second, thank you to Rae Minten and her yoga classes: although I feel like an elephant amongst gazelles when I take them, they are obviously doing their job.

Shortly after that, I was able to take residents for rides around the Landsmeer golf course on a beautiful day. One of the men got in with me. We were only just starting on the path when suddenly he said grumpily, "I'm 94 years old. I really don't want to do this!" He had me turn around and go home to Landsmeer Ridge Retirement Center, telling me that his wife said he had to get out more. The next lady that got in was a little different. Eyes sparkling and a big smile on her face, she climbed in. "I'm 98 years old and I've never been in a golf cart before!" she laughed. "This is going to be fun!" And it was. We had a great time driving the paths around the course. She couldn't wait to tell her children what she had done that day.

I guess my point is that age is really just a number, and you are as young as you feel. At least, as long as your body agrees.

## NORTHWESTERN COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENTS TO COMPETE AT HARVARD EVENT

ORANGE CITY — Two computer science majors from Northwestern College will compete at HackHarvard 2024, a computer coding event, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Oct. 11-13. Mari Hirota and Pratik Paudel have been accepted as two of more than 1,000 competitors in this competition, to be held on the campus of Harvard University.

At HackHarvard, Paudel explains, "Participants develop important skills, learn new technologies, and work together, all while tackling a specific problem in a short time, usually 24 to 48 hours." This is the ninth year of the event, in which college students from 22 countries and 284 universities have participated. Both Northwestern participants are international students: Hirota is from Japan; Paudel is from Nepal.

Hirota says the competition is about "building an impactful project in a short amount of time with a team. It is not just about winning the 'hackathon' but the opportunity to build connections with different students across the nation, improve our technical skills in a short amount of time, and get to know

more about companies that sponsor the event." Remotely they are now picking teams and teammates. When they arrive, they will learn their tasks for the competition.

About the term "hacking," Paudel explains, "Hacking in events like hackathons is about using technology in creative ways to solve problems. It's like how we use the word 'hack' to describe clever solutions in everyday life. At this event, hacking means creating and building, not breaking or damaging systems."

Both students are seniors and believe attending and performing well will bolster their resume. Hirota says, "It says that you take the initiative to improve your skills and problem-solving ability in a project that could have an impact on solving real-world problems."

Real-world problems are what Hirota and Paudel tackled this summer as software engineering interns at Vermeer Corporation in Pella. They helped create a product they now work on remotely while finishing their undergraduate degrees.

## IOWA STATE BANK ANNOUNCES PROMOTIONS

ORANGE CITY — Leroy Van Kekerix, President/CEO of Iowa State Bank, is proud to announce the following promotions.

Wade Hofland has been named President of Iowa State Bank's North Region and will oversee the seven Iowa State Bank northern locations, which includes Orange City, Hull, Melvin, Paullina, Sanborn, Sheldon, and Sibley. Wade started his career at ISB in 2002 as a Loan Officer at the Sheldon location before moving to Orange City as the Location Manager.

Nathan Wedel has been named Location Manager at Iowa State Bank's Orange City office. He will be responsible for overseeing all areas of bank-related activities, including bank personnel, building customer relationships, and Orange City community

involvement. Nathan has served as a Loan Officer at Iowa State Bank since 2018 after graduating from Northwestern College with a degree in Ag Business and a minor in Accounting.

Newest Board Member Announced Debra Locker has been named to the Iowa State Bank Board of Directors, having previously served on the Community Board of ISB. A graduate of Northwestern College, she has three decades of active involvement in the local community and has contributed with numerous volunteer roles in her church, school and community organizations. She and her husband currently reside in Orange City.

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## EDITORIAL

### Always error on the side of transparency

This past summer, I made a Freedom of Information request that led me to uncover several troubling practices within our city's operations. In an article this week, I detail the events that prompted me to file a formal complaint regarding a violation of Chapter 21. Let me clarify upfront: my intent is not to target any individual, but to challenge a broader issue that demands urgent attention—a lack of transparency in our local government.

At the heart of this issue is the ongoing debate over the chicken ordinance, which has grown far beyond the scope of poultry regulations. What started as a simple community matter has evolved into a concerning reflection of how our government conducts business. The practices I've brought forward, as confirmed by the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB), are in clear violation of the law. This is not a matter of personal vendettas; it's about ensuring that our elected officials adhere to legal standards and that our local government operates with the transparency we all deserve.

