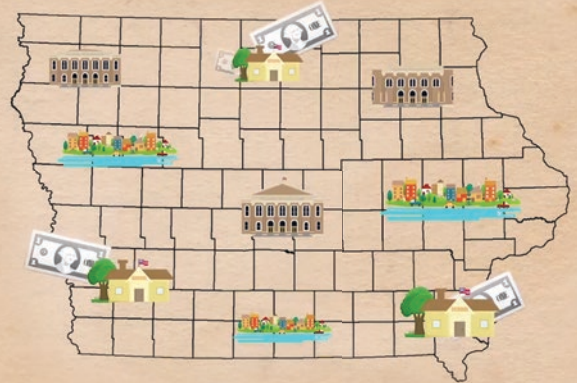
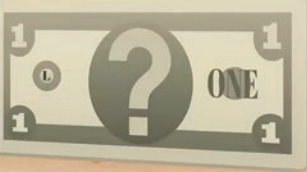


# The Iowa County



**Where**  
does all my



## March 2019

Iowa Assessment Process



To learn more about  
the property tax system,  
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# The Iowa County

March 2019 \* Volume 48, Number 3

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Iowa State Association of Counties

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To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

#### ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

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# Feature - Iowa Assessments

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## General Assessment Process

“There is nothing permanent except change.” “Do what is right, not what is easy nor what is popular.” As an assessor in Iowa both of these quotes speak to me. The first quote about change reminds me of when the legislature is in session and how legislators are always looking to make changes to the current law. The second quote is enforcing the laws, which might not be popular with your constituents, but still having the integrity to do your job correctly.

The office of the assessor was established by the legislature in 1948. It was decided to have the assessor be an appointed position. The appointment would be for a six-year term and would be made by the three largest taxing entities within the county – the county, school districts, and cities. These three entities would form the conference board and be made up of the mayor of each city in the county, a school board representative (must live within the county) from each of the school districts in the county, and the board of supervisors. The legislature has the wherewithal to realize that fair and equitable assessments work best when politics are removed from the equation.



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The assessor is charged with several administrative and statutory duties; however, the primary duty and responsibility is to assess all real property within his/her jurisdiction except that which is otherwise provided by law. Duties of the assessor are to discover, list, classify, and value all real estate/property within the county. There are many ways the assessor discovers and lists property: building permits/building changes; revaluation projects (cyclical); driving by properties; sales; and aerial photography. Real property is revalued every two years. The effective date of the assessment is January 1 of the current year. The assessor determines a full or partial value of the new construction, or improvements, depending upon the state of completion as of January 1. After the assessor discovers and lists property, then they must classify it by one of the five classifications of property. These are agricultural, residential, multiresidential, commercial, and industrial. The assessor determines, with guidelines from the Iowa Department of Revenue, the classification of each piece of property. Once the classification of the property has been determined, it is the assessor's job to then value the property at market value. Four of the five classes of property, residential, multiresidential, commercial, and industrial are to be assessed at 100% market value. Market value of a property is defined as the fair and reasonable exchange in the year in which the property is listed and valued between a willing buyer and a willing seller, neither being under any compulsion to buy or sell and each familiar with all the facts relating to the particular property. This is often referred to as the “arms length transaction” concept. The assessor must determine the fair market value of real property. To do this, the Assessor generally uses three approaches to value.

- 1. Market Approach** The first approach is to find properties that are comparable to the subject property and that have recently sold. Local conditions peculiar to the subject property are then considered in the determination of the property value. In order to adjust for local conditions, the assessor utilizes sales ratio studies to determine the general level of assessment in a community. This method is considered the most important in determining the value of residential property.
- 2. Cost Approach** The second approach is to determine replacement value, which is an estimate of how many dollars at current labor and material prices it would take to replace a property with one similar to it. In the event the improvement is not new, appropriate amounts of depreciation and obsolescence are deducted from replacement value. The market value of the land is added to arrive at an estimate of total property value.
- 3. Income Approach** The third method is used if the property produces income. If the property is an income producing property, it could be valued according to its ability to produce income under prudent management; in other words, what another investor would give for a property in order to gain its income. The income approach is the most complex of the three approaches because of the research, information, and analysis necessary for an accurate estimate of value. This method requires thorough knowledge of local and national financial conditions, as well as any developmental trends in the area of the subject property being appraised since errors or inaccurate information can seriously affect the final estimate of value.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

Taxpayers want to know why we are ALWAYS changing their values. Well it's kind of like the old saying "the more things change the more they stay the same." Values are always changing but the processes of arriving at that value stays the same. What are some of the reasons values change?

1. Real estate or land is an asset or investment
2. Construction costs and materials change
3. Community and neighborhoods change
4. Property changes
  - Additions
  - Renovations
  - Remodels
  - Repairs
  - Updates
  - Upgrades

Taxpayers also want to know the reason there is a difference between properties. My property is just like my neighbors. Well, properties are rarely "identical." Some differences are:

1. Location
2. Land/lot size
3. Square footage
4. Construction quality
5. Age
6. Condition
7. Amenities
8. Property changes

When properties sell within a county a Declaration of Value (DOV) statement is completed by either the buyer or the seller at the time the deed is recorded. This DOV statement has the sale price of the property on it, which we receive. As assessors, we review these sales and code them as either a good or bad sale. The Iowa Department of Revenue (DOR) has created a list of transactions that typically do not reflect market value and that cannot be used in the analysis process. We send these DOV's to DOR for review and for the equalization process. All good sales are used for sales ratio studies and equalization orders. In the sales review we check for the accuracy by using site visits, interior inspections, questionnaires, real estate listings, and phone calls. By Iowa Code, our sales ratio median must be between 95% and 105% of market value. The sales ratio is the relationship of the assessed value to the market value. This is calculated by dividing the value at the time of sale by the market value.

1<sup>st</sup> example of a sale:  $\$85,570 / \$97,000 = 88.22\%$

2<sup>nd</sup> example of a sale:  $\$54,240 / \$94,000 = 57.70\%$

3<sup>rd</sup> example of a sale:  $\$104,030 / \$117,500 = 88.54\%$

The median (middle) ratio of the group of sales is the statistic that is used. The sales median is used to calculate the equalization percentage (order) by DOR. DOR will adjust an entire class of property county wide if it is not in compliance with the law.

Once all of this information has been compiled and analyzed, the assessor will mail assessment notices to property owners by April 1 notifying them of their value. If a taxpayer disagrees with the assessment or classification, they should contact your assessor's office when the notice arrives to discuss the value. From April 2 to April 25 taxpayers can request an informal review of their value with the assessor. If an agreement can be reached, the assessor can change the value or classification. These agreements must be completed and signed by April 25. If an agreement can't be reached, then a taxpayer can file a protest with their local Board of Review. The protest period for the Board of Review is April 2 to April 30. There are additional appeal rights if you do not agree with the Notice of Value from the Board of Review; they are the Property Assessment Appeal Board or District Court. Assessments are final after the appeals process is completed and cannot change.

