

The Paper

Our Town, Our Paper!



Laurens, Iowa



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January 7,
2026

Local News

L-M 5th Graders Sing Carols

On December 12, 2025, several Christmas melodies sung by the Laurens-Marathon 5th Grade at the Laurens Festival of Trees were enjoyed by the Laurens Women's Club.

Three of the selections which were performed at a concert the previous day were, "Jingle Bell Rock", "Holiday Lights", and "Rock Around the Christmas Tree".

They finished with "We Wish You a Merry Christmas". The teacher of the 5th Grade is Grace Darr, and their music director is Sabrina Booth.



Laurens VFW Donates to Food Pantry

The Laurens VFW Post 3533 recently donated \$500 to the Laurens Food Bank.

Pictured left to right are VFW members Marlin Egertsen, John Pohlman, Lee Bailey, Ed Schmidt, and Bob Dallenbach. Receiving the donation are volunteers Wendy Hopkins, Barb Halligan and Sue Bringleon.

Donation of Scythe to Albert City Threshermen's and Collector's Show

The Albert City Threshermen's and Collector's Show received a scythe as a donation recently. The scythe has been in the law office of the late Laurens attorney Donald G. Beneke who was the owner of the scythe, an early farm implement used for cutting grain by hand such as oats or wheat. Shown in the photo are Loren Booth, a member of the Board of Directors, and Ann Beneke and Mary Beneke, daughters of Donald G. and Mardell Beneke.



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POCAHONTAS COUNTY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

WE INVITE YOU TO OUR

**2025
APPRECIATION
AWARDS & DINNER**

1 | 12 | 2026

5:30 PM - 8:00 PM

119 N MAIN ST, POCAHONTAS,
IA 50574

JOIN US AT ODD FELLOWS FOR GREAT
FOOD, AN AWARDS PRESENTATION, AND
REMARKS FROM GUEST SPEAKER, MARK
REDNIG FROM ISU EXTENSION.

PLEASE RSVP WITH THE QR CODE OR EMAIL
MARYJO @ LITWILLER@IOWACENTRAL.EDU



Hugo Kringle Visits Laurens

Santa's little brother Hugo Kringle/ Mike Anderson The Dulcimer Guy had a busy day in Laurens recently. In the morning Hugo enchanted kids of all ages with his stories of growing up with Santa, as well as his musical talents on the mouth harp, mountain dulcimer, and banjo.

In the afternoon Hugo told even more stories and answered questions for the students of Laurens Marathon.

In the evening he entertained with stories and music at Laurens Festival of Trees.

His visit was sponsored by the Laurens Public Library Foundation.



ISU Extension and 4-H Spread Holiday Cheer Through Operation Christmas Meal

ISU Extension and Outreach Pocahontas County, along with Pocahontas County 4-H members, teamed up with the Deb and Jeff Hanson Foundation to bring holiday meals to families in need. This December, the foundation is distributing more than 27,000 free pork loins across Iowa to help families enjoy a festive holiday meal and also granted \$500 to Pocahontas County 4-H to purchase additional groceries.

Pocahontas County 4-H members and Extension staff rolled up their sleeves, using the \$500 from the Hanson Foundation to buy groceries and assemble more than 20 complete meal kits. The kits, including 40 pork loins, were donated to the Pocahontas County Food Pantry, helping ensure families in the community could enjoy a hearty holiday feast.



Dawson Svuba helps deliver meals.

The Paper

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Join us for our 2026 Leadership Series which is designed for both professional and personal growth. These sessions will focus on communication skills, team building, customer service and building stronger relationships at work and home. This three-part program will be held at Prairie Lakes AEA in Pocahontas, IA from 9am to 11am and cost \$25 per person per session. Registration deadline is February 20th.

1 March 13th | Communication

If you had to rate your communication skills on a scale of 1 to 10, what number would you give yourself? In this engaging, interactive session, we will explore simple strategies for increasing your effectiveness as a communicator, particularly at work. We'll cover key areas including consideration of your listeners' perspective; active listening skills; deductive vs. inductive communication; nonverbal communication; and when to use different modes of communication (email vs. phone). These strategies can be implemented to make you more skillful and effective when you communicate.

2 April 10th | Emotional Intelligence

How effective are you at relating to others? Do you have a good grasp on which personality types set you off? Can you remain calm in the face of annoyances? Decades of research on these types of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) skills have repeatedly demonstrated that people who have higher levels of Emotional Intelligence enjoy greater success and satisfaction at work, at home, and in their relationships. During this, interactive session, you will learn several user-friendly strategies for increasing your EQ. We'll start by introducing 25 key competencies of people with high levels of EQ, then work into strategies for improvement in Self Awareness; Self-Management; Social Awareness; and Relationship Management.

3 May 8th | Crucial Conversations

We've all been there—dreading an unavoidable difficult conversation. In a workplace, it might mean talking to a colleague who missed a critical deadline, confronting a team member about inappropriate behavior, or discussing issues that feel too "hot-button" to address. In this session, we will walk step-by-step through a framework for having those difficult conversations in ways that keep the conversation calm and productive. We'll start by helping participants understand their own natural styles of responding to difficult conversations, then work into learning specific strategies for conversing with others whose style may be very different from their own. These strategies can be easily applied to difficult conversations at both work and home.

