

## Browns

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room for charging electric vehicles.

"It's important for us, (owner) Forest (Brown) and myself, that the West Branch community know that we're proud to be part of the community. We're proud of this investment into the community. And we're looking forward to many, many decades in the future serving this community," Managing Partner Jason Waterman said.

The building combines the downtown Ford dealership at 346 West Main Street with the Chrysler-Dodge-Jeep-Ram dealership at 205 Tidewater Drive. The finished facility will remain at 205 Tidewater Drive.

It creates a "convenient, customer-focused, state-of-the-art facility for our organization," he said, offering a more comfortable setting for staff and customers.

The facility will include 18 service bays and an indoor, climate-controlled drive-in service drop-off similar to drive-through oil-change shops.

Browns will expand its pickup and delivery service for vehicles that need repairs, and its mobile delivery service division, allowing repairs on location, he said.

The company also plans on displaying more cars, both new and used, on the lot.

Further, Waterman said Browns' plans to keep its current building and turn it into a "full-on detail facility" offering shampoing, washing, waxing, vacuuming, undercoating, and more.

Waterman said Browns West Branch wanted to break ground earlier last summer, but the company that put the primary components of the building together before delivering them to West Branch "had a really, really, busy first quarter of their year."

"Since the arrival of the building got pushed back to mid-September, we weren't really able to start this project until late August," he said.

The building arrived as "stacks of steel," Waterman said.

"When you're putting up a building of this size, the engineering and architecture (requires) constructing this steel building almost to the extent of an Erector Set," he said. "It comes in like nine semi loads."

West Branch's proximity to Interstate 80 and the Iowa City/Cedar Rapids corridor helps justify this expansion, Waterman said.

"I think it's very important that we pay homage to Brad Larson and the name that he built over 20 years prior to our acquiring of the dealership," he said. "We serve all throughout eastern or central Iowa, be it Cedar Rapids or Iowa City and beyond."

He said the company's web presence also helps draw customers from afar.

"We have put a pretty sizeable investment into our digital presence online, which is ... a bless-

ing and a curse. It affords you the ability to see, view, and acquire a vehicle from just about anywhere," he said. "As an example, we just delivered (a vehicle) to Spokane, Wash., last week from someone who found it online."

Still, the company wants to "prioritize our backyard," he said.

"We want to grow our organization. We want to grow our reach outside of West Branch. We want to continue to serve the Iowa City, Cedar Rapids and the surrounding area," Waterman said. "We believe that what we're providing for an experience will do just that. Make no mistake, being part of West Branch and focusing our attention on our community is our No. 1 priority."

While Browns' building permit puts the square footage at about 27,500 square feet, Waterman said the actual square feet could end up "over 30,000."

He estimates about 60 to 65 percent of the space will house additional repair and service areas, about 35 percent will hold showroom and office

space, and the remaining space is for miscellaneous.

Browns hired Custom Builders and Darrin Vittetoe of Tipton as its general contractor, and TNT Properties and Designs of Dyersville as its architects and engineers. Lynch Excavation and Larry Lynch of West Branch is one of the main subcontractors.

Right now, the company employs about 38 people and that will grow to between 45 and 50 staff, with the majority of the growth dedicated to the repair shop. At minimum, Browns West Branch plans to add at least five new technicians.

"I've got some other creative roles I want. One particular role is a promotions and foundation ambassador whose job will solely be to connect with the community, to be involved with the community," he said.

Those numbers do not include the courtesy drivers who run vehicles between Browns' four locations (West Branch, Elkader, Dyersville, and Guttenberg) and facilitate dealer trades.

Waterman calls the project "pretty massive" since the company is also investing in additional hoists and service technology and the infrastructure for EVs.

"There's just a lot that will be going into it," he said.

The EV charging station will offer Level 3 fast-charging stations for cars and light-duty trucks.

Waterman said the downtown Ford dealership may turn into a reconditioning facility, off-site offices, or a catch-all for additional needs.

While most of the focus is on the new showroom, Browns' West Branch also improved its small parking lot close to the entrance.

Waterman said the company brought in more dirt to increase the elevation to raise it up close to the parking area at its current service department. That will make more room for long-term service customers and maybe additional employee parking.

He said the company even envisions, one day, adding a drive-through car wash in that area.

## Letters

From Page 3

"Age of Trump."

What appealed to millions of Americans as macho, cute, or even funny is becoming sad, embarrassing, and scary.

Canada is talking trade with China as the U.S. has become adversarial. Europe is preparing for a trade war and a military invasion by the U.S. Thousands of our fellow citizens are being dragged off the streets and arrested in scenes reminiscent of Nazi Germany.

