

The Times Editorial

Leaving 2022 a bit dissatisfied

A year ago, when we set forth our hopes for 2022, we thought all five would be slam dunks.

In most cases, all of the prep work and paperwork were already done and it was time to get down to business.

One of those goals, however, did not get fully met, much to our surprise and frustration.

Let's review:

- Getting the Interstate six-lane project started. In 2021, the Iowa Department of Transportation and contractors Progressive Structure and C.J. Moyna and Sons got things going with a lot of the preparation work on this \$11.84 million project. In 2022, the agency and contrac-

tors shut down ramps, rerouted traffic, and got new eastbound lanes constructed.

However, while 2022 expected to start construction on the westbound lanes, IDOT did not open all three eastbound lanes, just two. The third lane, closest to the median, is still in use by construction crews as a place to park heavy equipment and store materials and barricades.

Still, the two lanes in use – as well as the shoulder – are wider than the lanes they replaced, making them a bit safer than before.

However, this is not the project we considered unfinished.

- Start construction on the new wastewater plant. Yes, that happened. As of the last report

by the city engineer, all of the landscaping and digging work got done. Those were the most time-consuming, labor-intensive parts.

The contractor, Boomerang Corp. of Anamosa, is now down to the details. It switched systems to one of the new cells, cleaned the sludge out of an old cell, and began some preliminary testing on the new \$8.84 million Submerged Attached Growth Reactor (SAGR) system.

The city hoped to have the system in service by January, but supply chain disruptions contributed to pushing that startup date back to June. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources

2022

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GUEST COLUMN

It's worth it: Museum plans exciting redo

I have been on the board of trustees at the Hoover Presidential Foundation for more than 30 years, and I'm involved in the largest renovation of the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum's exhibit space ever.



Ken Fawcett

And I can tell you, a renovation is long overdue!

It's been just over 30 years since the last major

renovation was completed, the longest span of all the National Archives and Records Administration presidential libraries.

Last year, the Hoover Presidential Foundation began a \$20 million effort called Timeless Values|Modern Experience, the cam-

Museum

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SOUNDBOARD

Republicans will leave us poorer in body & spirit

Everyone would start with zero points on the board. We would all have to play by the same rules. All the hurdles we faced would be the same height and the wind would always blow equally at our backs or in our face. No one would start out with two strikes on them, and umpires

would rule fairly for all. We would wrestle people our own weight, help people we knocked down get back up and shake hands when the game was over. We would remember it is not whether you won or lost that counts, but how you played the game.

Life is not a game. The lessons we taught our children as they began playing team sports are forgotten when it comes to people's

Letter

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History

10 YEARS AGO • 2012
• **STOP STAYS**
The city council took another U-turn in its consideration of the stop signs at the intersection of Main and Oliphant Streets Monday night. The second reading of a resolution to remove the flippable signs currently used before and after school hours failed on a deadlocked vote of 2 to 2. With this "no" vote, there are no changes pending for the crossing.
• **HOOP IT UP**
The WB Bears fourth grade team took first place at the Wilton Holiday Hoopfest. The team includes Bailey Donohoe, Taya Young, Nicki Henson, Lexi Peak, Rylan Druecker, Chyna Young, Maddy Hatfield, Savannah Sexton and Jaclyn Bloem.
• **CLIPPERS CLIPPED**
Cody Brandt went 9-9 from the floor as the WBHS boys basketball team defeated Clear Creek-Amana 58-52.

25 YEARS AGO • 1997
• **BOOSTER LEGACY**
When Jack Maher died last week at age 84, West Branch lost a man who prodded it, coddled it and scolded it when he thought necessary through the pages of his newspaper. "He really loved this community," said his wife, Maxine, who co-published the West Branch Times with him for more than two years and was mayor for some of that tenure.
• **ALUMNI ACTION**
The point totals were high, even if some of the ages were, too, during the WBHS alumni tournament. Gary O'Leary of the 1990-91 squad led all scorers with 96 points in four games, while Matt Messenger had the high game for 35 for that squad. In the women's bracket, Melissa Yearous and Kristy Regennitter, both of the 1996-97 team, led scorers with 38 and 23 points respectively.