REGISTER HERE

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Employer/Company: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Attending: March 13th ☐ April 10th ☐ May 8th ☐

Cost per session per person = \$25

Total amount enclosed: \$ _____

Registration deadline: February 20th

Return this form along with your payment to MaryJo at PCEDC Office (111 N Main Street, P.O. Box 212, Pocahontas, IA 50574)

Make checks payable to: Pocahontas County Leadership Fund



Brenda Clark Hamilton

Brenda Clark Hamilton is a dynamic keynote speaker and workplace trainer who offers fresh perspectives in leadership, communication, and offering one's personal best to life, relationships, and career.

Brenda launched her speaking business in the fall of 2005, by offering training to businesses in her northern Iowa community. She spoke at her first statewide conference in 2008. Since that time, she has become a nationally recognized conference speaker and audience favorite, speaking at approximately 100 events each year, in every industry imaginable.

Audiences are quick to note Brenda's sense of humor, in-depth knowledge, high energy, and skill at keeping them engaged. Brenda's career experience includes coordinating professional development for 1200 Iowa teachers. She holds a Master's degree in education.



pocahontascounty.iowa.gov/economic-development/ Questions? E-mail: litwiller@iowacentral.edu Phone: 712-730-2259

This Week at Bethany Lutheran

Pastor David E. Klappenbach

Wednesday: January 7, 2026

7:00 PM ~ Confirmation

Sunday: January 11, 2026

Baptism of Our Lord

9:15 AM Adult SS & Youth SS

9:30 AM ~ Coffee Fellowship

10:30 AM ~ Worship

Bethany Prayer Group after Worship

Tuesday: January 13, 2026

8:30 AM ~ Prayer Group

9:30 AM ~ Tuesday coffee at Bethany

Wednesday: January 14, 2026

7:00 PM ~ Confirmation

7:00 PM ~ Council Mtg.

Thursday: January 15, 2026

2:00 PM ~ Circle Group

***Worship, Love,
Accept~ Together in
Christ's Name***



This Week at Laurens United Methodist Church

Pastor Deb Parkison

January 4 through February 15:

Pastor Paul will be in the Pulpit

Saturday, January 10:

Fellowship Hall has been reserved for
Addison Tate's baby shower

Sunday, January 11:

Sunday School @ 9:15

Adult Sunday School @ 9:30 AM

Fellowship Coffee @ 10:00 AM

Worship Service @ 10:30 AM



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This Week at First Christian

Pastor Rev. Rita Cordell

Thursday, January 8

2-5 p.m. - Clothes Closet open

Sunday, January 11

9:30 a.m. Sunday School

10:30 a.m. Worship



Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church

**Pocahontas, IA -- Priest:
Father Paul Nguyen**

MASS TIMES:

Daily Mass as scheduled in the
weekly bulletin

Saturday at 5:00 PM and Sunday at
10:30 AM

Confessions: Saturday 4:15 pm at
Resurrection

ISU Extension and Outreach to Host 2026 Dairy Days Across Iowa

Iowa dairy producers and allied industry members are invited to attend 2026 Iowa Dairy Days, a statewide series of in-person educational meetings hosted by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, this January and February. The 2026 theme, “Near-Term Strategies for Long-Term Pay-Off,” highlights practical, actionable decisions producers can make to strengthen herd performance, manage risk and support long-term profitability.

Dairy Days brings together regional and statewide extension specialists to address timely topics in milk markets, herd health, forage management and farm-level decision-making. Each location offers a full day of programming, interactive discussion and opportunities to network with fellow producers and industry partners. Lunch will be provided through local sponsorships.

“Many dairy producers are looking at predictions for 2026 milk prices and are getting nervous,” said Gail Carpenter, assistant professor and extension dairy specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach. “Our goal when developing this year’s program was to bring practical tools for dairy farmers who want to improve their management today to prepare for whatever the next year brings.”

The 2026 program features speakers from the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team, as well as forage specialists:

Fred Hall, northwest Iowa dairy field specialist, will discuss current milk market dynamics and their implications for component-based pricing.

Dr. Phillip Jardon, clinical associate professor and dairy extension veterinarian, will review emerging disease and parasite issues and their implications for Iowa dairy herds.

Larry Tranel, northeast/southeast Iowa dairy field specialist, will explore cost-of-production strategies across herd sizes and production systems.

Shelby Gruss, assistant professor and extension forage specialist, will lead a forage identification session followed by a producer listening session.

Gail Carpenter will discuss how near-term culling decisions can influence long-term herd health, efficiency and profitability.

Jenn Bentley, northeast Iowa dairy field specialist, will share applied colostrum management strategies.

This program will be presented at five locations around the state.

Additionally, the northwest Iowa location in Spencer will feature a tour of Jones Dairy beginning at 9 a.m. At all other locations, the program will begin at 9:30 a.m. with registration and refreshments, and speakers will begin at 10 a.m.

- Jan. 29: Jones Dairy — 2680 250th Avenue, Spencer (farm tour at 9 a.m.)
- Feb. 3: Elma Community Complex — 319 Oak Street, Elma
- Feb. 5: Johnson’s Restaurant — 916 North High Street NE, Elkader
- Feb. 17: Chamber of Commerce — 514 B Avenue, Kalona
- Feb. 19: Community Center — 1951 Church Street, New Vienna

Dairy Days is open to dairy producers, farm employees and allied industry professionals. To register and view more program information, visit the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team website. For more information, contact Gail Carpenter at ajcarpen@iastate.edu or 515-294-9085.

