

Council Bluffs



Chad Guttau, Tom Hanafan

Mayor Tom Hanafan spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on 20 April. This is his last term of mayor after 25 years. Art Hill, the city financial director, also attended the meeting.

Since Iowa West Foundation was created in 1984, 0.5% of gambling money goes to Council Bluffs, another 0.5% goes to Pottawattamie County, and 24% goes to the State of Iowa. Therefore, the state gets the majority of gambling revenues.

Since he became mayor, the city budget has only gone from \$80M to \$105.6M this year. It will actually go down in 2014. The city is financially as good as it has ever been.

Each department in the city is a cost center and is held responsible for their budget. If a department has money left over, it carries into the following year. The department head is accountable for the money. The department does not have to spend it quickly before the end of the year. Each year the budget for each office is based on city priorities instead of on a fixed percentage increase. Council Bluffs is the only city Mayor Hanafan knows of that runs their budget this way and it has been very effective in keeping down expenses.

The fire department spends 90% of its budget on personnel. The police department spends 95% on personnel. Council Bluffs is the only city nearby with a full time fire department. Fires in the city are down since 1950, but ambulance calls are up.

The city starts the budget process in October and the budget is done by March. They built a comprehensive city plan in 1994 and updated it in 2000. The peak town size occurred in 1964. The comprehensive plan is to help the city grow 2% per year, because it was previously shrinking in size.

Council Bluffs has 32 parks. The new Riverfront is the largest with 85 acres. Three parks have wi-fi, including Riverside. There are 40 miles of bike trails in the city and were none in 1988. The city maintains 120 buildings.

The flood two years ago cost the city \$19.4M. Predicted levee costs are about \$20M. The city has been putting aside \$1M per year for levee repairs.

There are about 65,000 people in Council Bluffs. Mayor Hanafan's philosophy is to "listen more than talk." That is why the city is investing in wi-fi for parks, improving the streets, and beautifying the city. Building permits are up 40% since last year.