35 YEARS AGO • 1987
• **BUNDLE UP**
The wind chill earlier in the week dipped as low as 50 below. The cold spell with temperatures hovering near zero, is expected to continue through the weekend.
• **DOLE FOR DOLE**
Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole was in town Monday afternoon campaigning for her husband, Republican presidential hopeful U.S. Senator Bob Dole of Kansas.
• **AUDITIONING**
West Branch students auditioning for the Southeast Iowa Bandmasters Association Honor Bands: (middle school) Julianne Jensen, Mindy Simpson, Gretchen Strong, Jennifer Scheit and Neal Cardwell; (high school) Kim Streets and Tom Mullally.
• **OES INSTALLATION**
Eloise Rose will be installed Worth Matron of the Juanita Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star for 1998.

50 YEARS AGO • 1972
• **A BOOSTER BOOST**
From his "Breezes through the Branches" column, Times editor Jack Maher opines on the future outlook for West Branch: "I believe we have a great deal going for us; the finest schools, a good moral atmosphere, an energetic group of merchants, a neighborly community - it has everything that most of us seek in a place to live. Yet I suggest that is not enough. To keep it that way, we have many trends to combat, such as the idea that quality goes with bigness; that everything must be done on a grand scale. I don't believe that. I believe that this community has a personality, a commonality of spirit, if you will, a sense of responsibility instilled in every individual here. Like others, I like us as we are, but I don't believe we can stay that way.... West Branch will be what you make of it."

100 YEARS AGO • 1922
• **BEE THERE**
Have you forgotten how to spell correctly? Come to the spelling bee at the Centerdale Hall next Saturday evening at 8 o'clock.
• **LOCAL NEWS**
The college students have returned to the various seats of learning, after enjoying to the limit the holiday vacation spent at their respective homes.
• **SNOW BIRDS**
J.G. and I.S. Cookson and the Misses Lila and Mytle Cookson closed their country home last week and departed to spend the winter months in sunny California.
• **HOOP NEWS**
West Branch Basket Ball team will play Iowa City High here Friday evening at 8 o'clock. The second team will play Springdale as a curtain raiser at 7:15. Admission 35 cents.

Classism of low expectations: Why IHSAA rule gets it wrong

Do you believe that a student from a low-income home cannot play football as well as other students? Should we have lower athletic expectations for such students?

The proposed rule from the Iowa High School Athletic Association to reclassify football teams certainly suggests that, even if the agency that oversees boys' sports asserts otherwise. Some 180 years ago in Iowa, a slave owner by the name of John Emerson died suddenly. His slaves, including Dred Scott, eventually ended up with his brother-in-law, John Sanford.

Scott sued for wrongful enslavement and this set up the first serious challenge to the 1787 "Three-Fifths Compromise" regarding how states could count slaves when determining U.S. House representation.

The Supreme Court ruled against Scott, in hopes of averting a Civil War. It was a disastrous miscalculation and monumental civil rights violation.

Thankfully, in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment overturned the Dred Scott ruling, granted citizenship to U.S.-born slaves, and

eliminated the Three-Fifths Compromise.

The IHSAA's proposed rule creates a similar Three-Fifths Compromise for students from low-income families in the name of "equity." The rule calculates the number of students who receive Free or Reduced-Price Lunches (FRL) and reduces that number to 60 percent to determine a high school's total enrollment.

After running all schools through this formula, schools with high percentages of FRL students will end up playing football against smaller schools.

How did we get here? In summary, coaches whose teams struggle to win games, or whose teams get blown out by good teams, complained to the IHSAA to find a way to make things more "equitable."

The IHSAA's proposed rule suggests poor students might be a reason for poor-performing teams. And, by a vote of 211-52, IHSAA member schools agreed.

The rule will next go to the Iowa State Board of Education for a final deter-



Gregory R. Norfleet

mination.

West Branch Community Schools joined the opposition (see story, Page 1) because it "would not benefit our district," Superintendent Marty Jimmerson wrote.

I would agree. In fact, it will not benefit any district, even if some of those losing teams actually pick up a few wins. Why? Because, instead of pitching hope, this rule pitches hopelessness.

Just like the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case saw slaves as lesser human beings, the IHSAA's proposed rule sees students from low-income homes as lesser athletes. We've moved from racism of low expectations to classism of low expectations.

And this is rather surprising, too, since the IHSAA should have a better understanding of sports than the average Iowan.