In conclusion, the purpose of the assessors' office is to appraise all real property located within our jurisdiction for tax purposes as provided by Iowa law fairly and equitably. Thank you for reading, and I hope I have provided a little insight into the assessment process and determining market value.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

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## **Iowa Assessment Valuation Procedures for the Agricultural Class**

Iowa law requires that residential, commercial, multi-residential, and industrial real estate is to be assessed at the property's fair market value. However, agricultural real estate is to be assessed by law according to its productivity and net earning capability. The basic procedure for valuing agricultural real estate was developed under the direction of the Economics Department of Iowa State University. The assessed valuation as of January 1 of each year is arrived by taking a five-year average of the crop yields, the prices paid for the crops, the expenses occurred with the production of these crops, and the government payments paid to the farm operator. From this information a net income per acre value after real estate taxes is calculated, and this figure is capitalized by seven percent to arrive at an average assessed value per acre. The soil survey is utilized by establishing a dollar value per CSR2 (explained later in the article) rating and this is used to calculate and distribute the assessed value of the farmland.



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## **What is the Definition of Agricultural Property?**

Agricultural property is defined as follows per Iowa Administrative Code 71.1(3):

Agricultural real estate shall include all tracts of land and the improvements and structures located on them which are in good faith used primarily for agricultural purposes except buildings which are primarily used or intended for human habitation as defined in sub rule 71.1(4).

Land and the nonresidential improvements and structures located on it shall be considered to be used primarily for agricultural purposes if its principal use is devoted to the raising and harvesting of crops or forest or fruit trees, the rearing, feeding, and management of livestock, or horticulture, all for intended profit. Agricultural real estate shall also include woodland, wasteland, and pastureland, but only if that land is held or operated in conjunction with agricultural real estate as defined in paragraph "a" or "b".

Vineyards and any building located on a vineyard used in conjunction with the vineyard shall be classified as agricultural real estate if the primary use of the land and buildings is an activity related to the production of wine.

In summary, the agricultural land and farm outbuildings are assessed on their productivity and the dwelling and any residential related buildings are assessed at market value. In order to be classified as agricultural; the property must have a principal or primary use as agricultural, must be used in good faith for agricultural purposes, and must be used for an intended profit.

## **What is the Procedure to Value Agricultural Property?**

Per Iowa Code §441.21(e) and (f), the actual value of agricultural property shall be determined on the basis of productivity and net earning capacity of the property determined on the basis of its use for agricultural purposes capitalized at a rate of seven percent and applied uniformly among counties and among classes of property.

In counties or townships in which field work on a modern soil survey has been completed since January 1, 1949, the assessor shall place emphasis upon the results of the survey in spreading the valuation among individual parcels of such agricultural property.

As stated earlier, we take a five-year average by county for crop production, yields, prices paid, expenses, and government payments to arrive at a dollar per acre for assessment purposes. The January 1, 2019 assessments will be using the five-year average for the 2013 -2017 production years.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

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## **What is a CSR and a CSR2?**

The Iowa Corn Suitability Rating (CSR) is an index procedure that was developed by Iowa State University (ISU) in the early 1970's as a way to measure potential soil productivity based on soil profile, slope characteristics, and weather conditions. It is an index ranging from 5 to 100 with CSR values of 100 being the most productive. County assessors used CSR and the ISU soils database to determine land values for property taxation from early 1970's until 2014.

Effective 2014, CSR was updated to a CSR2. The CSR2 is an index similar to the CSR concept but uses a clearly defined and easily calculated formula to determine a soil's productivity. CSR2 evaluates soil properties, specific field conditions for a soil map unit, soil depth, local climate and environment, and expert judgment. It is more consistent with the newer, more-data driven methods the USDA-NRCS uses compared to the original CSR which was more experience and judgment based. CSR2 is also more suitable to site-specific soil measurement and precision farming uses as it takes into consideration the soil inclusions or subcomponents. USDA-NRCS is the agency that is responsible for the mapping, classifying, and quantifying the differences between the CSR2 soil types. The intent of utilizing CSR2 in the valuation of agricultural land is to eliminate farm management skills and to allow a more equitable assessment procedure.

As stated earlier, CSR2 is a ranking of all soils mapped in the state based on their potential to be utilized for row crop production. There are situations where the various land uses aren't capable of being cropped or have never been improved for production. Examples would be building sites, non-crossable streams or waterways, forest or timber ground, ponds, and permanent pasture. The CSR2 rating may be high on these types of non-crop uses because the CSR2 rating is based on what that type of soil should produce if improved. In 2013 the Iowa Department of Revenue passed Administrative Rules that non-crop type of uses are to receive an adjustment to the CSR2 rating.

The method to determine the amount of the adjustment for non-crop is the relationship between permanent pasture rent and crop land rent utilizing a five-year average of the USDA rent survey. In Story County the pasture rent is 30% of the rent for tillable land. Next, the assessor needs to determine the average tillable CSR2 rating for their jurisdiction. Story County has an 82 CSR2 rating for tillable land. Then you divide the 82 CSR2 by 50% which establishes a "Floor CSR2". This would be a 41 CSR2 in Story County. Earlier we stated the relationship between pasture and tillable land rent was 30%; which in turn is a 70% difference. Finally, we make an adjustment of all CSR2 ratings of non-crop land over the "Floor CSR2" of 41 by 70%.

## **Final Steps in Ag Valuation**

The agricultural land and farm outbuildings are assessed on productivity and net earning capability. We determine the five-year average of the overall productivity less expenses and then capitalize the net income by 7% which gives us an average dollar per acre for assessment purposes. This dollar per acre includes the farm land and outbuildings. Before we can calculate the dollar per point for the CSR2, we need to subtract the out-building value and the difference is the land value.

In determining the farm outbuilding assessed value we make an adjustment to the buildings, which is called a "Ag-Building Factor" so the value of the buildings represent a productivity value. We utilize the ISU Farm Land Market Value Survey and take a five-year average and then compare the relationship between the market value average to the estimated average per acre by the productivity formula. In Story County the productivity value is approximately 20% of the five-year market value. Therefore, all farm buildings receive an "Ag-Building Factor" adjustment of 80%. The total value of the farm buildings is subtracted out, and the balance is the value left for the land.

Finally, we need to calculate the "Dollar Per Point" for the CSR2 in order to arrive at the required land value. We multiply the estimated value per acre from the productivity formula by the total number of acres in the jurisdiction to arrive at a total value that includes land and outbuildings. Next, we subtract out the Ag building value to arrive a land value only. Finally, we divide the total land value by the total CSR2 points to arrive at an estimated "Dollar per CSR2 Point" which is used to calculate the land value.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

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## Multiresidential Classification

On June 12, 2013, Iowa Governor Terry Branstad signed into law Senate File 295 (SF 295), a tax reform bill that made many significant changes to Iowa's property tax system. Among the changes, a new classification called "multiresidential" property for property tax purposes.

To understand the importance of this change, it is important to understand how the property tax is calculated in Iowa. The assessor estimates the actual value of all property for property tax purposes each year. For most property, the actual value is the 100% market value, the value that a property will sell for in a transaction between a willing buyer and a willing seller. This estimate of market value is called the assessed value. Taxes on each property are calculated as follows:

Assessed Value times Rollback Percentage times Tax Rate equals Gross Tax

The term "rollback" refers to the percentage of a property's assessed value that is subject to the property tax.

