

Hiawatha!™

2026 STATE OF THE CITY

Refined. Redefined. Real.

PRESENTING SPONSORS & HOST



September 2026 Vol. 218



On August 13, hundreds of residents, business owners, and community leaders packed into The Can Shed for Hiawatha's 2026 State of the City. HEDCO Executive Director Liz Mathis opened with this year's theme, **Refined, Redefined, Real**; reflecting a city that keeps raising the bar, keeps rewriting its story, and still feels like a small-town community even as it builds big things. Mayor Steve Dodson delivered the numbers: in fiscal year 2025–26, Hiawatha recorded nearly \$69 million in economic development activity across completed, in-progress, and planned projects; the second highest in the city's recorded history. Six of those projects, representing more than \$35 million, came directly through HEDCO's outreach. "Next year is starting to look promising too," Dodson added.

The city's growing project list includes Igram Village, the Eldred Baseball and Performance Center, SERVPRO, a new NextEra training center, and Cedar Run Company, among other projects, with seven more already in planning for the year ahead. One standout is The Core of Hiawatha, a mixed-use development from Merit Development that will help shape a more walkable downtown at Center Point Road and Robins Road. Developer Wes Schulte presented the vision in a video feature, prompting Dodson to say: "That is what economic development looks like."

Beyond the headline projects, Mayor Dodson highlighted the infrastructure and amenities residents use every day. "Infrastructure is a necessity for all new development — roads, water, sidewalks. The things our residents feel every single day," he said. And it doesn't stop at roads: "Infrastructure isn't only about roads. It's about the quality of life that makes people stay."

Among the year's investments:

- A new 5.2-acre Urban Fishing Lake breaking ground this fall at Clark Park, funded by \$790,000 in state and county grants, with an ADA-accessible fishing pier, jetties, walking paths, and a reconfigured disc golf course
- New pickleball and basketball courts at Turtle Creek Park, plus master planning for Guthridge Park
- 400 new trees planted across the Plaza and city parks
- A Farmers' Market now with 55 vendors, and a growing Food Truck Friday tradition
- A refreshed Hiawatha Public Library exterior, with new raised garden beds installed alongside the Linn County Master Gardeners

Dodson credited City Manager Dennis Marks, department directors and staff, and City Council for the progress. The evening closed with the Fay M. Clark Hall of Fame Award, named for Hiawatha's founder and first mayor, presented to Hassan Igram — who has been building in Hiawatha for nearly forty years. Igram took over his father's small print shop in 1989 and grew it into Cedar Graphics, now serving Fortune 500 clients nationwide while staying rooted in Hiawatha. A HEDCO leader for more than nine years, he stood with fellow business leaders during the derecho recovery and is now behind Igram Village. Dodson called him "in every sense, a good neighbor — humble, generous, and committed to Hiawatha's success." Thanks go to The Can Shed for hosting, to HEDCO's Gold, Silver, and Bronze investor members, to Mayor Dodson and City Council, to City Manager Dennis Marks and city staff, and to every resident and business owner investing in Hiawatha's future.

CONNECT:



CITY OF HIAWATHA, IOWA



HIAWATHA-IOWA.COM

HIAWATHA-IOWA.COM/ALERT-SIGNUP/



MAYOR
STEVE DODSON
mayor@hiawatha-iowa.com



COUNCIL MEMBER
ROB ARCHIBALD
rarchibal@hiawatha-iowa.com



COUNCIL MEMBER
JEFF CATER
jcater@hiawatha-iowa.com



COUNCIL MEMBER
BEN FIEDLER
bfiedler@hiawatha-iowa.com



COUNCIL MEMBER
JILL WEIGEL
jweig@hiawatha-iowa.com



COUNCIL MEMBER
CJ FLYNN
cflynn@hiawatha-iowa.com

SEPTEMBER MEETING SCHEDULE

- 2nd** - City Council Meeting
- 8th** - Library Board Meeting
- 8th** - Park Board Meeting
- 14th** - Board of Adjustment Meeting
- 15th** - Water Board Meeting
- 16th** - City Council Meeting
- 17th** - History Commission Meeting
- 28th** - Planning & Zoning Meeting



Interested in community events? Find out what's happening in Hiawatha by checking out our city calendars!
hiawatha-iowa.com/calendar/



FROM THE CITY MANAGER



Every fall, we begin an important process that plans purchases and projects for the future of Hiawatha: our Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Everything from purchasing a new fire truck to reconstructing a city street is discussed and planned for the next five years, which allows us to stabilize our levy rate over time. Projects are moved up and down in the schedule as priorities and costs shift from year to year.