In football, for example, the IHSAA produces an annual list of the coaches with the most wins. Looking at coaches who remained at one school, No. 3 Curt Bladt earned a 422-66 record at Harlan Community with

36 percent — more than a third — on FRL; No. 7 Pat Mitchell earned a 344-138 record at Cedar Falls with 23 percent FRL; No. 9 Tom Stone earned a 332-88 record at Pekin with 41 percent FRL.

And at No. 10 we have our own Butch Pedersen with a 327-83 record with 24 percent FRL.

In November, West Sioux made it to the Class 1A state championship game with 59.3 percent FRL — one of the highest FRL rates in the state. The Falcons recorded winning seasons for nearly a decade before then and won the state championship in 2018.

Since teams experience turnover every year through graduation and relocation, these coaches prove that winning records start at the top.

One big thing West Branch does is to get children involved in football programs at the elementary level. I would not be surprised that these other high school teams with strong football traditions do something similar.

Clearly, it's not the fault of students from low-income

Football

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WEST BRANCH TIMES

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General contact information: 319-643-2131 • wbtimes@lcom.net
124 West Main Street, P.O. Box 368, West Branch, IA 52358

Publisher Stu Clark • StuartC108@aol.com • 563-886-2131
Editor Gregory R. Norfleet — gregory.norfleet@westbranchtimes.com • 319-643-2131
Sports Editor Matthew Dickinson • conservativesports2@gmail.com • 563-886-2131
Advertising Manager Annie Schroder — aschroder79@gmail.com • 563-886-2131
Advertising Sales Representative Kit Phelps • keepingintouch0721@gmail.com • 563-886-2131
Office/Reporter Joanne Saleminck • westbranchtimes19@gmail.com • 319-643-2131
Proofreader Kelly Walsh • 319-643-2131

SCHOOL MENUS

School menus for Jan. 5 through 11 at West Branch Community Schools.

Student breakfast price is \$1.60; lunch is \$2.70 EK-8, \$2.85 9-12.

Elementary school

Thursday, Jan. 5 - B: Sausage and egg on roll or cereal, peaches, apple juice, milk. L: Chicken quesadilla, shredded lettuce, diced tomato, refried beans, pineapple, banana, milk. Alt: Deli wrap.

Friday, Jan. 6 - B: Yogurt with graham cracker or cereal bars, pineapple, orange juice, milk. L: Cheese pizza, fresh cauliflower, pears, oranges, milk. Alt: Chicken patty on whole grain bun.

Monday, Jan. 9 - B: Dutch waffles or cereal, mixed fruit, orange juice, milk. L: Rib patty on whole grain bun, potato smiles, sliced peppers, strawberry applesauce, sidekicks, milk. Alt: Hotdog on whole grain bun.

Tuesday, Jan. 10 - B: Omelet and toast or cereal, peach applesauce, apple juice, milk. L: Chicken alphabet soup, goldfish crackers, green beans, broccoli, mixed fruit, apple slices, milk. Alt: Sunbutter sandwich.

Wednesday, Jan. 11 - B: Whole grain donut holes or cereal, apricots, orange juice, milk. L: Mini corn-dogs, baked beans, carrots, mandarin oranges, watermelon raisins, milk. Alt: Hamburger on whole grain bun.

Middle and High school

Thursday, Jan. 5 - B: Uncrustable breakfast or cereal/bar, fruit, orange juice, milk. L: Nachos OR chicken strips, refried beans, shredded lettuce, diced tomato, fruit choice, milk.

Friday, Jan. 6 - B: Breakfast pizza or cereal/bars, fruit, orange juice, milk. L: Pizza OR chicken patty on whole grain bun, romaine salad, fresh cauliflower, fruit choice, milk.

Monday, Jan. 9 - B: Whole grain donut holes or cereal/bar, fruit, orange juice, milk. L: Rib patty on whole grain bun OR hotdog on whole grain bun, tater tots, fresh broccoli, fruit choice, milk.

Tuesday, Jan. 10 - B: Apple Frudel or cereal/bar, fruit, orange juice, milk. L: Orange chicken OR beef teriyaki dippers, rice, broccoli, carrots, fortune cookie, fruit choice, milk.

Wednesday, Jan. 11 - B: Mini pancakes or cereal/bar, fruit, orange juice, milk. L: BBQ pulled pork on whole grain bun OR pizza crunchers, baked beans, carrots, fruit choice, milk.