Since filing my complaint, I have been the target of personal attacks from both the city attorney and the city administrator. I have been criticized, my character questioned, and my ethics put under scrutiny mostly behind the scenes in written correspondence with the IPIB board. These attacks are not only baseless but also serve to deflect from the real issue at hand—the need for more openness and accountability in government. I do not take such personal attacks lightly. However, I remain steadfast in my commitment to identifying and challenging practices that are not only wrong but undermine public trust in our local institutions.

It's important to remember that this is not about casting blame on any single individual, but rather about advocating for a change in how our government operates. Our city officials are supposed to serve the public, and part of that service includes being transparent and accountable in their actions. While I believe we have strong, capable representatives, it is clear that there needs to be greater clarification around what is and isn't legal when it comes to open meeting laws and transparency.

I have always believed in the vital role of the press and the public's right to be informed. Without transparency, how can we as a community truly engage with and trust our local government? How can we hold our representatives accountable if the processes that guide their decisions remain hidden behind closed doors?

This issue is bigger than any one ordinance, and it's about the kind of governance we expect in our city. I remain hopeful that through continued dialogue and advocacy for transparency, we can create a government that truly reflects the needs and values of the people it serves. The public deserves nothing less.

— Sarah Weber  
Editor

### Feenstra votes to fund Beagle Brigade to keep foreign animal disease out of the United States

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Tuesday, December 17, U.S. Rep. Randy Feenstra (R-Hull) voted for, and the U.S. House of Representatives passed, the Beagle Brigade Act.

"Keeping foreign animal diseases out of our country is critical to the security of Iowa agriculture and our food supply. As we've seen with bird flu, our farmers have faced serious financial losses and uncertainty over the spread of this disease, and African Swine Fever has the potential to seriously harm our hog industry. We must continue to do everything possible to monitor, prevent, and mitigate outbreaks," said Rep. Feenstra. "That's why I voted for legislation to have the National Detector Dog Training Center train dogs – including beagles – to inspect cargo, baggage, and vehicles at our borders and detect foreign diseases that pose a significant threat to agriculture. I'll continue to work to keep foreign animal disease out of our country by passing the Farm Bill and investing in prevention and detection measures."



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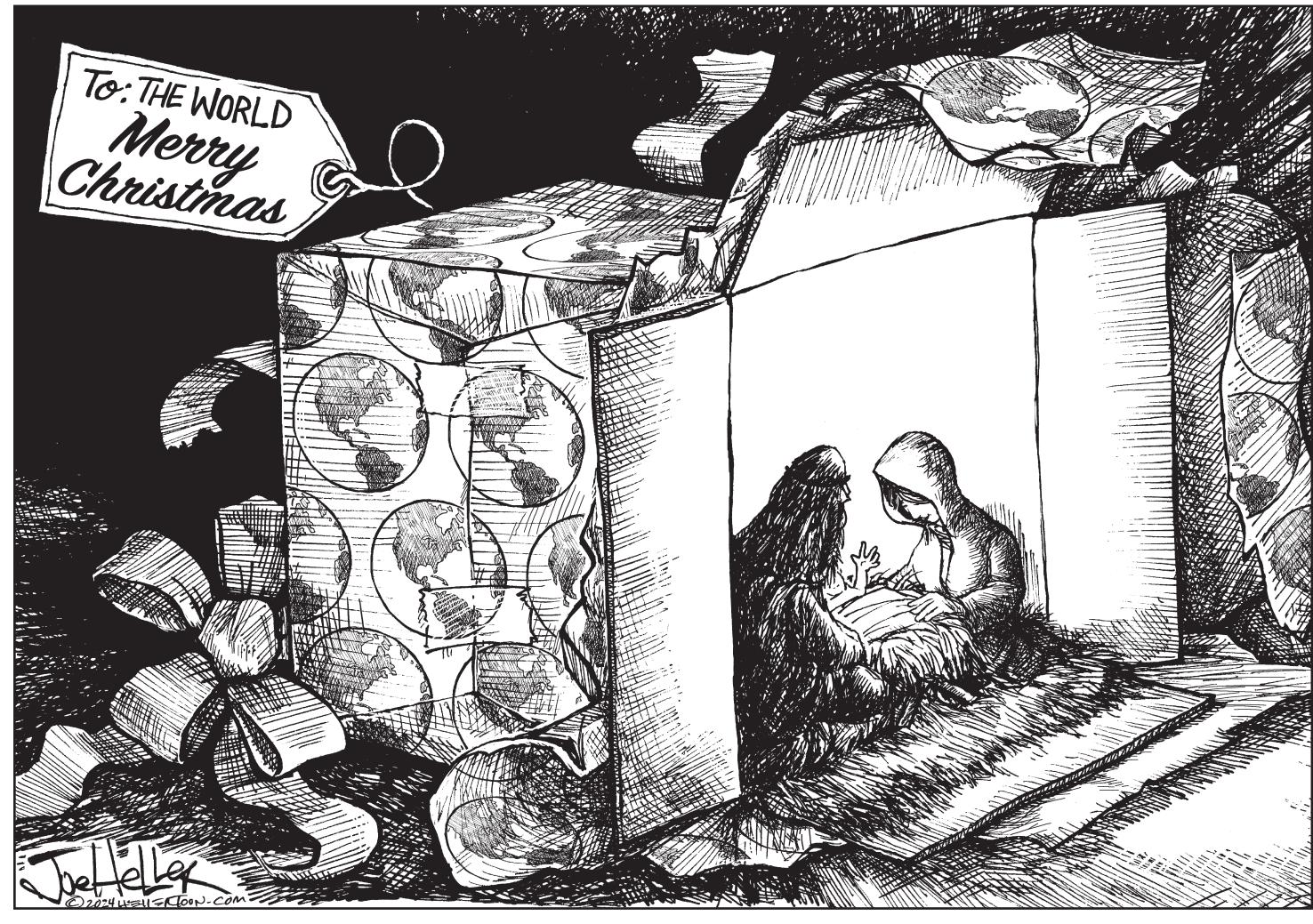
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## RAMBLINGS

### CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS...GIVE ME A CLUE...

By SHARON VERMEER  
Correspondent

Everybody loves Christmas Music. The ringing tones of Joy to the World. The quiet contemplation of Away in the Manger. The raucous fun of Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer. But did you know that one of our common Christmas Carols is a secret code?

In the 16th century England outlawed the Catholic faith. Only the Church of England was allowed. Those who instructed their children in the Catholic faith could be drawn and quartered! So Catholicism went underground, making up silly poems to teach the Church's most important things. The Twelve Days of Christmas is one of those songs. Keep in mind that the twelve days don't start in the middle of December, ending on Christmas, but actually start on Christmas Day. That's your first clue: day one, "the partridge in a pear tree," symbolized baby Jesus. Now that you have seen how this works, try to guess the meaning before you read it!

"Two turtle doves" represents the Old and New Testament, showing the Biblical roadmap to everyone.

"Three French Hens" goes back to 1 Corinthians 13: faith, hope and love. "Four Calling Birds" is the four Gospels: Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. "Five Golden Rings" is talking about the five books of the Old Testament (the Torah or Pentateuch): Genesis, Exodus,

Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

"On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me six geese a-laying..." relating to when the world was "hatched," each egg is a day in creation. "Seven swans a-swimming" starts to get a little tricky: it's the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and compassion.

"On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love brought to me eight maids a-milking..." during that time being a milkmaid was one of the worst jobs you could have! This line is telling us that Jesus cares about everyone and included the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

"Nine ladies dancing" is next, representing the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Ten lords a-leaping:" during that time the lords were judges, so this code is for the ten commandments. Next is "eleven pipers piping." Almost a trick question, it refers to the eleven disciples left after Judas betrayed Jesus.

"On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love gave to me twelve ladies dancing." This one is tied to the Apostle's Creed.

Whew! A lot of Biblical doctrine loaded into a strange song. Next time you sing it, maybe you will think about it a little differently!

## DO-IT-YOURSELF FOOD GIFTS

By AMY JONES  
Human Sciences Specialist

STATE — Do-it-yourself food gifts are unique expressions of warmth and connection with a personal touch. When crafted with health in mind, they become even more meaningful, offering both nourishment and joy. Perfect for a festive gathering, heartfelt thank-you, or a simple gesture of kindness, healthy, homemade food gifts, like dry soup mixes, spice blends, and dip mixes, are simple and affordable options for family, friends, co-workers, neighbors and teachers.

Soup it up. Capture the essence of comfort and warmth with dry soup mixes. Recipes containing ingredients like beans, pasta, lentils, and whole grains are simple to assemble, and they can be made in advance. Recipe ideas include: Three-Bean Chili in a Jar, Chicken Noodle Soup Mix, Split Pea Soup Mix and Spicy Black Bean Soup Mix. This is the gift of a hearty meal that has a lengthy shelf life and is as nutritious as it is delicious and easy to prepare. Packaged in a clear jar or bag, the colorful layers of ingredients are decorative on their own. Add a festive ribbon or tie and it's ready to go. For a larger gift, put the soup package in a basket or bag with shelf-stable ingredients like canned tomatoes, perhaps adding a wooden spoon, spoon rest, or colorful kitchen towel or oven mitt.