IPIC to offer three PQA Advisor Certification Sessions in 2026

The Iowa Pork Industry Center has announced the PQA Plus Advisor certification sessions for the 2026 year. With Pork Quality Assurance version 6.0 now in effect, training is required to maintain certification. IPIC associate director Chris Rademacher organizes PQA advisor certification sessions provided by IPIC.

“Advisors with an expired certification and people wanting to become certified for the first time are required to attend a face-to-face training like this,” he said. “Interested and qualified people should complete and return the application form soon.”

The sessions are scheduled to be on:

- Wednesday, January 28, 2026. This will be virtual via Zoom, and the application deadline will be Wednesday, January 21.
- Tuesday, July 7, 2026. This will be virtual via Zoom, and the application deadline will be Tuesday, June 30.
- Monday, October 5, 2026. This will be virtual via Zoom, and the application deadline will be September 28.

For all sessions, registration will start at 8:30 a.m. Central time and the session begins at 9 a.m.

Rademacher, who is also the Iowa State University extension swine veterinarian, leads the sessions and said it takes approximately six hours, including the exam at the end. No spot is guaranteed until the application is approved, and payment is accepted by IPIC. The cost is \$100 and includes all materials and lunch. Veterinary CEUs will be requested for the sessions.

Qualification requirements are listed on the two-page application form, available as both a fillable PDF document and a Word document from the PQA Page on the IPIC website. Applicants may use either version.

Garden Academy

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Master Gardener Program will provide its statewide horticulture training in the spring and fall of 2026. Garden Academy, previously known as Iowa Master Gardener training, offers a comprehensive approach to consumer horticulture education.

From the training, participants can expect:

- 10 weeks of asynchronous online instruction, featuring video lectures, reading assignments and quizzes
- A comprehensive overview of 17 horticultural topics to build a varied foundation of horticultural knowledge
- Additional resources for deeper exploration of specific interests
- Completion of a pre- and post-test to meet course requirements
- Three optional live interactive Zoom sessions with campus specialists

Interested participants can choose from two program tracks: Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer or Iowa Home Gardener. All participants, whether enrolled to become an Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer or an Iowa Home Gardener, will complete the same course designed to enhance horticulture knowledge and skills.

Alicia Herzog, Iowa Master Gardener program manager for ISU Extension and Outreach, explained the goals of both course tracks. “The Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer track is focused on developing and supporting passionate volunteers, providing them with knowledge and resources that instill confidence in them as they serve their communities. Participants do not have to be gardening experts to complete this option,” she said. “The Iowa Home Gardener track is great for those looking to enhance their own knowledge and personal gardening skills.”

Applications for the spring Iowa Master Gardener track will be open from Jan. 5 through Jan. 30 on the Iowa Master Gardener website. A list of participating counties is also available on the website.

Iowa Home Gardener participants will be able to purchase their spot in the course starting Feb. 2 on the ISU Extension Store website.

The spring training period for both tracks is Feb. 16 to April 24.

Garden Academy will be offered again in the fall from Aug. 31 to Nov. 6. Applications for the Iowa Master Gardener track will be accepted July 20 through Aug. 14. Iowa Home Gardener spots will go on sale Aug. 17.

Review the application and completion guidelines for both tracks below.

Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer Track

1. Submit an application and background check. Apply to be an Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer and successfully complete a background check by contacting an ISU Extension and Outreach county office.
2. Make a payment. Be accepted into the Iowa Master Gardener Volunteer track and pay a one-time Garden Academy fee to the ISU Extension and Outreach county office.
3. Complete training. Complete the 10-week online Garden Academy training and pass the final quiz.
4. Complete orientation. Attend in-person volunteer orientation through the ISU Extension and Outreach county office. Dates, times and duration vary by county. County Master Gardener Coordinators will provide county-specific information.
5. Volunteer in the community. Complete a 40-hour volunteer internship within one full calendar year. County Master Gardener Coordinators will provide county-specific information and guidance throughout the application, training and internship period.
6. Stay involved. After completing the volunteer internship, Iowa Master Gardener Volunteers remain active members by completing 10 hours of continuing education and contributing 20 hours of volunteer service annually. Volunteer and continuing education hours should be reported online by Dec. 1 of each year.

Iowa Home Gardener Track

1. Access course materials. Purchase access to the Garden Academy course through the ISU Extension Store.
2. Complete training. Complete the 10-week online Garden Academy training and pass the final quiz.
3. Go garden. Participants in this track will receive a certificate of completion as an Iowa Home Gardener but will not earn the title of Iowa Master Gardener.

For more information, prospective volunteers can contact their county office. General questions can be directed to mgardener@iastate.edu or 515-294-5104.

'Boots in the Barn' Series Offered in Dallas County in February

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach will offer Boots in the Barn, an educational opportunity for central Iowa beef cattle producers, this February. Hosted by Dallas and Boone counties, the four-part meeting series has been set for 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Feb. 4, 11, 18 and 25 at the Towncraft Gallery, located at 1122 Willis Ave., Perry.

Chris Clark, extension beef specialist, said the program will include some interactive learning and hands-on activities.

"I hope to make it an interesting and interactive program with time for discussion and various interactive learning exercises," he said. "We plan to round out the program by using the dystocia model to learn about the birthing process and practice delivering calves."