We've seen this movie before, and history has not been kind. In the late 1800's, we herded native Americans onto reservations. In the 1930's, Germany threw their Jewish population in concentration camps. In the 1940's, the U.S. put Japanese citizens in internment camps. And now we build holding pens for legal immigrants, just as our ancestors were, and citizens who don't match the pure "whiteness" desired by our current regime.

As we prepare to celebrate 250 years as a nation, we must consider how history will judge this "Age of Trump" and, more importantly, how it will judge those who allowed this to happen.

2026 may well be our last opportunity to restore our pride, and the world's respect for our country. Attend your precinct caucus on Feb. 2, at 7 p.m. and standup for our U.S. Constitution.

After all, "This land belongs to all of us," so let's make it one we can all be proud of.

**Larry Hodgden  
Tipton**

## Gruenhagen needs lesson in economics

Time to fact-check State Senator Kerry Gruenhagen's op-ed in the January 22nd edition of the West Branch Times.

Sen. Gruenhagen said, "The momentum continues as Iowa recorded the sec-

ond-highest rate of economic growth in the nation ..."

I have no idea where Gruenhagen got this. According to the latest Bureau of Economic Analysis data, Iowa state GDP growth in 3rd quarter 2025 ranked 14th. That's still a decent number, but nowhere near the second highest. But wait ... that third quarter data was not released until after Gruenhagen's op-ed was written.

At the time he wrote his op-ed the latest available data was from the second quarter, and in that quarter Iowa tied at 19th, which was a big improvement over the first quarter when Iowa ranked 28th and growth actually shrank.

It's bad enough that Gruenhagen doesn't know how to read easily available economic data, but his support for Senate Study Bill 3001, which would eliminate property taxes for those over age 60 who have paid off their mortgage, is simply godawful economics. I'm sure it will play well with the older Republican base, but it

runs against almost all sound economic principles.

The bill would slow the rate of housing stock turnover, which will hurt affordability. The bill will shift the tax incidence to younger households and renters, who do pay personal property taxes, albeit indirectly.

And the bill would increase what economists call "deadweight loss." Why-oh-why can't we have legislators who understand economics?

In the past, Sen. Gruenhagen has expressed a need to improve student understanding of history and civics. Fine. But since most polls show voters typically rank the state of the economy at or near the top of their concerns, doesn't it seem reasonable that our politicians should have a better understanding of economics?

In that spirit let me offer a modest proposal. I would be willing to offer Gruenhagen personal tutoring in basic economics. Some math would be required, but I promise to try and keep it to a minimum.

**Mike Johnson  
West Branch**

ALL PUBLIC NOTICES CAN BE FOUND AT IOWAPUBLICNOTICES.COM

## Cedar county payroll

VENDOR	PAY DATE	VENDOR TOTAL
Benefits Inc.	1/09/2026	960.82
Phelps the Uniform Specialists		34.10
Cedar County Treasurer		88,877.23
Cedar County Treasurer		11,500.70
Cedar County Treasurer		361.82
Cedar County Treasurer		1,016.42
COUNTY TOTAL		102,751.09
		WBT 4

## Cedar county board

BOARD PROCEEDINGS (FOLLOWING IS A SYNOPSIS OF MINUTES.FULL TEXT OF DAY'S MINUTES ARE AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION AT AUDITOR'S OFFICE OR ON OUR WEBSITE--WWW.CEDARCOUNTY.IOWA.GOV) TIPTON, IOWA

January 13, 2026 Cedar County Board of Supervisors met in regular session at 8:30 a.m. January 13, 2026 with following members present: Barnhart, Gaul, Kaufmann, and Chairperson Bell. Bixler absent. Minutes reported by Deputy Auditor Hamdorf. Members of public were also present. Board viewed correspondence from various agencies.

It noted following Handwritten Disbursement issued on 1/9/2026 to Cedar County Treasurer for Benefits, Inc. for an electronic deposit: #444636 for \$7,736.89-self funded medical claims. Moved by Gaul seconded by Kaufmann to approve agenda.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Barnhart seconded by Kaufmann to approve Board Minutes of January 6, 2026.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Barnhart seconded by Kaufmann to approve Payroll Disbursements #203939-204080 for period ending 1/3/26 and to be paid on 1/9/26.  
Absent: Bixler  
Board reported on Outreach/Committee Meetings they attended.