A \$1.2 million pumper fire truck is a great example of why this planning matters. Fire trucks have an exceptionally long lead time, so we ordered this one in November 2024, and it isn't scheduled for delivery until spring or summer of 2027. Including this purchase in the CIP lets us spread the cost over several years while still ensuring the funds are in place when the truck arrives.

Major road construction and reconstruction projects are another significant part of the CIP. Roads deteriorate over time, so having a plan for replacement is essential. Fiscal Year 2027 includes \$3.35 million in road improvements and new construction, an amount that has stayed consistent throughout the five-year plan, a good example of how prioritizing and timing keeps spending steady year after year.

The process begins in August, when city staff identify new and existing projects, discuss timing and city goals, and assign estimated costs and funding sources. Many sources come together to fund this plan, including GO Bonds, Sanitary Sewer Funds, Water Department Funds, Federal and State Grants, Local Grants, LOSST Revenue, and Property Tax Relief Funds are just a few examples.

In October, a draft plan is presented to City Council in a work session, where council members weigh in on and discuss each project. That feedback helps city staff refine and produce a final CIP. The finalized plan is set for a public hearing in November, and in December that hearing is held during a regular council meeting, giving residents the opportunity to comment. The CIP is generally adopted at this meeting, providing a roadmap for the next two years, with future years on the radar. Placing importance on the CIP process sets us up for continued growth while ensuring the necessary funding is in place.

Dennis Marks, Hiawatha City Manager



City Calendar



Library Calendar

CITY DIRECTORY

TITLE	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESS
City Manager	Dennis Marks	319-393-1515	dmarks@hiawatha-iowa.com
City Clerk	Kari Graber	319-393-1515	kgrab@hiawatha-iowa.com
Finance Director	Cindy Daack	319-393-1515	cdaack@hiawatha-iowa.com
Parks & Recreation Director	Matt Boggess	319-393-1515	mboggess@hiawatha-iowa.com
Community Development Director	Kesha Billings	319-393-1515	kbillings@hiawatha-iowa.com
City Engineer	Jon Fitch	319-393-1515	jfitch@hiawatha-iowa.com
Public Works Superintendent	Rod Jasa	319-393-6601	rjasa@hiawatha-iowa.com
Water Superintendent	Marty Recker	319-393-1515	mrecker@hiawatha-iowa.com
Police Chief	Ben Kamm	319-393-1212	chief@hiawathapolice.com
Fire Chief	Matt Powers	319-393-4180	mcpowers@hiawatha-iowa.com
Library Director	Chris Stoner	319-393-1414	cstoner@hiawatha-iowa.com

ENGINEERING UPDATE

Construction of the new pickleball courts and basketball court continues. The courts have been paved with asphalt, and installation of the perimeter and interior fencing has begun. Over the next month, we anticipate that the courts will be painted with the designated colors, basketball hoops installed, fence fabric installed, lighting erected and the project starting to come to closure. On the north side of the pickleball courts, City staff will erect a 16'x24' steel pavilion in September or October.



FY26 BUILDING PERMITS – BY THE NUMBERS

From July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 the city issued permits for over \$68 million in construction valuation, a 100% increase from the slower year of fiscal year 2025. The permits for new construction included:

- 75 new single-family dwellings valued at over \$28 million
- 6 new 4-plex attached residential structures valued at over \$4 million

No new commercial construction permits were approved in FY26, but numerous remodel projects contributed to the increased permit valuations for last fiscal year. The increased investment in current businesses is encouraging, while a number of new construction projects are on the horizon for FY27.

Looking at inspections, Community Development staff completed 148 commercial building inspections, 134 electrical inspections, 70 mechanical inspections, 209 plumbing inspections, 757 residential building inspections, and 373 rental unit inspections for a total of 1,691 inspections, with some inspections taking less than 30 minutes and others taking over an hour and some requiring multiple inspectors. In addition to building safety inspections, Community Development staff also respond to and follow-up on nuisance complaints such as tall grass/weeds or rubbish in yards

CITY OFFERING FREE MARKERS AHEAD OF WINTER

With winter just around the corner, the Public Works Department is launching a pilot program to assist snowplow drivers when clearing streets and help prevent damage to the right-of-way along the curb line.