The classification of property is an important piece of the property tax process. Since the rollback percentage in the above calculation is based on the classification of a property, classification is used by policy makers to give certain types of property favored treatment. Prior to SF 295, commercial properties had little or no rollback and because of that, had been taxed on 100% of their market value; while residential properties, with a rollback typically around 50%, were taxed on half of their market value. Thus, a \$100,000 residential property paid approximately half the property tax that a \$100,000 commercial property would pay.

The classification of properties used primarily for human habitation has always depended on the number of dwelling units a property contains. Properties having one or two dwelling units in the same building are classified residential and receive the benefits of the residential rollback. So are condominiums and multiple housing cooperatives. Prior to SF 295, properties that had three or more separate dwelling units in the same building were classified as commercial and received little or no benefit from the commercial rollback (it was almost always 100%).

However, with SF 295 being signed into law, beginning with assessment year 2015 (AY 2015), properties having three or more separate dwelling units in the same building are now classified multiresidential. This includes apartments, mobile home parks, manufactured home communities, land-leased communities, and assisted living facilities. Section 42 housing property plus a hotel, motel, inn, or other building where rooms or dwelling units are usually rented for less than one month are still classified commercial.



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# Feature - Iowa Assessments

Multiresidential Rollback		
<u>Assessment Year</u>	<u>Rollback</u>	<u>Taxes Payable Sept/March</u>
2015	86.25%	2016/2017
2016	82.50%	2017/2018
2017	78.75%	2018/2019
2018	75.00%	2019/2020
2019	71.25%	2020/2021
2020	67.50%	2021/2022
2021	63.75%	2022/2023
2022	Same as Residential	2023/2024

With the multiresidential classification comes a favorable rollback percentage. For AY 2015, the multiresidential classification had a rollback of 86.25%. That percentage declines 3.75 percentage points each year through AY 2021; beginning in AY 2022 and after, the multiresidential rollback will be equal to the residential rollback each assessment year – see chart.

Per the Legislative Services Agency (LSA) (Legislative Services Agency, Issue Review, Fiscal Services Division, January 5, 2017, Property Tax

Systems Modifications – Senate File 295.), the statewide assessed valuation of multiresidential property for AY 2015 was \$4.9 billion, and of that amount, \$4.7 billion was taxed and benefited from the rollback of 86.25%. This rollback benefit reduced the taxable value of multiresidential properties by \$647.6 million. Because of the declining rollback percentage, the taxable value of multiresidential properties will continue to be reduced each year through AY 2022. At that time and thereafter, the multiresidential classification becomes equal to the residential rollback – currently at 56.918 percent.

The loss in revenue to local government due to the declining rollback is not reimbursed by the state. Thus, the tax revenue that's available to local governments is being reduced.

A study conducted by the LSA for fiscal year 2017 showed multiresidential property owners saved \$24.7 million in property taxes and local governments (non-school) saw a \$14.9 million reduction in property tax revenue, all because of the multiresidential rollback benefit.

The rollback reduction will continue for multiresidential property until it equals the residential rollback in AY 2022. The taxable value of multiresidential property will be reduced by 3.75 percentage points each year through FY 2021. For multiresidential property owners, this means lower taxable values. For local governments it means lower revenue and/or higher tax rates.

An additional change brought about by SF 295 is dual classification for parcels that partially satisfy the requirements for multiresidential classification and partially satisfy the requirements for either commercial or industrial classification. Under this new change, the only permissible combinations of dual classifications are commercial and multiresidential or industrial and multiresidential. With dual classification, the assessor maintains the valuation and assessment of property on one parcel record.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

## Importance of Communications in the Assessor's Office

Are you a communication introvert, or a communication extrovert? When you have news or changes in your office, what is your policy? Are you the person who leans into the issue and is proactive about informing the public and the media, or do you just do your job and "let the chips fall where they may"?

For decades the standard in our offices was to do the job well and let the chips fall where they may. "Stay out of the public eye and out of politics and just do your job" was what the old assessors said. This mindset was entrenched. We had the belief that all we needed to do was estimate an accurate value, and the public would accept it. While that mindset might have been appropriate before the internet, it is no longer a plan that any of us should be following. In today's world we don't just need to do our required duties well, we also need to do a good job of selling the final product to the public.

Over my almost four decades of public service, I've watched as some assessors placed accurate values on property and suffered public backlash about the higher assessments and the higher taxes that were perceived to follow. I've also seen assessors who sent out new assessed values and received relatively few complaints. In many instances the difference between them was salesmanship and the ability to communicate effectively with the public and media.

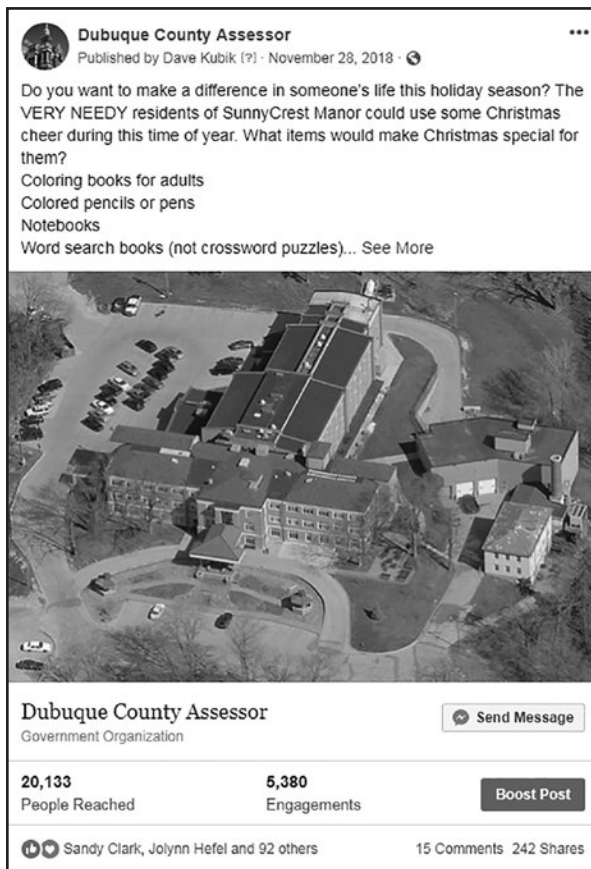
Just setting accurate values isn't enough anymore. We know that because we still saw frustrated/angry taxpayers, increasing numbers of assessment appeals as well as new legislation aimed at our office.



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Recent history has shown us that being a communication extrovert is the best path, and actually is the only viable path leading toward improving public relations. Every county office operates under a myriad of rules and regulations. In most cases the public sees the end results or the final decision, but cannot begin to fathom all the steps/processes we've undertaken to arrive at that result.

What can we do to improve this? For assessors that means more informational letters to property owners, more press releases, more meetings with groups/organizations, more time on radio talk shows, and more social media posts. In all of these instances we need to go into detail about how the values were estimated and talking about the actual calculation processes and the many factors that were considered before the final value was determined. It also means going into deeper details about the appeal process, explaining the options as well as what to expect in each of the options.