Spice it up. Homemade salt-free and sugar-free seasoning mixes and herb and spice rubs enhance the flavor of foods in a heart-healthy way. Create your own seasoning and rub blends with versatile ingredients like onion and garlic powder, cayenne or red pepper flakes, and dried sage, rosemary, and thyme. Try salt free Taco Seasoning Mix <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/taco-seasoning-mix/> or Dried Onion Soup Mix <https://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu/recipe/dried-onion-soup-mix/> from Spend Smart. Eat Smart. For a more substantial gift, line a basket with a colorful apron or dish towel. Arrange the mix with a serving platter or bowl and utensils to enhance the theme. You can even include cards with recipe ideas.

Keep these tips in mind for your healthy food gifts:  
Choose recipes with accessible, affordable ingredients. Buying



Photo courtesy of Iowa State Extension Office

in bulk can save money when making multiple gifts.

Gather ingredients and jars or bags, line them up, and assemble several gifts at once. Make extras to keep on hand for last minute occasions (or for your own use after the holidays).

Choose packaging that suits the recipe, such as a jar, bottle, or bag. Consider accessibility, cost, and options to repurpose or reuse.

Make or purchase tags with space to handwrite or print out things like ingredients, how to prepare, how to use, and a "To / From" section or separate tag.

If you want to add to the gift, pair it with other shelf-stable ingredients, cooking implements, and/or serving dishes.

And last but not least: DIY Dips. The perfect accompaniment to a platter of fresh vegetables, dips are a wonderful option for gatherings at holidays or any day. Give your family and friends a homemade dip mix or two like Tex Mex Dip Mix or Herb Dip Mix or create your own signature blend. For a more substantial gift, add a dip bowl and a package of crackers.

With a little planning and preparation, you can craft a healthy homemade food gift that truly shows you care :)

Adapted from Tufts Health and Nutrition Letter December 2024.

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## 02 news

## EDITORIAL

### Building trust through transparency

 At a time when public trust in government is more fragile than ever, Iowa is taking notice and strengthening transparency and accountability. The passage of House File 706 was highlighted in Tom Jeneary's week 14 report, and it is not just a bureaucratic update—it's a necessary action that boldly states democracy functions best when the public is informed and officials are held accountable.

Too often, public officials violate open meeting and records laws not out of malice, but out of ignorance. The Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB) routinely hears cases where the defense amounts to "we didn't know." That excuse should no longer be acceptable—and under HF 706, it won't be.

The bill mandates that newly elected or appointed officials complete training on Iowa's open meetings and public records laws within 90 days of taking office. This proactive requirement ensures that every official begins their tenure equipped with the knowledge needed to uphold the public's right to know. It's a basic, yet powerful reform that reinforces the idea that transparency is not optional—it's a duty.

The legislation also adds teeth to Iowa's transparency laws by significantly increasing the penalties for violations. The fines, which haven't been updated since 2005, will now range up to \$12,500 for knowing violations. These changes send a clear message: the state is serious about enforcing the public's right to information.

Importantly, HF 706 outlines the intent of IPIB's complaint process. Harmless errors can still be dismissed, and informal resolution remains a central tool. The goal is not to punish mistakes, but to correct behavior and uphold standards—and to do so before serious violations occur.

All this echoes the recent complaint process and the IPIB claim with the Orange City Council. At the May 5 meeting, the council scheduled the mandatory IPIB training, which will take place on May 19. The public is invited, and the council session will begin at 4 p.m. I encourage anyone who is part of a public board to attend; it is a public meeting, and it will prepare other boards with the knowledge to move forward the right way under public meeting laws. As more training becomes available, I hope other municipalities and boards across Iowa follow suit.

HF 706 passed the Iowa House with overwhelming bipartisan support and now heads to the Governor's desk. We urge Governor Kim Reynolds to sign it into law.

Transparency is the cornerstone of accountable government. With this legislation, Iowa is not only updating its laws—it's renewing its commitment to the people it serves. Let's make open meetings training the standard, not the exception. Our democracy depends on it.

Sarah Weber  
Editor



### Festival Time

A city named Orange celebrates each May with a queen and tulips on full display, Wooden shoes do abound Clickety-clacking around And sore feet make the Podiatrist's day.