Series topics will include animal health, nutrition, animal selection, managing the birthing process and more. Curriculum is flexible and can be adapted to meet the interests and needs of participants.

"I have some lessons in mind that we will almost certainly use, including some nutrition, animal health, animal selection and delivering a calf. Beyond that though, we have flexibility to tailor the program to the interests of the participants," Clark said.

An evening meal will be served at each meeting and online registration by Jan. 28 is requested to assist organizers with meal planning. The registration fee is \$50 and includes meals and resource manuals.

For more information or with any questions, please contact Ben Wilson at btwilson@iastate.edu or 515-432-3882, Chris Clark at caclark@iastate.edu or 712-250-0070, or Aleta Cochran at aleta@iastate.edu or 515-720-5999.

Registration Open for 2026-2027 SowBridge Educational Series

SowBridge, the distance educational series for those who work with sows, boars, and piglets and with genetic and reproductive issues, begins its next program year in early February 2026, and registration is now underway. The series is provided online through Zoom, and each session is recorded for later viewing.

Suggestions from participants guide the selection of future topics and speakers, and the opportunity for interaction with session speakers remains unchanged. SowBridge provides all participants with the opportunity to hear directly from experts and to contact those experts following the individual sessions.

Sessions generally are held on the first Wednesday of the month and run from 11:15 a.m. to about 12:15 p.m. Central time. The fifth session is moved up one week to May 27 to avoid conflicts with the World Pork Expo.

During each session, participants can ask questions to industry expert presenter from the comfort of their home, office or swine unit. Each registration provides access to one Zoom connection per session and all program materials provided by presenters.

The cost is \$200 for the first registration and half that amount for each subsequent registration from the same entity.

Registration is due Jan. 15, 2026, to ensure participants have access to materials for the first session on Feb. 4. A flyer with information and registration form is available on the Iowa Pork Industry Center website.

The 2026-2027 program session dates and topics are as follows.

- Feb. 4 – The role of specialized people in reducing sow mortality
- March 4 – New World Screwworm – What to look for
- April 1 – Managing large litters
- May 6 – When to process piglets in relation to survival
- May 27 – Gilt feeding strategies to enhance longevity and productivity
- July 1 – Water quality, biofilms and water line management
- Aug. 5 – What are cull sow buyers looking for?
- Sept 2 – On-farm semen management – tips and tricks
- Oct. 7 – What's the latest porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome research?
- Nov. 4 – Fixed-time artificial insemination in gilts
- Dec. 2 – Satisfaction and stress factors on barn employees
- Jan. 6, 2027 – Anemia: impact on sow removal

For more information on the sessions or registration, contact Sherry Hoyer by phone at 515-294-4496 or email shoyer@iastate.edu.

SowBridge is provided through a cooperative effort of 13 colleges and universities from the nation's major swine-producing states.

Virtual Field Day to Compare Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Feedstocks for Bioenergy Production

Iowa Learning Farms, in partnership with C-CHANGE: Grass2Gas, will host a virtual field day on Thursday, Jan. 22, at 1 p.m. Central time. The event, which is available at no cost, will feature a live discussion with Hyeonji Song, postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University.

Grass2Gas is examining the production of renewable natural gas and related bioproducts through the anaerobic digestion of plant biomass and manure. To help determine the environmental impact of the system, the team is comparing greenhouse gas emissions produced by different plant biomass feedstocks that are being considered and utilized in bioenergy production.

“Nitrous oxide is one of the major greenhouse gases, and agriculture accounts for 50% of nitrous oxide emissions, mainly through fertilizer applications,” said Song. “Cropping system emissions of nitrous oxide is an important factor in calculating the carbon intensity of biofuels. Our core hypothesis is that adding nitrogen fertilizer to prairie to increase its biomass production as a bioenergy feedstock will not increase nitrous oxide emissions.”

Any person interested in bioenergy production systems is welcome to attend the virtual field day. Participants are also encouraged to bring any questions they would like to ask.

To participate in the live virtual field day, visit Iowa Learning Farms Field Days - Grass2Gas - Comparing Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Feedstocks for Bioenergy Production or join from a dial-in phone line (dial 646-876-9923 or 646-931-3860, with meeting ID 914 1198 4892). The field day will be recorded and archived on the ILF Virtual Field Day Archive for future viewing.

Participants may be eligible for a Certified Crop Adviser board-approved continuing education unit. Information about how to apply for and receive the CEU will be provided at the end of the event.

About Iowa Learning Farms. Established in 2004, Iowa Learning Farms is building a Culture of Conservation by encouraging adoption of conservation practices. Farmers, researchers and ILF team members are working together to identify and implement the best management practices that improve water quality and soil health while remaining profitable. Partners of Iowa Learning Farms include the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Iowa Department of Natural Resources, EPA Section 319 Grant Program, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture and GROWMARK Inc.

Dairy Goat Webinar Series Continues into 2026

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dairy Team will continue its dairy goat webinar series in 2026 for the state’s dairy goat producers and allied industry members. Topics will include timely updates on various aspects of financial management, herd health, animal care and nutrition. All webinars will take place from noon to 1:15 p.m. Central time.