Your mother probably told you "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure". That wise old saying is very applicable to communications with the public and media. Re-stated this means: An ounce of proactive public relations is worth a pound of efforts educating others after you have a problem on your hands. From a time investment angle, how much energy are you willing to spend now, so you don't have to spend more energy on a bigger problem later?

Is it easy to be proactive and a communication extrovert? Absolutely not. It's never easy to step forward when you know information may not be well received. Even though it is difficult, there are very

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

positive aspects of being proactive. The most powerful part is because what you share will be the first information on this subject. This first-strike capability is highly effective in sharing information because it will contain accurate and specific details and is probably the only fresh news on that subject. Having the first word can minimize false or misleading counter statements and does a world of good in dispelling anger and frustration.

We use a Facebook page as our proactive communication tool. One of the benefits of this format is that the subject matter can be “bite-sized”, meaning the post is typically two or three paragraphs long. Even complex subjects can be broken down into smaller parts and added to Facebook over multiple posts. On occasion, the public has used the page to be critical of new assessed values. In those situations, although difficult, we try not to respond and allow them to vent their frustrations. This venting process is beneficial to the public and also gives us feedback on public perceptions and concerns.

While a social media account will most certainly bring some negative comments, there are many positive aspects as well. You can give the public more specific details on targeted topics, telling them about job openings, the opportunity to bid on county vehicles, and even when the office is doing a fun event (dressing up for Halloween) or working on a charitable project for others.

Before Christmas we added a post to Facebook, asking the public to join with us in donating to the needy county hospital residents. That post was shared by over 240 other Facebook users and showed up on over 20,000 individual Facebook pages. This was just one instance, but 20,000 people saw a post that humanized the office and the compassion of the people that work there. That post cost nothing other than the time taken to write it. The power of social media is mighty, and it's cheap!

If there is one hidden cost, it is the time you or your staff spend working on positive public communications. Time is money and you will spend considerable time building that positive image and increasing communications for your office or county. Of course, if you aren't proactive in your communication to the public and media, how much time and energy will be spent defending yourself or your office. In the world of communication and public relations, the best defense is no match for a good offense.

## Are you a communications extrovert?

How many of these boxes can you check?

- ☐ I regularly offer to speak at meetings or events
- ☐ Our website(s) has information on property records, taxes and recorded documents
- ☐ When changes are happening, I send the media a press release
- ☐ We use social media to educate and inform the public
- ☐ Our state legislators are informed about changes we are making and the reasons why.
- ☐ We have a county website that is fresh and is updated frequently
- ☐ We put out a periodic newsletter that gets mailed/emailed
- ☐ We accept emailed documents in lieu of original paper copies
- ☐ I have posted a link to 2 or more helpful videos on my page/website

5 + = Great job! You're a communication rock star!  
4 = Congratulations, you're proactive with your communications!  
3 = You're doing OK, but you know you could be better. Why don't you start now?  
2- = When are you going to start your plan to be a communication extrovert?

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

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## Equalization Process

The term equalization refers to one of the primary functions within the Local Government Services Division of the Department of Revenue relating to the measurement of equitable aggregate valuations of locally assessed real property for property tax purposes every odd year. Equalization is the process by which statistical measures are developed for each locally assessed class of property to determine if the aggregate valuations by class meet the requirements found in Iowa Code Chapter 441.21, within 5% above or below actual value. Based upon policy, and defined statistical measures, a determination is made whether jurisdictions are compliant. If not, the Department will order an aggregate increase or decrease in valuation to that class of property to meet the statutory requirements of actual value.

## Iowa Department of Revenue

<https://tax.iowa.gov/>

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Assessors are responsible for the determination of actual value and classification of locally assessed property for individual parcels of properties in their jurisdictions. The sum of all individual property values within a single class of property, is known as the aggregate value. This is what the Department measures in determining compliance. The 2018 valuation report can be found at: <https://tax.iowa.gov/sites/files/idr/2018PropValReport.pdf>

The procedures for equalization begin with the review of actual sales transactions of real property that occur across the state. These sales are recorded at the county recorder's office and in many cases are accompanied by a Declaration of Value (DOV). The DOV document contains information specific to the recorded transaction including buyer, seller, sale date, sale price, and other pertinent information. The DOVs are sent from the recorder to the assessor who is required by law to complete additional information in regard to assessed values and classification of the properties involved. Each quarter, assessors are required to report these documents to the Department. The Department processes approximately 75,000 to 120,000 DOV documents annually. Assessors and the Department analyze these sales to determine if they are "arms-length" and meet the definition of willing buyer and willing seller with no undue influence. There are other criteria as well. Once this determination is made a comparison of sale price to assessed value is done for each transaction. This comparison is known as a ratio. A single sale ratio is not sufficient to measure the actual level assessment. Therefore all the "good" or arm's length transactions for the prior year sales, for a class of property, are thoroughly screened, and statistical analysis is done. This analysis is called a ratio study. The ratio study tells a story about the overall level of assessment and/or the quality of the assessment for each class of property. There are five statutory classes of locally assessed property:

1. **Agricultural Property** is valued based on a productivity or use value, as required by Code. The value is based on production; yields and prices in a landlord crop share income model. The results are a per acre productivity value for every county in the state.
2. **Residential Property** There are sufficient sales for residential property to support the ratio analysis for residential property.
3. **Commercial Property** The smaller more rural jurisdictions tend to lack enough sales for an adequate sample size for the statistics to be reliable. As a result, the Department employs field appraisers who perform appraisals in jurisdictions where necessary. These appraisals supplement the ratio study upon which statistics are performed.
4. **Industrial Property** is not equalized in the state of Iowa. Industrial property is so diverse with limited sales that Iowa Code specifically prohibits the use of direct equalization procedures.
5. **Multiresidential Property** Field appraisal staff work together on the collection of specific data that is used in building a statewide regression model based on sales. This is the basis for the ratio study for this class of property accompanied by any "arm's length" sales.

## Equalization Overall

Aggregate actual valuation is determined based on the resulting statistical analysis for residential, commercial, and multi-residential property. Agricultural property is based on the productivity value per acre. Once the aggregate actual values are calculated, a comparison of the aggregate actual value to the assessor abstract reported aggregate value is completed. This comparison illuminates if an assessor is within the statutory required five percent above or below actual value. If the abstract submitted aggregate value, of a class of property, as reported on the reconciliation pages, is not within five percent above or below the actual value as computed through the median ratio and other supporting statistics, the Department will order a percentage adjustment to the actual valuations of that class of property to bring the assessed values to 100% of actual value as determined through this process.

Assessors may increase or decrease valuations locally prior to submission of their abstracts, and in these cases, their valuations by classification may already be at actual value as measured through this process. If this occurs they would not be subject to equalization orders if their actual values are compliant. The information provided is part of the source data for issuance of the statutory equalization orders, publication of statistical reports and the calculation of the annual assessment limitations, also known as rollback.

# Feature - Iowa Assessments

The conclusion of equalization procedures accomplishes the goal of aggregate locally assessed property being at actual value. This means that the distribution of the property tax burden is equitable between and among classes of property based on the requirements within Iowa Code. The purpose of equalization is to ensure each class of property is assessed at the level prescribed by law, and that an equitable relationship exists between the assessment for the various classes of properties and between assessing jurisdictions. Assessors are responsible for equity between individual parcels of property.