Moved by Barnhart seconded by Gaul appointed Pam Hartwig to Conservation Board for a 5-year term and Kent Stuart to Planning & Zoning Commission for a 3-year term and Terry Goerd to Eastern Iowa Regional Housing Authority effective 6/1/2026 for a 2-year term.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Whitney Randolph presented with her award for 5 years of service.  
Public Health Program Coordinator Randolph met with Board to present a quote for Harm Reduction Vending Machine presented on 12/23/2025. Randolph would like to see sharps containers, wound care kits, Narcan, hygiene items, condoms, Your Life Iowa handouts, gun locks and any other suggestions

placed inside machine. This does have a limited three-year warranty.

Moved by Barnhart seconded by Kaufmann to approve quote as presented for \$6,000 to Greater America Distributing from Opioid fund.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Sheriff Wethington and Chief Deputy Knoche met with Board for a FY 26/27 budget review. Discussion held. No decisions were made.

Public Health Business Manager Hansen met with Board for a FY 26/27 budget review. Discussion held. No decisions were made.

Board recessed for fifteen minutes. Environmental & Zoning Director LaRue met with Board for a FY 26/27 budget review. Discussion held. No decisions were made.

Veterans Affairs Officer Hamann and members of her Commission met with Board for a FY 26/27 budget review. Discussion held. No decisions were made.

Engineer Fangmann met with Board for his annual performance review. Fangmann requested a closed session in writing.

Moved by Barnhart seconded by Kaufmann to go into closed session under Code section 21.5(1)(j) at 10:31 a.m.

Ayes: Gaul, Barnhart, Kaufmann, Bell  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Kaufmann seconded by Barnhart to go back into open session at 10:46 a.m.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Kaufmann seconded by Barnhart to authorize Board to sign 28E agreement with City of Lowden for design and construction of certain roadway improvements.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by seconded by to approve Iowa Department of Transportation Federal-aid Agreement for a City Highway Bridge Program Project.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Barnhart seconded by Gaul to go into closed session under Code section 21.5(1)(j) at 11:00 a.m.

Ayes: Gaul, Barnhart, Kaufmann, Bell  
Absent: Bixler  
Moved by Barnhart seconded by Gaul to go back into open session at 11:26 a.m.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler, Kaufmann  
No decisions were made from closed session.

Moved by Gaul seconded by Bell to adjourn at 11:27 a.m., to January 20, 2026.

Ayes: All  
Absent: Bixler, Kaufmann  
Jon Bell, Chairperson  
Nicki Welch, Auditor  
WBT 4

## West Branch city council

(The following is a synopsis of the minutes of the West Branch City Council meeting. A video recording is available for inspection at westbranchiowa.org. The minutes are not approved until the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.)  
West Branch, Iowa; City Council, January 20, 2026  
Council Chambers; Regular Meeting; 7:00 p.m.  
Mayor Laughlin called the West Branch City Council regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.  
Roll call: Council members present; Colton Miller, Mike Horihan, Jerry Sexton, Chantry Noel and Tom Dean. City Staff present: City Administrator Adam Kofoed and City Clerk Alycia Friis Attending via Zoom: Finance Officer Heidi Van Auken and Deputy City Clerk Jessica Brown

APPROVE THE AGENDA  
Motion to Approve the Agenda made by Miller, 2nd by Dean. Motion carried on a voice vote.

APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA  
Approve Minutes from the January 5, 2025 City Council meeting.

Approve the Forth Option Year of Contract 140P6021P0005, HEHO-City services for the period of January 29, 2026 to July 28, 2026 (snowplowing and alarm intrusion for the National Park Service and Herbert Hoover National Historic Site).

Approve Claims for January 20, 2026 EXPENDITURES - 1/20/2026 EOCENE ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP- WIDENING WAPSI CREEK-686.39 GOODALE, HARRISON-REIMB FOR ANTIFREEZE FOR PW-46.61

MAIN STREET WEST BRANCH-FY26 MAIN STREET DJES-17,500.00 MID-STATES ORGANIZED CRIME-MOCIC 2026 MEMBERSHIP-100.00 MOPPY MO'S LLC-CLEANING SERVICES - POLICE-910.00

TOTAL--19,243.00  
PAYROLL-WAGES, TAXES, EMPLOYEE BENEFITS - 1/16/2026 66,939.45

PAID BETWEEN MEETINGS ALLIANT ENERGY-ALLIANT ENERGY-22,247.31 DEMCO-PAPER-FOLD FOR BOOK JACKETS-113.98

LEAF CAPITAL FUNDING-COPIER LEASE - LIBRARY-142.02 LIBERTY COMMUNICATIONS-LIBERTY COMMUNICATIONS-1,543.94 MUNICIPAL SUPPLY-WATER METER FOR CAMBIO-8,212.00