“Dairy goat production is an important industry in Iowa,” said Jenn Bentley, dairy field specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach. “We are very pleased to continue this educational opportunity with a lineup of quality speakers and presenters to provide producers and industry providers with practical take-home information.”

2026 Webinar Sessions

- Jan. 21 – Dairy Goat Records: Gail Carpenter, extension dairy specialist, ISU, and Greg Palas, manager of user support services, Dairy Records Management Systems
- Feb. 18 – Improving Goat Dairy Milk Quality: Lessons from Parlor Audits in Vermont: Whitney Hull, dairy specialist, University of Vermont Extension, and Kelsie Braam, dairy and grazing specialist, UVM Extension
- Mar. 18 – Dairy Goat Profit Analysis: Larry Tranel, dairy field specialist, ISU Extension and Outreach

Topics for April through December will be announced at a later date. There is no fee to attend the webinar sessions; however, registration is required. Registration is only required once to attend any or all webinars.

Those interested in attending may register online in advance or contact Jennifer Bentley at 563-382-2949 or jbentley@iastate.edu or dairygoatextension@iastate.edu. Registrants will receive a confirmation email with details on how to join the meeting. Information will also be provided about future webinars as topics are announced.

This work is supported by the Sustainable Agricultural Systems project award number 2024-68012-41749, from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

Grant-Writing Workshops to Support Dairy Producers Applying for 2026 Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grants

Iowa dairy producers planning to apply for a 2026 Choose Iowa Dairy Innovation Grant are invited to attend grant-writing workshops designed to strengthen applications and improve competitiveness. Hosted by the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dairy Team, the 90-minute workshops will focus on practical tools and strategies producers can apply to their grant proposals.

The workshops are specifically designed for dairy producers who are interested in on-farm technology or processing projects. Participants will learn the fundamentals of creating a clear and compelling grant application, including understanding the grant submission process and developing the writing and communication skills needed for a strong proposal. The goal of the workshop is to help producers convert their on-farm ideas into robust, fundable proposals.

“The Choose Iowa program has been a phenomenal opportunity for dairy producers in the state,” said Gail Carpenter, assistant professor and extension dairy specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach. “Every year, the quality of grant applications continues to increase. Our goal for this program is to give producers practical tips for putting their best foot forward for this opportunity.”

This program will be presented at three locations around the state. All workshops will begin promptly at 8 a.m. and last approximately 90 minutes.

- Jan. 28: ISU Extension and Outreach Sioux County Office – 400 Central Ave. NW Suite 700, Orange City
- Feb. 4: Northeast Iowa Community College – 1527 Highway 150, Calmar
- Feb. 18: Delaware County Community Center – 200 East Acers Street, Manchester

The workshop fee is \$15 per person, and the program is sponsored by Midwest Dairy. Space may be limited, and advance online registration is encouraged. For more information, contact Gail Carpenter at ajcarpen@iastate.edu or 515-294-9085.

‘Money Smart’ Statewide Virtual Series Begins Jan. 22

After the excitement of the holiday season, many people find themselves facing extra expenses or lingering debt. However, a new year brings new opportunities to take charge of your financial future. Beginning Jan. 22, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach will host “Money Smart: Prioritizing Bills, Credit and Debt,” a free, three-part virtual series that provides practical tools to help you regain control, reduce stress and set yourself up for success in the year ahead.

ISU Extension and Outreach will host the virtual series on Thursdays, Jan. 22, Jan. 29 and Feb. 5, from noon to 1 p.m. and from 5:30-6:30 p.m. Iowans may participate in either the noon series or the evening series and online pre-registration is required by Jan. 13.

“This virtual series provides tools to help manage money effectively, make better financial decisions and live according to your priorities,” said Barb Wollan, a health and human sciences educator. “If you’re ready to start fresh and feel confident about your money decisions, this program is designed for you.”

Participants will improve their financial wellbeing by developing an emergency spending plan, creating a prioritized bill paying strategy based on future consequences, developing skills to improve their own credit and learning strategies to manage debt.

The topics – prioritizing bills, protecting credit and managing debt – are presented in one-hour, online Zoom sessions.

Individuals may choose to register for either the noon series or the 5:30 p.m. series, as they will cover the same content. Health and human sciences educators with ISU Extension and Outreach will lead the program. Participants will learn research-based strategies to decide which bills and monthly expenses to pay first, how to protect their credit history, and how to manage debt even when money is short.

Sessions are free but pre-registration is required online by Jan. 13. After registering, participants will receive an email confirmation with the Zoom link and class information. Questions can be directed to Barb Wollan at 515-832-9597 or bwollan@iastate.edu.

Planter University Workshops Focus on Optimizing Planter Setup across All Brands

Workshops to be held in five locations across Iowa

Specialists with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach are once again teaming up with ISU Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering specialists to bring planter equipment expertise to farms across the state Feb. 2–6 with Planter University.

The workshops are an opportunity for farmers, agricultural service providers, equipment and precision ag dealers and others to gain insight into how planters function; optimizing settings for individual seed, field, and equipment needs; and improving understanding of planter wear and calibration. Prior attendees have noted the value this workshop provides, with 80% of 2025 survey respondents stating it was worth more than \$10 per acre to their farming operation.

“Planter University goes far beyond a typical planter clinic and provides attendees direct access to specialists with expertise in planter technology and settings,” said Meaghan Anderson, field agronomist with ISU Extension and Outreach. “We are excited to host these workshops across the state again this February.”