Once equalization is completed and all aggregate valuations have been adjusted, assessment limitations, commonly known as rollback in Iowa, are calculated. The assessment limitation is the process of limiting the aggregate statewide growth in taxable value.

## ISAC Brief

Since 2010, ISAC has honored one individual as an ISAC Golden Eagle during the Annual Conference General Session. The ISAC Golden Eagle was created to recognize and honor individuals who have provided extraordinary public service to county government through ISAC and/or NACo.

Golden Eagle Honorees are selected from nominations submitted to the ISAC Golden Eagle Committee, which consists of board and staff members. The committee will then submit its recommendation to the ISAC Board for approval. The ISAC Golden Eagle honoree(s) will be recognized during the 2019 ISAC Annual Conference General Session on August 21.

Those eligible for induction include: current or former elected and appointed county officials; business or civic leaders; ISAC preferred vendors; persons providing assistance to counties as trainers, consultants or advisors; and/or former members of ISAC staff. \*Current ISAC board members and staff are not eligible.

Honorees will be selected on the basis of their service rendered to county government through ISAC and/or NACo. Such service may include: Leadership in ISAC and ISAC-affiliated boards; service to NACo; service on state or national boards or commissions; service to counties in training, education and development of local leadership; advocacy for counties and good local government; and assistance and support to counties.



Past honorees include:

2010 – Jane Halliburton, former Story County Supervisor and ISAC board member  
2011 – Kim Reynolds, Governor and former Clarke County Treasurer  
2012 – J. Patrick White, ret. Johnson County Attorney and ISAC Past President  
2013 – Mike Wentzien, former Supervisors Lobbyist  
2014 – Richard Heidloff, former Lyon County Treasurer and ISAC Past President  
2015 – Sue Vande Kamp, former Story County Recorder  
2016 – Linda Langston, former Linn County Supervisor and NACo Past President  
2017 – Wayne Clinton, former Story County Supervisor and ISAC board member  
2018 – Harlan Hansen, former Humboldt County Supervisor and ISAC Past President

To nominate qualified individuals to be honored as ISAC Golden Eagles, please complete the form that's available on our website, [www.iowacounties.org](http://www.iowacounties.org), under the About tab, and return it to: Iowa State Association of Counties, Attn: ISAC Golden Eagle, 5500 Westown Parkway, Suite 190, West Des Moines, IA 50266 or [rbennett@iowacounties.org](mailto:rbennett@iowacounties.org).

Please return submissions before May 31, 2019. A golden eagle is not guaranteed to be honored annually. If you have any questions regarding the ISAC Golden Eagle, please contact Rachel Bennett at 515.244.7181 or [rbennett@iowacounties.org](mailto:rbennett@iowacounties.org).

# ISAC Brief

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## Summary of Minutes – January 18, 2019

ISAC President Eric Stierman called the meeting to order and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Wayne Walter swore in President Stierman, the ISAC Executive Committee, and all members of the ISAC Board of Directors. The meeting minutes of the November 15-16, 2018 ISAC Board of Directors were approved unanimously.

Brad Holtan reviewed highlights of the financial report ending on November 30, 2018. He gave an overview of ISAC's funds and programs. The auditors, supervisors, and SEAT have all signed contracts for ISAC to handle their financials. The financial report was unanimously accepted.

The ISAC and Education Foundation 990s have received a six-month extension. They will be brought to the Board prior to the May deadline.

Bill Peterson reviewed the ISAC budget approval process. The ISAC Executive Committee will meet on January 30 to review the proposed budget and to make recommendations to the ISAC Board. The ISAC Board will meet on February 7, and the ISAC membership will vote on the board recommended FY 2020 budget on March 14 during the ISAC Spring Conference.

Brad reviewed the ISAC Board of Directors conflict of interest statement. Board members were asked to sign and return the form.

Kristi reviewed the board policy related to exhibitors and vendors at ISAC conferences. The policy was approved during the Board's October meeting. Recently, a competitor to Precinct Atlas was disallowed to attend and members issued concerns. The Board discussed the policy and the need for the policy apply. The Board unanimously reaffirmed the exhibitors and vendors at ISAC conferences policy.

ISAC appoints one county supervisor and two county treasurers to the IPAIT Board of Directors. One of the treasurer appointments is currently vacant. The Iowa State County Treasurers' Association Executive Committee nominated and the Board unanimously approved Jarret Heil, Marshall County Treasurer, to fill the vacancy.

Jamie Cashman and Lucas Beenken updated the Board on actions taken during the first week of the legislative session and gave an outlook for the session. Rachel Bennett showed the Mental Health and Disability Services (MH/DS) videos and gave an overview of the social media campaign that will continue through the session.

The ISAC Board of Directors recessed and reconvened at the end of the ICTS Board of Directors meeting.

Kelsey Sebern reported a great turnout for the 2019 New County Officers School that was held on January 16-17. The Board agreed that the Sheraton West Des Moines is a great location for this meeting and ISAC University. She reported that 2019 ISAC County Day at the Capitol is being held on March 13 and that all affiliates will be asked to display around the Rotunda. Rachel reported that special focus will be given to the MH/DS campaign during the event including media involvement. Kelsey continued that registration and hotel numbers for the 2019 ISAC Spring Conference are good so far and reiterated the need for members to use ISAC hotel room blocks because of existing contracts. Jacy Ripperger gave an update on preferred vendors and conference exhibitors and sponsors.

Eric Stierman and Bill Peterson gave an overview of the NCCAE State Association Presidents and Executive Directors meeting that they attended in Washington, D.C. Overall, it was a great meeting and experience.

Rachel reviewed Iowa-specific meetings and events being held in conjunction with the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference.

President Stierman adjourned the meeting following board members sharing issues, concerns, ideas, achievements, etc. with other board members.

## Summary of Minutes - February 7, 2019

ISAC President Eric Stierman called the meeting to order at 9:30 am and led the Board in the Pledge of Allegiance. Meeting minutes of the January 18, 2019 ISAC Board of Directors, January 30, 2019 ISAC Executive Committee, and February 6, 2019 ISAC Executive Committee were unanimously approved.

The ISAC Board recessed and reconvened at the conclusion of the ICTS Board of Directors meeting.

Brad Holtan reviewed highlights of the financial report ending on December 31, 2018. He reviewed highlights of the ISAC General Fund, Health Insurance Fund, and the Dental Program. Brad has provided a financial administration quote to the Iowa Community Services Association, and ISAC is still waiting for guidance from the IRS to file ISAC's 990. The financial report was unanimously approved.

Rachel Bennett reported that the Iowa State Association of County Supervisors (ISACS) is developing a continuing education certification program that will begin in January 2021 called the Certified Iowa County Supervisors (CICS) program. ISAC staff is working with ISACS members to develop the program.

Katie Cook gave an overview of Basecamp, which is the website used by the ISAC Board of Directors and other ISAC affiliates, committee, boards, and programs for communication, document storage, and more. She gave a live demo and answered questions.