This pilot program needs your help!

The City will provide five free 4-foot curb markers for residents to place along the back of the street curb. Residents can place the markers along the curb around December 1 or when the first snowfall is forecasted. In the spring, around April 1, residents should pull up the markers and store them until the following winter. The markers will be most beneficial on streets with a lower 3- to 4-inch curb height or on streets with curves.

The giveaway is available to City residents while supplies last. Watch in the October newsletter for sign-up information, including pickup locations, distribution dates, and any eligibility requirements.

A little preparation now can help make winter snow removal safer and easier for everyone.



THANK YOU FOR JOINING US FOR ANOTHER SUMMER READING AT HIAWATHA PUBLIC LIBRARY!

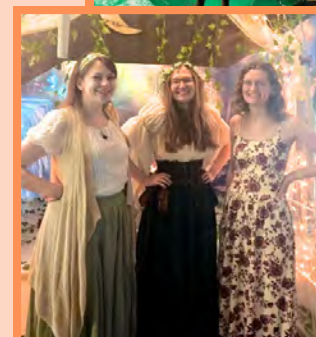
The staff of Hiawatha Public Library want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the people of Hiawatha and our surrounding communities for showing up and supporting your local library during our Summer Reading Program.

We saw record-breaking attendance and reading program participation over the past two months. A total of 33,010 people walking through the library's doors between June and July (3,402 more than our previous summer door count record). 2,630 people signed up for our summer reading program, and our completion rates for the program were excellent, with 60% of children, 50% of teens, and 38% of adults completing all levels of the program.

Whether it was attending an enchanted Fairy Ball, seeing a fire truck up close, making crafts with peers, meeting goats and llamas, or learning to cook new meals together, our summer programming had something for everybody.

We could not have made this summer such a success without the incredible hard work of our dedicated staff, as well as our amazing volunteer network. Thank you all so much, and well done.

Remember, even though summer is over, the fun doesn't need to end! Check out our website at hiawathapubliclibrary.org for a full calendar of upcoming events for all ages.



CONNECT:



HIAWATHA PUBLIC LIBRARY



HIAWATHAPUBLICLIBRARY.ORG

BUILDING A THRIVING TREE CANOPY FOR HIAWATHA'S FUTURE

Six years ago, the August 2020 derecho changed Hiawatha's landscape, damaging and destroying countless trees throughout the community. Since then, the City of Hiawatha has worked hard to rebuild what was lost while creating a healthier and more diverse environment for the future.

This fall, that effort will take another step forward through a partnership between the City of Hiawatha and Trees Forever. With support from an Iowa Department of Natural Resources grant, 75 new trees will be planted in city right-of-ways throughout Hiawatha.

The project is part of the city's continued effort to develop a comprehensive tree canopy that provides benefits outside of just appearance. Trees provide valuable shade, help reduce summer temperatures, improve air quality and create welcoming neighborhoods and public spaces. Every tree planted pushes Hiawatha further into establishing a thriving canopy post-derecho.

Planting Where Trees Are Needed Most

The locations of all plantings are chosen based on the area's need for all of a tree's benefits, while avoiding conflicts with all current or future infrastructure. Based on these factors, the 75 trees will be planted in the northern corridor of the city mainly in the Edgewood Village neighborhood.



CONNECT:



CITY OF HIAWATHA PARKS AND RECREATION



HIAWATHA.ACTIVITYREG.COM

LIBRARY STILL SEEKING MLB BOBBLE HEADS FOR OCTOBER DISPLAY

A huge THANK YOU to everyone who has offered to loan their MLB bobble heads for Hiawatha Public Library's October display! your generosity is helping us create a fun celebration of America's pastime.

We're still looking for a few all-stars! We haven't heard from fans of the Cubs, Twins, Royals or Cardinals yet. Step up to the plate! If you have a bobble head from one of these teams that you'd be willing to loan for the display, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact Alicia Mangin at amangin@hiawatha-iowa.com.

Let's make this exhibit a home run with representation from all across Major League Baseball!



BUCKET TRUCK STORY TIME

SEPTEMBER 21
@ 10:00
Hiawatha Public Library

Superintendent Rod from Hiawatha Public Works returns with his bucket truck!