Specialists from the ISU Digital Ag group will lead each workshop, focusing on small-group, hands-on learning with row units that represent a variety of technologies currently available for planters. The Digital Ag group is renowned for their key industry partnerships and unique expertise in equipment development and precision agriculture. Meetings will also offer continuing education credits for Certified Crop Advisers.

“We are going to help attendees better understand the physics behind traditional and high-speed planters and how to evaluate planting performance, because every planter, operator and operation is different,” said Levi Powell, Iowa State ag and biosystems engineering program specialist. “This event will focus on how to dial in the right settings for you and your operation.”

The training will be offered at five locations. Attendance will be limited to maintain small group sizes and allow for hands-on activities. Registration for each location is \$100 and closes seven days ahead of each meeting. On-site registration is not available, but online registration will be available starting Jan. 5.

Registration includes lunch, refreshments, reference materials and CCA credits. Registration check-in opens at 8:30 a.m., and the program begins at 9 a.m. The program concludes at approximately 3 p.m.

- Feb. 2 – Alliant Energy Ag Innovation Lab, 3800 University Boulevard, Ames
- Feb. 3 – Carroll County Conservation Center, 22676 Swan Lake Trail Drive, Carroll
- Feb. 4 – Northern Research and Demonstration Farm, Kanawha
- Feb. 5 – Heartland Acres Agribition Center, Independence
- Feb. 6 – Prime Ag, 571 180th St., Otley

For registration-related questions, please contact ISU Registration Services at 515-294-6222 or registrations@iastate.edu. For all other inquiries, email crops@iastate.edu.

December 15, 2025

The Utility Board of Trustees of Laurens, Iowa met in regular session at the Municipal Building, 272 N. Third Street, Laurens, Iowa, at 3:00 p.m. on the above date. Present were Trustees Kelly Horsman, Jerry Runneberg, and Ben Storms. Also present was General Manager Chad Cleveland.

Motion by Trustee Runneberg and seconded by Trustee Horsman to approve the December 15, 2025 regular Board meeting agenda. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Trustee Horsman and seconded by Trustee Runneberg to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2025 regular Board meeting. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Trustee Runneberg and seconded by Trustee Horsman to approve the summary of receipts for November 2025 in the amount of \$343,054.06 and the list of expenses for November 2025 in the amount of \$796,880.20. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Summary of Receipts

A/R- Electric	\$ 227,779.08
A/R- Communications	\$ 39,735.79
Merchandise/Services- Electric	\$ 830.00
Carrier Access Fees- Communications	\$ 1,809.92
Write Off Recovery- Electric	\$ 40.00
NIMECA Power Credits- Electric	\$ 1,292.27
Investments- Interest Earned- Electric	\$ 20,164.38
ERATE Reimbursement- Communications	\$ 61.20
Deposits- Electric	\$ 450.00
Deposits- Communications	\$ 272.00
Accrued Vacation- Electric	\$ 346.04
Accrued Vacation- Communications	\$ 153.96
Marathon Energy Sales- Electric	\$ 15,889.61
E911 Fees- Communications	\$ 643.26
Tower Lease- Communications	\$ 974.19
Attachment H Revenues- Electric	\$ 32,532.36
Broadband Lifeline Support- Communications	\$ 9.00
Voice Lifeline Support- Communications	\$ 11.00
Office Phones- Electric	\$ 60.00
Total Cash Receipts	\$ 343,054.06

List of Expenses

AFLAC	Employee Contributions	\$ 142.86
Aureon	CALEA/SS7/Switching	\$ 183.33
Avesis- Fidelity Security Life	Group Vision Insurance	\$ 96.13
B&K Embroidery	Company Clothing Embroidery	\$ 13.38
Bailey, David	Company Clothing	\$ 74.89
Calix Inc.	Cloud Services	\$ 1,761.22
City of Laurens	Utility Billing/Bottled Water	\$ 96,610.53
Cleveland, Chad	Meeting Expenses	\$ 462.00
Consortia Consulting	Consulting Contract	\$ 1,200.00
Customers	Credit Refunds	\$ 279.65
Department of Energy	WAPA Power Bill	\$ 31,875.25
DGR Engineering	Relay Upgrades/SCADA Project	\$ 14,031.50
DGR Engineering	Fuel System Modifications Project	\$ 2,247.50
Echo Group	Electric Supplies	\$ 25.68
Employee Benefit Systems	Self-Funding Administration	\$ 120.00
Employee Benefit Systems	Self-Funding Claims	\$ 1,712.33