By Ron Regnier  
Orange City resident

## OPINION



## Ramblings PARALYZED AT WALMART AND BEYOND

Submitted by  
CAROL VAN KLOMPENBURG



It's late Wednesday evening. I am weary, nearly finished shopping with my husband at Walmart after back-to-back church meetings.

Shampoo. I need to find shampoo. Then I'm done. Hair products—organized by brand, not by product—fill an aisle-long shelf.

I confront the plethora, paralyzed. Cheapest? I don't see the Equate brand. Choose a brand I know? I fail to recognize a name.

Our last humongous bottle from Costco lasted more than a year. I wish Costco weren't an hour away. I'd just get the same one, and we'd be good for another year.

I look up, down, across, and repeat.

For better and for worse, I live in a prosperous capitalist economy. I have choices. Sometimes they overwhelm me.

Choose the cheapest? That is often a generic or a name brand that is on sale.

Select top quality? But how do I judge that? I've read that some companies price items high to create the illusion of better quality.

Take the one that is most advertised? But think of all the money they wasted on advertising and didn't put into their product.

Go middle of the road? I often do that.

Choose not to patronize a multinational corporation at all? Some people I know make that choice, too. But then I shouldn't even be here in a Walmart.

I decide to wait for Marlo to catch up with me. He appears, immediately lifts a large, black bottle from the shelf across the aisle, and asks, "Is this one good?"

"Sure," I say. "It's as good as any."

"Oh, that's a good one alright," says a well-groomed shopper near me. "It has a good pH."

A good pH?

Amazed, I turn to her with question marks on my face.

She answers my silent question. "I was a hairdresser for 25 years, and we tested the pH of different shampoos. That was one of the good ones."

Who knew? Shampoo should be chosen by pH level? I wonder if a low or high pH, acidic or basic, is the best for hair? I wonder if I'll want to investigate that later. At the moment, I doubt it.

That last item now in our cart, we trudge toward the checkout counter, drive home, and fall into bed.

This morning at my keyboard, I reflect on last night's paralysis. From the past I hear the voice of a missionary returning from years in the two-thirds world. "When I step into any large supermarket, I am paralyzed by the choices between dozens, even hundreds, of each item. For years, I had just one choice—if the item was

available at all. Now I live in a world of choice overload." That overload is certainly a first-world problem, not a global one.

At last night's prayer meeting one of us prayed, "Lord, we are so thankful to live in this country. We are so blessed. We have . . ." The person listed examples of our prosperity, choosing from the list of words we often use: homes, food, heat, doctors, peace, freedom, cars, clothing . . .

To date no one has mentioned 100 choices of shampoo.

Then we go on to pray for those less blessed. "Lord, we pray for those who do not have the same blessings that we do, for those who live in other countries, in poverty, in war, in refugee camps. Give them what they stand in need of."

Sometimes we also pray, "And help us, Lord, to do our part in providing for others. Make us generous."

This morning I wonder, How generous?

If all ten of us at that prayer meeting liquidated all of our retirement savings and gave them all away, it would be a drop of water that disappeared into an ocean.

My late father used to say, "If all the rich gave away all of their money, then instead of having just some poor people, all of us would be poor." He believed some people needed riches to create work and jobs for the poor.

I understand the need for working capital, but to my non-expert mind, trickle-down economics does not appear to have worked.

I wonder again, How generous?

A flood of questions follows: Who needs to help people in poverty? Is generosity only a role for individuals and foundations? Is helping people in poverty also the role of government?

That immediately crashes my thinking against the great divide paralyzing my country, my church, my friends and acquaintances, my family, and me.

In a recent message our pastor said that we owe our first allegiance to God, not to a political party. I agree with him, but I have no idea what that means in my life and choices.

This morning, as I sit at my keyboard under a therapy light for SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), feel more paralyzed than I did in Walmart. I do not have an answer. My current paralysis does not help. Perhaps shouting across a huge and hate-filled canyon doesn't help either.

I sit for a long time and decide on two baby steps:

Read each evening the opinions from both sides of the aisle, even though I agree more with one side than the other. I need to understand the reality which is alternative to mine.

Continue my civil conversation with a relative on the opposite side of the divide.

Are these steps just a cup of water in an ocean? Perhaps. But Jesus does find fault with those who failed to provide a cup of cold water.

Perhaps I should consider also an event in Jesus' ministry: a hungry multitude and a lad with just a handful of loaves and fishes. That child offered just five loaves and two fish. It was a tiny amount, but by some miracle, it was enough.

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