Katie Cook updated the Board on the Scholarship Selection Committee results. Scholarship interviews were held on February 6, 2019, and the scholarship recipients were chosen. The top scholarships will be given during the ISAC Spring Conference General Session on Thursday, March 14.

Bill Peterson and Brad Holtan presented the recommended FY 2020 ISAC Budget. Brad reviewed the budget process and the FY 2019 income and expense notes for each program. Bill highlighted revenue notes between the FY 2019 budget and the FY 2020 budget proposal. He went into detail regarding specific expense adjustments in personnel expenses. The executive director's salary was reviewed by the executive committee and a three-year compensation plan was adopted that will adjust the salary by \$13,000 per year. This was done to get the position's compensation more in-line with today's market. He reviewed the Depreciation Fund, Reserve Fund, and the Building Development Fund. There is a recommended transfer of \$250,000 from the Operating Fund to the Building Development Fund for an upcoming move or remodel when the lease expires in two years. He reviewed and recommended the following summary of required actions which were approved unanimously

- Adopt recommended FY 2020 budget proposal with following:
  - Approve recommended institutional value fee adjustments to .9%
  - County dues set \$5,900
  - ISAC conference registration fees – no change
  - Authorize a 3.0% increase in the staff salary line item
  - Executive Director salary recommended to be \$155,868
  - Authorize staff to enter into contract with ISACA for legislative representation

Rachel reviewed Iowa-specific meetings and events being held in conjunction with the 2019 NACo Legislative Conference.

Kelsey reported that 2019 ISAC County Day at the Capitol is being held on March 13 and that all affiliates have been asked to display around the Rotunda. She requested that the board members reach out to the affiliates who have yet to confirm attendance. Rachel gave an overview of events that will be held connected to the mental health and disability services campaign during the event including media involvement.

Kelsey reported that registration and hotel numbers for the 2019 ISAC Spring Conference are good so far and reiterated the need for members to use ISAC hotel room blocks because of existing contracts. She reviewed the ISAC Board scenario for the conference. Jacy Ripperger gave an update on conference exhibitors and sponsors. She also highlighted the exhibitor reception that will be held in the exhibit hall on the afternoon of Thursday, March 14.

# NACo News

## Iowa Supervisor Attends Farm Bill Signing

Congress passed an \$867 billion Farm Bill in the House of Representatives on December 11, 2018 in a 386-47 vote while the Senate passed the legislation in an 87 to 13 vote on December 12. On December 20, 2018 it received President Trump's signature and became law.

Clay County Supervisor Barry Anderson attended the signing in Washington, D.C. As a member of the National Association of Counties (NACo) Rural Action Committee, Barry was offered the invitation to attend the signing. Barry took his son Christopher as his guest. Barry and Christopher boarded a plane in Des Moines late on December 19 and arrived even later that day in D.C. The session was to begin at 2:30 pm on December 20 but was delayed until near 4:00 pm as work was still being done on the bill. The whirlwind travel was unexpected but exciting. In attendance with President Trump were Vice President Mike Pence, Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Purdue, and Ivanka Trump.



The bill "largely continues current farm and nutrition policy" and does not include new requirements for SNAP (food stamps) recipients. Incorporating some of the text of the Hemp Farming Act of 2018, the farm bill descheduled some cannabis products from the Controlled Substances Act for the first time. One estimate put the U.S. CBD [a non-psychoactive cannabinoid] market at \$2.3 billion to \$23 billion by the 2020s, enabled by the 2018 Farm Bill. Additional revenue to farmers and processors is expected from textiles and other hemp products.

## ISAC Brief - continued

Kristi Harshbarger reviewed the contract for legislative services between ISAC and the Iowa State Association of County Auditors (ISACA). The contract is very similar to what is currently in place with the Iowa State Association of County Supervisors. The board unanimously approved entering into the contract.

Jamie Cashman and Lucas Beenken updated the Board on actions taken during the first four weeks of the legislative session and the status of ISAC's legislative priorities, objectives, and other bills of interest to counties. President Stierman and staff met with legislative leadership this week to discuss ISAC's top legislative priorities. Rachel Bennett gave an update on the mental health and disability services social media campaign which is performing successfully with well over 100,000 impressions.

Eric Stierman distributed the 2019 ISAC Board committee appointments and adjourned the meeting following board members sharing issues, concerns, ideas, achievements, etc. with other board members.

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## Return-to-Work in Crawford County

As the new millennium arrived in 2000, Crawford County found itself experiencing one of the worst workers' compensation experience modification factors in the state. The number and magnitude of work-related injury claims weighed heavily on the work force and strained the budget.

**Paul J. Assman, P.E., P.L.S.**

Crawford County Engineer

[passman@crawfordcounty.org](mailto:passman@crawfordcounty.org)

With guidance from the Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association (IMWCA), Crawford County began implementing change. IMWCA recommended a number of procedural, policy, and administrative improvements aimed at reducing work-related injuries and improving management of claims once they occur. While most recommendations were readily implemented, some were looked upon with skepticism. Return-to-Work (RTW) was more or less cast aside as a recommendation that was simply not practical; there just didn't seem to be any "light duty positions" in the Secondary Road Department. We were wrong!

About five years ago, after continued frustration with the process of work release for employees, the Crawford County Secondary Road Department adopted a RTW policy in conjunction with a light duty work program.

Essentially, the county-designated physician is asked to provide the employee and the county a document explaining work restrictions and the ability to "return to work." This is generally a hand-written script from the physician. If the employee is allowed to return to work with restrictions, Crawford County will work with the employee to begin their light duty activities as soon as possible. First, however, the employee is required to sign a Temporary/Modified Alternate Duty Agreement form outlining the modified work duties and sign a RTW Agreement acknowledging the temporary nature and conditions of the assignment. Light duty work assignments have included: updating stop sign inventory, answering phones, running errands for the mechanics, computer data downloading and input, and taking gravel tickets when completing the summer gravel haul. It is important to have a list of "light duty work" items available so employees can be placed in a meaningful assignment as soon as possible. The current return-to-work efforts are paying dividends as employees generally welcome maintaining their work routine, although limited. In addition, they are returning to their normal work assignments much sooner. The benefit for Crawford County is minimizing lost production and reduced indemnity claims, which both translate to cost savings. As a result of implementing all of the IMWCA recommendations, including RTW, Crawford County now benefits by having one of the lowest experience modification factors in the state.

*Congratulations to Crawford County for their work toward sending employees home safe. And thank you to Paul Assman and Crawford County for sharing their story.*

*This article was submitted by the Iowa Municipalities Workers' Compensation Association (IMWCA) and appeared in the December 2018 issue of their newsletter, the Informer. Learn more about IMWCA, an endorsed program of ISAC, and subscribe to their newsletter at [www.imwca.org](http://www.imwca.org).*



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# IPAIT

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## Don't Leave Money on the Table

If a stranger laid a hundred-dollar bill on a table for you with no strings attached, would you take it? Speaking from my Dutch heritage, "Uh...yes, please." Now who knows what I would do with it. I could use it for myself, take my wife out for a surprise dinner, or buy an unexpected gift for my kids. The point is, I'd suddenly have some options and be fortunate to have them.