GFC Leasing - WI	Copier Leases	\$	80.32
Grainger	Tools	\$	81.92
Internal Revenue Service	Payroll Taxes	\$	9,545.55
Interstate TRS Fund	TRS Fund Assessment	\$	250.27
Iowa Department of Revenue	Sales Tax	\$	3,768.74
Iowa Department of Revenue	State Withholding	\$	1,060.23
Iowa Public Employees Retirement System	IPERS Contributions	\$	5,659.89
Iowa Utilities Commission	IUC/OCA Assessment	\$	2,343.00
Laurens Chamber of Commerce	Chamber Bucks	\$	1,950.00
Laurens Municipal Power & Communications	Communications Bill	\$	86.60
Laurens Municipal Utilities	Utility Bill	\$	109.54
Laurens Plumbing	Supplies	\$	90.06
Laurens Sun	Publications/Advertising	\$	750.07
Long Lines	Communication Services	\$	8,125.17
Lumen Lexcis	Directory Listings	\$	144.00
LumenServe	Tower Lighting Monitoring	\$	316.24
Mid America Computer Corporation	Utility Billing	\$	899.87
MidAmerican Energy	Neal 4 Operations	\$	71,000.00
NIMECA	IPPA Assessment	\$	25,400.00
Office Elements	Office Supplies	\$	307.43
Paymentus Group	CC Processing Fees- Comm	\$	192.45
Paymentus Group	CC Processing Fees- Electric	\$	196.67
Payroll	Salaried, Hourly & Overtime	\$	24,996.70
Phelps Uniform Specialists	Dust Mops & Mats	\$	63.66
PLIC-SBD Grand Island	Short Term Disability Claim Taxes	\$	174.99
PLIC-SBD Grand Island	Group Life/Disability Insurance	\$	666.55
Pro Cooperative	Vehicle Fuel	\$	206.45
Qwest dba CenturyLink-IA	Access Charges	\$	95.15
Record Democrat	Advertising	\$	50.25
RESCO	Transformers/Splice Kits	\$	22,605.00
Richardson's Service	Battery- Digger Derrick	\$	195.76
RSM US LLP	Network Support	\$	2,954.70
RSM US LLP	Computer Monitors/Adaptors	\$	1,049.18
RSM US LLP	Firewall License/Support Renewal	\$	3,855.00
RSM US LLP	Relay Upgrades/SCADA Project	\$	537.42
UMB Bank	Bond Payment	\$	442,937.50
Unity Point Health	Employee Hearing Tests	\$	460.00
US Card Systems	Consulting Fee	\$	149.95
Verizon	Wireless Phone Service	\$	116.04
Visa	Company Clothing/Supplies	\$	152.85
Webster County Treasurer	Property Taxes	\$	342.00
Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield	Group Health Insurance	\$	12,076.78
	Total Expenses	\$	796,880.20

Trustees reviewed the Utility Funds Report, Investment Schedule, Income Statement, and Balance Sheet for November 2025. No action was taken.

Trustees reviewed the Summary of Discounts and Adjustments for November 2025. No action was taken.

Trustees reviewed the two proposals received for auditing services. Cornwell, Frideres, Maher & Associates stated their audit schedule was full. T.P. Anderson & Company proposal stated the total all-inclusive maximum fee, including out-of-pocket expenses, shall not exceed \$24,000 for the year ended December 31, 2025, \$25,500 for the year ended December 31, 2026, and \$26,775 for the year ended December 31, 2027.

Motion by Trustee Horsman and seconded by Trustee Runneberg to accept the proposal from T.P. Anderson & Company to audit our financials for calendar year 2025, 2026, and 2027. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Trustee Runneberg and seconded by Trustee Horsman to designate the December 2025 Iowa Heartland Regional Directory as the official directory for Laurens Municipal Broadband Communications Utility. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Trustee Runneberg and seconded by Trustee Horsman to authorize the Board Chairman to sign the Notice to Proceed and the Construction Contract Agreement with Harold K. Scholz Company for the Relay Upgrades & SCADA System Replacement Project. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

The Board of Trustees went over the 2025 Annual Report for the City Council. Motion by Trustee Horsman and seconded by Trustee Runneberg to approve the 2025 Annual Report for the City Council. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Motion by Trustee Horsman and seconded by Trustee Runneberg to approve the wage scales for Calendar Year 2026 as presented. Ayes: All. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Discussion was held on the MissionSquare 457(b) Deferred Compensation retirement plan and the MissionSquare Retirement Health Savings Plan. No specific action was taken.

Discussion was held on the General Manager's salary for calendar year 2026. The Board reviewed salary information from the American Public Power Association and the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities for General Managers. Instead of having a wage scale for the General Manager position, the Board of Trustees directed the General Manager to prepare an Employment Agreement for the General Manager position for them to review and approve at the January 2026 Board meeting.

At 5:00 p.m. the Board of Trustees took a break to attend the City Council meeting and presented the 2025 Laurens Municipal Power & Communications Annual Report.

At 5:20 p.m. the Board of Trustees resumed their regular board meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Ben Storms
Chairman, Board of Trustees

ATTEST: Chad Cleveland
Secretary, Board of Trustees

City Council Minutes

December 15th, 2025

The Laurens City Council met in regular session at the Municipal Building at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, December 15th, 2025. Mayor Rod Johnson called the meeting to order. Present were Council members John Jamison, Hannah Zylstra, Aaron Christenson, Loren Booth, Jean Swanson, City Manager Hilary Reed, City Clerk Joan Hoben, Public Works Director Julian Johnsen, and Chief of Police Alex Leu.

Zylstra moved to approve the consent agenda consisting of the minutes from December 1st, 2025, meeting, and the list of claims. Jamison seconded. All ayes: motion carried.