A DINOSAUR IS LOOSE IN THE LIBRARY!

SEPTEMBER 21 FROM 1:00-2:00
HIAWATHA PUBLIC LIBRARY
FOR KIDS 6-12 YEARS OLD

Look out! A dinosaur is loose in the library, and he has razor-sharp claws, bone-crushing jaws, and...feathers??? Come and see for yourself!

Join Iowa author Kelly Crull for a fun STEM storytime featuring his new National Geographic Kids book, *The Chick-o-saurus!*



The trees will come from Fleming Nursery and include a variety of species from Hiawatha's approved tree list. In order to ensure a thriving environment, the species are selected based on their low mortality rates. The city wants to ensure that the trees are able to withstand any pests, severe weather, and any other future challenges that arise.

The planting process will be carried out by a couple of different groups. 50 trees will be planted with assistance from local volunteer groups, and the remaining 25 will be planted by the Arlington County Growers Research Team. Planting is expected to take place over two days this October.

Hiawatha is fully committed to this process and it does not end once the trees are in the ground. A two-year watering and maintenance plan, led by Trees Forever, will help give each tree the best opportunity to become established and thrive.

The new trees will also be monitored on data tracking software, helping the city care for its tree population and quickly resolve any issues in a timely manner. Six years after the derecho, rebuilding Hiawatha's tree canopy remains a long-term effort. The city is excited to provide environmentally friendly improvements to the community. These 75 trees are another important investment in a greener and healthier Hiawatha for generations to come.



MAILBOX MANNERS: GIVE 'EM 20 FEET



The Hiawatha Police Department would like to remind residents of a City of Hiawatha parking ordinance designed to help ensure safe and efficient mail delivery.

The ordinance prohibits parking within 20 feet on either side of a mailbox that is positioned to allow mail delivery from a postal vehicle on the roadway. Keeping this area clear allows postal carriers to deliver mail safely without having to maneuver around parked vehicles.

Not sure what 20 feet looks like? A simple estimate is:

- About one full-sized vehicle length
- Approximately four to five adult steps
- Approximately the length of two standard parking spaces placed end to end

When parking near a mailbox, leaving about one car length of open space on each side is a good rule of thumb. Vehicles blocking mailboxes may delay delivery, require carriers to skip delivery, and create unnecessary traffic hazards. Vehicles found in violation of this ordinance may receive a parking ticket. Residents are encouraged to be mindful of mailbox locations when parking on neighborhood streets.

Thank you for helping keep our neighborhoods safe, accessible, and ready for everyone—including our postal carriers.

WATER YOU LOOKING FOR?

**Think you know your way around Hiawatha's water system?
Dive in and see how many hidden water-related words you can find!**

D P H O S P H A T E N X H H L
U H W U W A T E R C L E R K Y
O Y D A W Q T C H L O R I N E
R K I I T A D O V L E F E T F
C M S R R E T N S H V J D O W
U O T F Q R R E I A U C K W E
R N R E L N I O R J M B S E L
B T I H E U C G P B W P H R L
S H B M S R O U A E O I L S S
T L U E F W T R K T R A X E I
O Y T T I S R B I H I A R Q T
P B I E L E U M O D E O T D E
G I O R T W C U O E E I N O R
A L N L E E K D W V K W N H R
M L Q W R R A Q U A P H O R Y

Water Operator

Monthly Bill

Chlorine

Water Board

Curb Stop

Sewer

Distribution

Water Clerk

Fluoride

Sample

Filter

Tower

Irrigation

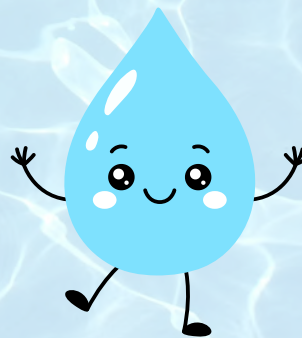
Phosphate

Aquaphor

Well Site

Meter

Truck



INSIDE YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT: PART 3 – MORE THAN A FIRE DEPARTMENT

Over the past several months we have highlighted how to join the fire department, the initial training a new member undertakes, and the opportunities members have within the fire department. That initial training is hopefully only the beginning of a long-tenured career of serving our community. Being a combination fire department, with both paid and volunteer members, has numerous advantages. Not only are we able to supplement our volunteer staffing with full-time paramedic/firefighters, we are able to have an organization that is well rounded and reflects our community. The department's roster includes young adults building career experience, neighbors looking out for neighbors, people seeking a sense of community, and others simply looking to give back.