Our goal with the Iowa Public Agency Investment Trust (IPAIT) is to get solid, market-based, interest-earning options on the table for your organization. Relative to the last several years, we are in a unique interest rate environment. With these changes in the market, however, not all participants change at the same speed. Just because rates rise, it may not show an immediate impact. For instance, if the beef price that the farmer receives goes down, it may still take a while, if ever, for you or I to realize it at the store. Various retail stores adjust differently based on their internal mechanics, which is similar to interest rate moves. In other words, there is a lot of variation in the market today.



**Dan Zomermaand**

Iowa Public Agency Investment Trust  
dzomermaand@pmanetwork.com

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When it comes to where your cash is invested or "parked", IPAIT has worthy rates to compare to those available locally. In fact, that's a reason why Local Government Investment Pools (LGIPs) like IPAIT were created across the country in the 1980's. Public entities wanted to know that they had another option to what was being provided locally. The goal was never to replace your bank, but to simply compliment your bank when warranted.

What IPAIT offers are market rates that reflect the national bond market. Our Daily Fund simply invests in very short-term, 100% US Government-backed bonds to accommodate that type of investment. As of this writing, the net rate of our Daily Fund was 2.15% after operating fees<sup>1</sup>. The rates of our Iowa-based Certificates of Deposit are competitive among similar investment options.

Knowing what IPAIT can put on the table, why would organizations hesitate to take potential extra earnings on their cash? Maybe it's not seen as simple as cash being laid on the table. Maybe it's the perceived hassle of doing something different. Maybe it's the political aspect: the feeling of not being able to send your entity's money anywhere besides your local financial institutions.

We understand the importance of local financial partners that help the community thrive. They're tremendous partners to IPAIT as well. However, public funds bring inherent costs to local banks, who may not be all that thrilled to take on public funds. In fact, depending on the business climate, your local banks may not want to take on any deposits at all. If local politics are a big concern, it may be to your advantage to visit with banks and share your IPAIT options to see if they want to match the rate or are willing to give up a portion of the deposits to a program that is not a bank competitor.

If you realized that the bulk of your funds were sitting in a checking account earning 0.5%, wouldn't you want to pick up the 2.15% that's lying on the table for the taking? Let's say you kept an average of \$2 million in your operating checking account and typically never dip below \$1.5 million. You could easily move those funds to the IPAIT Daily Fund and earn an extra 1.65%. That's an estimated \$24,750 (1.65% x \$1.5 million) over a year. You would still have access to the funds on a daily basis. If you had longer-term funds you thought you could lock-up for a year, you could possibly earn 2.7% or more.

When the market leaves money on the table, go ahead and pick it up. Don't leave it on the table. Find out more at [www.ipait.org](http://www.ipait.org).

<sup>1</sup>As of January 31, 2019. Example scenarios are not a guarantee of performance or results.

# Miscellaneous

## **“Spring” to Help Your Community**

You don’t often hear of anyone giving a celebration of spring gift to the community that they call home. Why not? If you love your community, have a heart and show your appreciation by doing something for your hometown as spring moves into the picture. Loving your community and wanting to make it clean and attractive are critical to its future. In the words of Helen Keller, “The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.”

One relatively easy effort to show your community your love is to encourage leaders to support “Keep Iowa Beautiful Month” in April by passing a proclamation. This provides special support for building community pride. Maybe that support can be turned into a special project that improves the cleanliness and/or beauty of your town – one that might involve the residents and the youth.

How about a “green gift?” Form a Green Runners group of walkers, joggers, families, and friends, and schedule some fun runs (and walks). Pick up litter along the route and get a little exercise! At the end, celebrate the amount of litter and recyclables collected.

Form a citizen and volunteer committee to see if there is potential for murals to be developed around the town. Of course – start with one but also keep in mind the bigger picture (pardon the pun).

Work with school officials and teachers to consider utilizing the Teachers Going Green materials or start a school garden to get youngsters outdoors and learning how to produce food for the table. It doesn’t always need to come from the grocery store.

A couple other community ideas include:

Cleaning the signs around town with a little warm water and soap. Everyone could help, including the neighbors and school children. Block-by-block, it can make a difference.

Getting rid of the weeds in a vacant area would be of real value. Maybe it is a back-alley brigade of volunteers to clean up the litter and debris in selected alleys.

For more ideas, visit our Volunteer page and look through the list of potential projects that will put valentines on your town.

As the Executive Director of the organization, I also encourage you or your employer to become a sponsor of Keep Iowa Beautiful so that our work with communities may continue.

You get the idea – have a heart and give your community a “Spring Gift.”



KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL AFFILIATE

## **Gerald F. Schnepf**

Executive Director, Keep Iowa Beautiful

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# Opinion piece

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## Solar Energy Prosperity in Every Iowa County

Energy is as ever-present in the lives and work of Iowans as corn, conversations about the weather, and a can-do attitude.

Prosperity hasn't been quite so predictable, however, despite the corn, weather, or can-do attitude. But the 21<sup>st</sup> century energy world is providing very real opportunities for local investment, job creation, and keeping major energy dollars at home in every community and county in the state.

We call this opportunity energy prosperity, and locally-owned solar is the largest piece of that opportunity. This year, 2019, is a year of peak solar potential, but also a time for vigilance. If we're not careful, the promise of solar energy prosperity throughout Iowa and for generations may fade into the great Iowa sunset.

It's a year of peak opportunity because solar prices have been dropping for a decade, quality Iowa contractors cover most of the state, and solar tax credits are still in full effect. NOW is a very good time for local governments, institutions, farms, businesses, and homes to start the process.

Non-taxable entities such as local governments can utilize the tax credits only indirectly. We have developed a resource page to help<sup>1</sup>, including good examples in Iowa. The future of the Iowa solar credit is uncertain, but the federal credit is slated to begin phasing down from 30% this year, to 10% by 2022. It still may be a good deal for farms and businesses then, but why wait?

2019 is also a year for peak vigilance, however, because it appears the investor-owned utilities MidAmerican and Alliant will attempt to overturn net metering either in the legislature or at the Iowa Utilities Board. Net metering allows solar owners to feed surplus power production into the grid, and withdraw the same amount of power when needed: a kWh for a kWh, at the same value.

Without net metering, solar becomes economically non-viable for many customers, because the utility wants to pay 3-4 cents for each kWh the customer feeds into the grid, then turn around and charge the same customer 10-15 cents for each kWh they use. Not exactly a fair shake for the customer, but a great deal for the shareholder/investors of the utilities.

Fairness, though, is also the argument used by utilities around the country when attempting to do away with net metering. Electricity prices include a bundle of costs, including energy but also infrastructure such as poles, wires, and transformers. So if a solar owner doesn't buy as much electricity, the argument goes, they're also not covering their fair share of the infrastructure costs. This theoretically requires non-solar owners to "subsidize" solar owners.

There are a number of problems with this argument. One is that grid benefits don't flow only one way. Yes the utility provides multiple benefits, but the solar owner also provides a bundle of benefits when feeding power to the grid, including energy, capacity, avoided transmission cost, and voltage and frequency regulation.