CLAIMS 12-15-2025

ACCO	CHEMICALS	5,664.20
AFLAC	GROUP INSURANCE	204.38
ALLIANT ENERGY	MONTHLY GAS FEE	153.91
AMAZON CAPITAL SERVICES	DVDS & BOOKS	996.04
BADGER METER	TECH SUPPORT	62.40
BEN ZYLSTRA	TRAINING	83.54
CENGAGE LEARNING, INC.	LARGE PRINT BOOKS	218.92
CITY OF MOVILLE	NUISANCE ABATEMENTS	1,083.90
CMBA ARCHITECTS	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	1,500.00
COMMUNITY FIRST AUTO PARTS	PARTS FOR DUMP TRUCK	114.99
CONNECTIONS, INC.	MONTHLY GROUP INSURANCE	31.14
DAKOTA SUPPLY GROUP	EQUIP REPAIRS	1,084.91
DEE JACKSON / JACKSON MOTOR	SNOW REMOVAL	60.00
DES MOINES REGISTER	ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION	546.68
FOUNDATION ANALYTICAL LAB	WASTEWATER TESTING	950.50
GWORKS	LICESNE TECH FEES	6,220.00
HUBBELL TRUCK & AG SERVICES	FIRE TRUCK MAINT.	582.86
I & S GROUP, INC.	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	24,837.68
IRS	FED/FICA TAX	7,661.72
IOWA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION	ANNUAL DUES	127.00
IOWA ONE CALL	OCT. LOCATES	38.70
JOHN DEERE FINANCIAL	SHOP WORK	612.64
JOHNSON, MULHOLLAN, & COCHRANE	LEGAL FEES	2,070.00
LMPC	MONTHLY PHONE & INTERNET	141.20
LMU	MONTHLY UTILITIES	544.00
LAURENS SUN	LEGALS	398.32
MACC	TECH SUPPORT	755.69
MAQUEEN	SUPPLIES	176.74
MCCARTAIN INSURANCE AGENCY, LLC	STATUE INSURANCE	59.00
NORTHWEST MFG, INC.	PARTS FOR DUMP TRUCK	1,190.00
POCAHONTAS COUNTY AUDITOR	ELECTION EXPENSE	281.39
POCAHONTAS CO SOLID WASTE	MONTHLY LANDFILL FEE	7,020.90
PRINCIPAL LIFE GROUP	MONTHLY DEC LIFE INSURANCE	757.72
PRO COOPERATIVE	MONTHLY FUEL FEES	1,900.26
RB LUMBER COMPANY	SUPPLIES	20.94
RICHARDSON SERVICE	OIL CHANGE	94.90
RJ THOMAS MFG. CO	SIGNS	1,480.00
RSM US LLP	TECH SUPPORT	1,385.05
SANTANDER LEASING, LLC	MONTHLY PUMPER TRUCK PAYMENT	1,461.34

City Council Minutes

SCOTT HERRIG LAWN CARE	SPRAYING	6,440.00
SHAMROCK RECYCLING, INC.	CURBSIDE RECYCLING	2,010.60
SIPEKR AUTO REPAIR	STREET PICKUP REPAIRS	458.05
VERIZON WIRELESS	MONTHLY CELL PHONES	380.92
VERNON MANUFACTURING	VALVE INLET SCREEN	70.00
	TOTAL	<u>81,933.13</u>

PAYROLL		11/3/2025	
001	GENERAL		15,756.76
	TOTAL		<u>15,756.76</u>
		12/8/2025	
001	GENERAL		1,828.68
210	ROAD USE TAX		2,627.77
600	WATER		3,602.11
610	SEWER		3,706.86
670	GARBAGE		2,770.90
	TOTAL		<u>14,536.32</u>
	PAYROLL TOTAL		<u>30,293.08</u>
	PAID TOTAL		<u>112,226.21</u>

001	GENERAL	43,012.90
110	ROAD USE TAX	5,270.58
112	EMPLOYEE BENEFITS	412.18
176	HOMETOWN PRIDE COMMITTEE	1,480.00
600	WATER	23,841.78
610	SEWER	15,301.64
670	GARBAGE	15,422.87
745	STORM WATER	7,484.26
	TOTAL BY FUND	<u>112,226.21</u>

Chad Cleveland, LMPC General Manager and the LMPC Board of Trustees gave their annual report to the council. They asked for approval on the 2025 Write Offs. Jamison so moved. Christenson seconded. All ayes; motion carried.

Zylstra moved to approve Resolution 26-25 Unpaid Nuisance Charges. Booth seconded. Roll Call Vote: Ayes: Zylstra, Jamison, Booth, Christenson, Swanson. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Booth moved to approve the Employment Offer as presented by Chief Leu for a police officer. Swanson seconded. All ayes; motion carried.

Zylstra moved to approve the second reading and waive the third reading on Ordinance 02-25 – Storm Sewer Rates. Christenson seconded. Roll call vote: Ayes: Zylstra, Jamison, Booth, Christenson, Swanson. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Zylstra moved to approve the second reading and waive the third reading of Ordinance 03-25. Jamison seconded. Roll call vote: Ayes: Zylstra, Jamison, Booth, Christenson, Swanson. Nays: None. Motion carried.

Council members Swanson and Jamison were thanked for their dedicated service to the citizens and community of Laurens. Their courtesy, kindness, professionalism, compassion, enthusiasm, hometown pride, spirit of cooperation, service, leadership, mentorship, and their community efforts are a great asset to the Citizens of Laurens. They will be missed.

Jamison motioned to adjourn at 5:46 p.m. Swanson seconded. All ayes; motion carried.

Rod Johnson, Mayor

Hilary Reed, City Clerk