Student breakfast price is \$1.60. Each meal must have a fruit and two other items. Elementary breakfasts include choice of 1% or skim white milk. All high school breakfasts served with orange juice and choice of 1% white, skim white or chocolate skim milk.

Student lunch is \$2.70 EK-8, \$2.85 9-12. Students must take three components, one must be a fruit or vegetable. Students have choice of 1% white, skim white or chocolate skim milk. High school choices include fruit and vegetable bar.

Football

From Page 3

households.

Public school districts must take all students who live within their borders, regardless of how well they play football.

Any public school coach who can produce winning records every year, like Coach Pedersen, is proving the IHSAA wrong.

The IHSAA's proposed rule diverts the responsibility and ownership of failure from head coaches to students. If football success is that important to a school district, then it is incumbent on the district to take action, not the IHSAA.

Here's my suggestion:

- Schools that post back-to-back no-win seasons in their class may choose to drop down to a smaller classification or play as a junior varsity team. This two-year cycle must line up with the IHSAA's two-year reclassification schedule.
- If a school chooses to drop down to a smaller varsity class, the team would forfeit their chance at the playoffs, since they will now play smaller schools.
- The varsity football team will play each game as a non-district game for the next two seasons. The IHSAA will not consider these games if these teams' opponents qualify for playoff contention.
- If a team remains winless at that level for two seasons, then they may choose to drop again to a lower class. Or, the team may return to their natural, enrollment-based classification and play as a junior varsity squad.
- If the varsity team posts a record of three wins or greater, then they must bump up to the next highest class and continue to do this until they return to their

natural classification. If they do not, they may remain at their lower classification. If a temporary JV team posts three wins or greater in their natural classification, then they must return to the varsity level.

- Schools naturally in the 8-Man class may opt to forfeit their varsity season and only play a JV team. Schools that drop down to 8-man and continue to lose may also do this.
- Larger schools that continue to post no wins or big losses at 8-Man JV must take the question of retaining the head coach or continuing a football program to their respective Board of Education. This requirement would not apply to schools naturally in the 8-Man classification.

Preferably, the IHSAA would keep its current classification system and only group together schools of similar size. One of the beautiful aspects of amateur sports is that it teaches real-world life lessons without significant consequences. While individual families hope to see their student-athletes leverage high school sports for college scholarships, this is not the primary reason why schools create extra-curricular sports programs. Only a small fraction of players at any school earn sports scholarships; most who go on to play college sports do so under an academic scholarship.

The IHSAA's effort to inject more equity into high school athletics is a worthwhile goal, but this proposed rule wrongly measures the capacity of students from low-income households.

Gregory R. Norfleet is the editor of the West Branch Times. You may reach him at gregory.norfleet@westbranch-times.com or 319-643-2131.



A farmer moves traffic cones Dec. 7 while trying to get a tractor and trailer across the Rochester bridge over the Cedar River. Allender Butzke Engineers closed one lane of traffic while conducting soil borings along the bridge in preparation for replacing the structure. The Cedar County Engineer's office stated that no wide loads — greater than 12 feet wide — would be allowed to cross during the work but engineers allowed the farmer through while traffic waited. **Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times**

Bridge

From Page 1

Program grant for another \$2 million.

He hopes to get word on the grants by March.

If both grants come in at the full amount, Cedar County will still need \$1 million in local funding. Fangmann feels confident that the county could move forward with the replacement project at that time.

In fact, the county in early December sent Allender Butzke Engineers to Rochester to conduct soil boring work along the bridge and the approaches on F44/290th Street. This, as well as design work,

would help get the project "shovel-ready" should the grants come in, he said.

Fangmann said the new bridge elevation will be "relatively close" to the current bridge, but will be designed to better withstand flood conditions.

The bridge was closed during flooding in 2008, 2013, and 2016. Each time after the water level receded, divers, inspectors, and work crews went in to assess the damage and remove debris, usually large limbs and even some entire trees.

The new design would create larger openings for the water to pass under the bridge, Fangmann said.

"It will also be designed to current hydraulic standards and the piers will be designed to catch less debris," he said. "All of which will help reduce the probability of it needing to be closed in an extreme flood event."

The prediction that the bridge will last only another 10 years "is a ballpark estimate," the engineer said.

"I hope it will be done well before then," Fangmann said.

According to the Iowa Department of Transportation, the bridge was built in 1948 and measures 1,145 feet. It was reconstructed in 1985 and, as of a 2022 report, was

rated in "poor" condition.

