



City of Council Bluffs

Al Ringgenberg spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on July 5. He is a member of the Council Bluffs City Council. He grew up in central Iowa and was in the military for 21 years. He was a military lawyer and started out doing Court Marshals. He did over 100, then switched to international law. His last tour was in the Pentagon and he helped negotiate agreements for the “War on Terror”.

Al said that Council Bluffs is starting to work with other communities in the area to promote development, including Pottawattamie and surrounding counties, and Omaha. Everyone can benefit from growth in the area.

In 2011 the city was not sure the levies would hold from the flooding. If they broke water could have flooded a third of the city. The National Guard and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

were a big help in preventing the levies from breaking.

Now FEMA wants the levies improved, with an estimated cost of \$114M. The State of Iowa will allow Council Bluffs to use sales tax revenues for this, which would provide about \$57M over 10 years. Other funding is available, but Council Bluffs will need to pay \$25M-28M. If the levies are not improved, FEMA has threatened to redo and enlarge the flood zones in the city, making it necessary for FEMA is already redrawing flood zones throughout the country at a record pace.

Al said that the median income in Council Bluffs is \$53,000. A fast food restaurant in Council Bluffs pays about \$123,000 more in taxes than a similar place in Omaha. That makes it difficult to compete.

The City budget is \$128M. It is a difficult time to raise taxes, but the city doesn't have much trouble raising fees. Al said the city is about ready to raise sewer and water fees.

Asked about use of the land where the dog track was, Al said that they are looking at allowing a big, luxury hotel to build there. The area has a shortage of hotel space for large events, and even Omaha has asked that more hotels be built in the area. The casinos alone have two-thirds of their hotel space blocked every night.