TIPTON ELECTRIC MOTORS-PRESSURE WASHER HOSE-PW-109.00 ULINE-SEWER PLANT DESK - PW-922.85

WENDLING QUARRIES-SAND FOR ROAD TREATMENT-755.84

SISCO-HEALTH CLAIMS 1-5-2026--84.96

SISCO-HEALTH CLAIMS 1-12-2026--88.17

VARIOUS VENDORS-UB REFUNDS-153.01 CARDCONNECT-ANNUAL SECURITY BUNDLE FEE-149.00

TOTAL--34,521.88  
GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES 120,704.33

FUND TOTALS  
001 GENERAL FUND-52,777.66  
022 CIVIC CENTER-1,087.67  
031 LIBRARY-5,857.94  
110 ROAD USE TAX-6,189.99

112 TRUST AND AGENCY-15,608.13  
321 WIDENING WAPSI CREEK @ BE-686.39  
600 WATER FUND-22,676.55  
610 SEWER FUND-15,373.19  
740 STORM WATER UTILITY-446.81

GRAND FUND TOTAL--120,704.33  
Motion by Dean, second by Miller to approve the Consent agenda. AYES: Dean, Miller, Sexton, Horihan, Noel, NAYS: None. Motion carried.

PRESENTATIONS / communications / open forum - NONE  
PUBLIC HEARING / NON-CONSENT AGENDA

Second Reading Ordinance 834 Amending Chapter 69 - No Parking Zones./ Move to Action.  
Motion by Sexton, second by Miller to approve the Second Reading of Ordinance 834 Amending Chapter 69. AYES: Sexton, Miller, Noel, Dean, Horihan. NAYS: Motion carried.

Resolution 2026 - 04 Resolution approving Pay Estimate Number 22 in the amount of \$262,895.39 to Boomerang Corp. for the Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements Project./ Move to Action.

Motion by Sexton, second by Dean to approve Resolution 2026-04. AYES: Sexton, Dean, Miller, Horihan, Noel, NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2026 - 05 Resolution approving Pay Estimate Number 8 in the amount of \$1,200.38 to Boomerang Corp for the 2025 Cedar-Johnson Road Reconstruction Project./ Move to Action.

Motion by Miller, second by Dean to approve Resolution 2026-05. AYES: Miller, Dean, Noel, Horihan, Sexton. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Resolution 2026 - 06 Resolution approving an Agreement for Maintenance and Repair of Primary Roads in Municipalities./ Move to Action.

Motion to table this resolution and get more answers on the terms of the agreement for the next council meeting, by Dean, second by Sexton. AYES: Dean, Sexton, Horihan, Noel, Miller. NAYS: None. Motion carried.

Discussion/Move to Action - Building Permit Fees and Reinspection Fees - The discussion began with a breakdown of what services and expenditure items are included in the figure of what is collected for each building

Roger Laughlin, Mayor  
ATTEST:

Alycia Friis, City Clerk  
WBT 4

## For Sale

COLEMAN DUAL fuel power-house lantern for sale. Comes with newer mantels installed, only Coleman lantern fuel used in it. Call or text 563-212-0202. #4tf

## Wanted

WANTED - JUNK appliances - will pick up. Farm steel, batteries and cars. 319-331-8122. #17tf

BUYING ALL Antiques: Fair Cash Prices for Antiques: Furniture, Signs, Toys, Crocks, Paintings, Documents, Oddities and Weird Stuff. 319.270.1251. #9tf

## Help Wanted

HELP WANTED - Part Time Cashier/ Merchandiser. Contact Tipton Pharmacy, 563-886-2158. #4-5c

## For Rent

ONE BEDROOM, downtown Tipton, upstairs. No Smoking. No Pets. Call 563-357-9650. #1-2c

## Storage For Rent

WEST BRANCH Mini Storage, 1264 East South Street, Tipton. 10 x 24 ft. stalls. Reasonable rates. 1-319-643-7150. #10tf

## Notice

HOUSEKEEPING NEEDS? Call Lacy Goddard at 563-260-0474 or Nicki Aikman at 563-886-2151. #1-4p

WANTED TO BUY! Local Authorized Collector And Buyer. Buying Buffalo Nickels and Indian Head Pennies. I pay \$3 each for 1943 nickels. Buying old coins and currency collections. I pay cash on the spot for over 50 years. Will pick up at your home or bank. Call Max @ Wallis Co., Cedar Rapids, Iowa. 1-319-360-0213. #51-6p