Fangmann said the older design includes wood pilings, though the county put down rip rap — large rocks to reduce erosion — to strengthen the ground around the pilings after the 2008 flood.

He said the rivets are rusty and there are spots of corrosion.

Due to the poor rating, the county will no longer issue permits for loads that exceed 80,000 pounds, the maximum weight, Fangmann said.

Before being downgraded, the bridge could withstand the occasional load of between 90,000 and 92,000 pounds, he said.



School board member Rev. Richard Paulus cuts the ribbon on what was then the practice gymnasium at West Branch High School in February 2012. Paulus pushed hard to get the \$2.7 million gymnasium built. Looking on are, from left, former School Board President Mike Owen and former Superintendent Kevin Hatfield.

Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times/File

Paulus

From Page 1

mances sometime in the mid 1990s.

Reed said former marching band director Pam Houser recruited Paulus and he remained on the microphone through every band director since.

"The biggest thing was that he was at every concert and he would come up and talk to us afterward," Reed said. "It didn't matter how many concerts — he was always there, thanking us for all the work we had done and for the kids. He was always a staple you could turn to. He was a really great support system for the fine arts in West Branch."

Paulus' vigorous support helped pass bond referendums that built a secondary gymnasium at WBHS — opened in January 2012 — and a larger auditorium as part of the district's recent \$24.5 million upgrade and improvement project.

Former school board member and president Mike Owen's terms overlapped with Paulus.

"He was one of the first people we met when we came to West Branch," Owen said. "He knew everybody and was always sociable — never knew a stranger. He was a real leader in the community."

Owen said Paulus kept the "pulse" of the community and liked to tell

stories.

Owen, former editor of the *West Branch Times*, said he remembers Paulus was a leading voice of calm and comfort in the mid-1990s when the community experienced the hunting accident that took the life of high school athlete Chad Gates and other accidents that spread over a two-month gap.

"He was very helpful and made himself available to students at the high school," Owen said, recalling that the funeral crowd overflowed the capacity of WBUMC. "Richard had soothing words when the community really needed it. He was always a calm and steady voice."

This reporter remembers a December 2009 comment by Paulus during a school board meeting that discussed building a new gymnasium and, as part of it, a new weight room. There, the minister used an explicative to emphasize his desire to get the project done.

"Before I either die or go off the board, I would like to see the damn weight room built," he said. "The weight room ought to be at the top of that list. Before I die, I'd like to cut the ribbon on a new weight room."

Owen, board president at the time of the comments, chuckled at the memory.

"I made sure Richard had the opportunity to cut the ribbon," Owen

said, which Paulus did in February 2012.

"I'm really going to miss him," Owen said. "The community will certainly miss his leadership and the example that he set."

Fellow former school board member Kathy Knoop posted to the *Times* Facebook page that Paulus officiated her wedding and baptized one of her children.

Owen said he learned a lot from Paulus during their school board years. He remembers the minister pointing out that the school district only has the children for a fixed amount of time and that the district should make the most of that time before the opportunity is lost.

"That's a critical time to be there for the children in the community," Owen said, remembering Paulus' comments. "We have to deliver on that. That's a really good message about the role of public schools."

For 17 years, the pastor read storybooks to kindergartners and first-graders at Hoover Elementary school, adding in different voices for the many characters.

In January 2022, West Branch Community Schools honored Paulus by placing a small red plaque with his name on a select seat inside the 600-seat West Branch Performing Arts Center.

the district's appreciation "for all you've done for the town of West Branch."

Paulus' name appears on the back of the seat in Row 6, Seat 110, in the center section.

"(Imagine) the experiences this will provide for hundreds and hundreds of people," he said at the time.

Paulus was also involved in the West Branch Lions Club and frequently dressed up as Samuel Adams for historical reenactments.

He sometimes wore his Samuel Adams costume when reading the Declaration of Independence each year during Independence Day celebrations at the Herbert Hoover National Historic Site.

In 2009, Paulus and the Presidential Troupe of other American Revolution re-enactors earned an all-expense-paid trip to Washington D.C. to participate in the 75th anniversary celebration of the creation of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Thomas said Paulus' involvement in so many groups and activities stands out most to him.

"He was a good pastor and he was also in (community) theater at (the University of Iowa) and read stories to kids," the musician said. "He was busier than a lot of pastors as far as his other interests."