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— M A Q U O K E T A —
SENTINEL-PRESS

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Cardinal receives playground funds

By **KELLY GERLACH**

Cardinal Elementary School students will be thanking Alliance Pipeline, as well as other donors, every time they use their new playground equipment.

Brian Hintgen of Alliance Pipeline presented \$1,000 to Beverly Brauer of the Cardinal Playground Committee as a donation to the project.

The playground committee applied to the corporate headquarters for a grant, but the application didn't meet corporate guidelines. The Maquoketa Alliance office, which has always been supportive of education, surprised Cardinal with the donation.

The Cardinal Playground Committee has raised about \$10,000 from cookbook sales (cookbooks are available now by contacting the school) and an additional \$8,300 from other donations and projects.

Committee members have also applied for several grants to offset the cost of the estimated \$125,000 playground.

Among their other fundraising events, committee members are also planning a Bunny Hop and soup supper at Cardinal on March 26. Cardinal students would be allowed to stay after school and participate in after school activities for a \$5 fee per student. A soup supper will be held afterward. Several raffle items will also

be offered, including a Nintendo Wii and a bicycle.

The Cardinal Playground Committee formed last year to study the existing playground and future playground needs. They found that the existing playground was deteriorating, with many of the apparatus better suited for the older elementary-age children who used to attend class there.

Committee members also said the Cardinal playground is not handicap accessible.

Playground committee members are working to rectify that situation with preliminary plans to tear out much of the unusable equipment and replace it with equipment geared for preschool-age children through second graders. This equipment includes slides, climbing areas and updated motion equipment. Grounds modifications and rubber tiling will also make the area more fun and accessible for individuals with special needs.

The committee plans to raise \$50,000 of the estimated \$175,000 required for the project. The Maquoketa Community School District agreed to commit \$75,000 from the 1-cent local option sales tax fund to complete the project. The district will advance the total cost of the project until the committee has raised its portion.



Contributed photo

Brian Hintgen, right, hands Beverly Brauer a \$1,000 donation from the Maquoketa office of Alliance Pipeline. The money will be used for the new playground at Cardinal Elementary School.

Property taxes unchanged for next year

By **DOUGLAS MELVOLD**

Maquoketa landowners will pay the same property tax rate next year as they did this year, the City Council decided this week.

The council adopted its budget for the 2010-11 fiscal year during a brief special meeting Monday night, March 8, which was preceded by a 2 1/2-hour work session on the budget.

No comments were received during a public hearing that preceded adoption of the budget.

The budget will maintain the city's property tax rate at \$12.45 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation, the same rate called for in the current budget. The new budget will take effect July 1.

The council turned down a last-minute opportunity to reduce the tax rate by 12 1/2 cents.

City Manager Brian Wagner explained that lower than expected rates for the city's health insurance coverage could have allowed the council to drop the tax rate to \$12.32 1/2 cents.

The council decided, however, to maintain the current tax rate and put the extra revenue in the general fund for a purpose to be determined later.

The council approved the budget on a 6-1 vote, with Councilman Ed Turney casting the dissenting vote.

Turney didn't comment on his vote during the meeting. He said afterward that he wouldn't vote for the budget until seeing the renewal of the city's contract with the Scott County Family Y for operating the Maquoketa Area Family YMCA and the city's other recreation programs.

The initial three-year contract expires this year. City and Scott County Y officials were scheduled to work out details of a renewed contract in coming weeks.

Wagner said he budgeted \$175,000 in city payments to the Scott County Family Y during for the 2010-11 fiscal year, a reduction of \$25,000

from the \$200,000 payments the city has paid during the first three years of the agreement.

The initial management agreement with the Scott County Family Y called for annual payments of \$125,000 to cover continuing operating expenses and \$75,000 to cover shortfalls as YMCA memberships would gradually increase for the first three years.

The \$75,000 payments were to have dropped off after three years or sooner if hoped-for membership levels were reached.

Those levels have not been reached, however, forcing the YMCA to make staffing reductions and other budget cuts.

In addition to the YMCA agreement, Turney also said he wanted to see the bids for the city's mowing contract before approving the budget.

The council decided to seek bids for mowing city parks and other property after hiring the same contractor for several years.

Bids were opened by the council's Finance Committee on Thursday, March 11, and will be presented to the council for action Monday night, March 15.

Wagner noted that savings in the police budget helped the city to maintain the tax rate.

Police officer Scott Hansen will be taking a military leave starting in April that Police Chief Brad Koranda said could extend through September of 2011.

Hansen's position will be filled by part-time officers, resulting in a net savings.

Koranda also offered to delay for a year purchase of a new squad car, saving \$21,500. The city usually trades in one car a year for a new model.

Wagner said some budget reductions were necessary, however, because of a council decision to resume contributing to the police pension fund,

which has been drawn down in recent years.

When the council's Finance Committee recommended preserving the fund, but to do so without raising taxes, cuts had to be made in other areas, the city manager noted.

If the council had not resumed contributing to the fund, it would run out of money in two to three years, Wagner estimated.

In the public works area, proposals to spend \$38,000 to resurface Blair Court and \$20,000 to resurface city parking lots were deleted.

The city's contributions to nonprofit groups were maintained at their current levels, Wagner said.

A request from the Mount Hope Cemetery board for an additional \$5,000 was denied.

The budget maintains \$33,540 in city funding

**■ BUDGET,
Please turn to page 15**

Spring forward
 Daylight saving time begins
 this weekend!

Residents will lose an hour of sleep this weekend when daylight saving time begins. The annual time change will take effect at 2 a.m. Sunday, March 14. Residents should set their clocks ahead one hour before going to bed Saturday night.