States like MN have analyzed this trade<sup>2</sup> through "value of solar studies" and have found that, on average, the total value of the solar energy provided by solar owners is equal to or greater than the utility's retail electricity rate. This means net metering is more often than not a good deal for the grid and for other customers. It also suggests the real objection from investor-owned utilities might come more from lost profits on lower overall sales than from "fairness" issues between customers.

Another problem with the "cross-subsidization" argument is that utilities, like most infrastructure, already operate to a large degree on shared costs and benefits. Rural customers of a given utility pay the same rates as urban customers, for example, yet require much more distribution infrastructure. Nobody is complaining about cross-subsidization there.

Roads are a similar example familiar to local leadership throughout the state. We pay the gas tax and registration fees, but also realize nobody pays exactly their share. Someone is always "subsidizing" someone else, but in a shared system, we all recognize the importance of infrastructure for shared prosperity.



**Andy Johnson**  
Winneshiek Energy District  
[andy@energydistrict.org](mailto:andy@energydistrict.org)

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1 <https://energydistrict.org/resources/solar/solar-resources-for-local-governments/>

2 <https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/MN-Value-of-Solar-from-ILSR.pdf>

The grid is a similar shared infrastructure, and fair access on fair terms is critically important to shared energy prosperity long into the future. Just how big is the opportunity?

Winneshiek County is a non-metro Iowa county, with total population around 20,000, including a county seat of around 8,000. Over the past few years the solar market has grown from one contractor to six and has seen over \$10 million invested in hundreds of customer-owned solar systems. This investment creates between a half and one million dollars of energy value that remains in local pocketbooks every year. This is just the tip of the opportunity iceberg of local solar energy prosperity.

Consider that Iowa has enough capacity on rooftops alone to generate up to 20% of our annual electrical energy needs. With local ownership, this would represent over a billion dollars of reduced electricity purchases remaining in those pocketbooks and communities every year. It also means hundreds of thousands of Iowa homes, farms, businesses, and institutions becoming “energy entrepreneurs” by investing in local contractors, communities, and their own future.

This opportunity for solar energy prosperity is especially strong for Iowa farmers. Farms generally have plenty of siting options, including the roof of livestock facilities or space for ground mount systems. They have significant demand for power, and as businesses they have the ability to take advantage of both tax credits and depreciation (note, the 2017 federal tax bill increased bonus depreciation to 100%<sup>3</sup> for qualified property through 2022). Every farmer should have the option to become a solar energy entrepreneur.

Getting from here to 20% locally-owned solar would represent major investment over a generation or more, spread through every county and community. For an Iowa county with population of 10,000, this could mean over \$50 million of investment, and generate energy worth over \$85 million during the 25-year warranted system lifespan. This is possible and very cost-effective today, with incentives and net metering. With storage technologies advancing rapidly, there is no reason to stop at 20%.

And here’s the real power of solar energy prosperity: it is possible everywhere. Compared to large-scale, utility-owned wind (which is important, but very different), distributed solar generation = distributed ownership, distributed investment, distributed jobs, distributed wealth creation, distributed resilience, and distributed stewardship. Those are the investments that will keep ever-growing amounts of energy wealth in the pocketbooks and on the balance sheets of Iowa farms, homes, businesses, institutions, and local government.

How to get from here to there? Be proactive, and be vigilant. On the proactive side, much can be done to kick-start markets, from local governments and institutions investing in solar, to starting a local energy district<sup>4</sup>, to supporting the state solar energy tax credits<sup>5</sup>. On the vigilant side, beware of efforts to undo net metering and tax credits at the state level. Encourage your local municipal utility or rural co-op to support both.

There certainly are options to fine-tune net metering, and there is experimentation happening within some of the more innovative consumer-owned utilities such as municipals and co-ops. But any proposal coming from the investor-owned utilities, whatever the language or spin, is very likely to represent a steady closing of the door of solar energy prosperity for Iowans in order to protect profits for out-of-state investors.

The utilities are granted monopoly distribution service territories for good reason – we don’t need duplicate sets of poles and wires crisscrossing cornfields and communities, and we do need the good men and women on the lines and in the offices doing a great job keeping the lights on through all kinds of Iowa weather.

Utilities should not, however, be granted a monopoly on profitable clean energy investments. That “first monopoly” for investment and energy entrepreneurship ought to remain with customers, communities, and counties. Iowa’s grid must remain “open for business” in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Energy costs have been like a giant sucking sound, draining financial resources out of Iowa counties and communities year after year. With supportive policies and strong local leadership, we can turn that sucking sound into the giant churning sound of locally-owned solar energy prosperity for generations to come.

That’s powerful, and it’s the right thing to do. Let’s get to work.

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3 <https://www.energy.gov/savings/modified-accelerated-cost-recovery-system-macrs>

4 <https://energydistrict.org/services/leading-the-energy-district-movement/>

5 <https://programs-taxcredit.iowa.gov/Solar/Dashboard/External>



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# 2019 calendar

## March

- 2-5 NACo Legislative Conference  
(Washington, D.C.)
- 13 County Day at the Capitol  
(Iowa State Capitol, Des Moines)
- 14-15 ISAC Spring Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit  
Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

## April

- 14-17 ISSDA Civil School  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
- 18 ISAC HIPAA Program Meeting  
(Polk County River Place, Des Moines)
- 23-24 Iowa Governor's Conference on Public Health  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)
- 25 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## May

- 7-10 Treasurers Conference  
(Ameristar Holiday Inn, Council Bluffs)
- 15-19 NACo WIR Conference  
(Spokane, Washington)

## June

- 5-7 Records Summer School  
(Council Bluffs)
- 12 ISAC Scholarship Golf Fundraiser  
(Toad Valley Golf Course, Pleasant Hill)
- 18-21 ITAG Conference  
(Sheraton, West Des Moines)
- 26 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## July

- 11-15 NACo Annual Conference  
(Las Vegas, Nevada)
- 17-19 Auditors Annual Conference  
(Burlington)

## August

- 20 ISAC LPC Meeting  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit  
Union Convention Center, Des Moines)
- 21-23 ISAC Annual Conference  
(Veterans Memorial Community Choice Credit  
Union Convention Center, Des Moines)

## September

- 15-18 ISSDA Jail School  
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)
- 18-20 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat  
(Dubuque County)

## October

- 6-9 Assessors Fall Conference  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)

## November

- 20-21 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting  
(ISAC Office)

## December

- 8-10 ISSDA Winter School  
(Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines)

If you have any questions about the meetings listed above or would like to add an affiliate meeting to the ISAC calendar, please contact Kelsey Sebern at [ksebern@iowacounties.org](mailto:ksebern@iowacounties.org).

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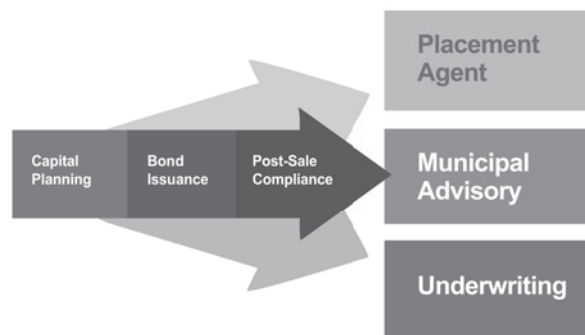
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