After a member's initial onboarding and training is complete, the member is assigned to one of six duty crews. A duty crew is made up of a crew officer, two full-time firefighter/paramedics, and 5-7 volunteer members. These crews are assigned to be on shift on a rotating six-day schedule. The department uses a duty crew system as a way to schedule members to be present and ready to respond to calls. The benefits of the crew system are faster response times, adequate coverage for initial calls, and increased team building and readiness across the department. The crews become a member's second family. They spend many hours a week being on call together, completing training, working on certifications, and completing equipment checks.

Training and responding to emergency calls are only a portion of the activities that fire department members participate in. A few highlights of those activities include assisting at public events like the city's Earth Day recycling event, stopping by block parties, providing EMS medical stand-by for community events, giving tours to community groups, teaching CPR classes, and conducting fire safety education in schools.

The fire department truly aspires to be a community-based department. A fire department is more than emergency response. Every duty crew shift, every training night, every knock on the door for a smoke detector check is a reminder that someone is paying attention, someone is prepared, and someone cares. That kind of presence builds trust, and trust builds a safer, more connected place to live. The men and women of the fire department aren't just protecting property and lives — they're helping keep the community vibrant, resilient, and genuinely connected, one call and one shift at a time.



DELIVER BY TUESDAY
09/01/2026

PRESORTED
STANDARD
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PAID
Hiawatha, IA
Permit No. 33

ECRWSS

HIAWATHA CITY COUNCIL ACTION

RESOLUTION

AUGUST 5, 2026

- #26-129** Setting PH to Consider Amending Ordinance Chapter 101 Storm Water Drainage System \$101.03 Rates
- #26-130** Amending Monthly Rates for Storm Water Management Facilities
- #26-131** Designating Rates for City Operated Equipment, Labor & Supplies
- #26-132** Change Order #1 for 2026 Turtle Creek Pickleball Courts Project
- #26-133** Approving Contract with ECICOG for CDBG Administration & Project Delivery Services
- #26-134** Adopting Require Policies for CDBG Funding Application
- #26-135** Authorizing Contract to Proceed with Public Improvements for Todd Hills Second Addition
- #26-136** Iowa DOT TSIP for Boyson/Carpenter Rd and Edgewood Rd Intersection Reconstruction Application
- #26-137** Final Plat and Development Agreement for Igram Village First Addition
- #26-138** Authorizing Website Equipment Reserve funds for development of a new Library website
- #26-139** 28E Agreement between Hiawatha and Marion for Building Inspections and Plan Review Services
- #26-140** 28E Agreement between Hiawatha and Linn County for Building Inspections and Plan Review Services
- #26-141** Certification to the County Treasurer Office for collection of a delinquent account of lawn care services

RESOLUTION

AUGUST 19, 2026

- #26-142** Setting PH on Development Agreement with Murray, Wilson & Rose LLC
- #26-143** Setting PH to Consider Voluntary Annexation for 3541 Todd Hills Road
- #26-144** Accepting STBG Award for Boyson Rd Project
- #26-145** Approving Contract for Clark Park Pond Project
- #26-146** Awarding Contract for Sewer Manhole Inspections
- #26-147** Change Order #1 for Kainz Dr Sewer Improvements
- #26-148** Final Pay Estimate #1 for Kainz Dr Sewer Improvements

The Hiawatha City Council meeting minutes may be obtained online at hiawatha-iowa.com or by request to the City Clerk's Office at City Hall at 319-393-1515 x526

HIAWATHA HISTORY COMMISSION



September's Question:

This was the first mobile home park in Hiawatha. Where was it located?
Bonus question: what was its name?

August's Answer:

"Garlow" is a combination of "garage" and "bungalow." They were an affordable solution to building a home in the 40-50's. This was before mortgages existed. A small structure was built and the owner could live on their property. The owner had to save money to eventually build a larger home and then convert the Garlow to a garage.

Call Marilyn with your answers at 319-393-5067

CELEBRATING FREE BOOKS FOR KIDS 0-5!

Since Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program began in the Hiawatha area, **318 children** have registered for free & 122 have graduated!



COFFEE TALK WITH MAYOR DODSON

7:00 - 9:00 AM

SEPTEMBER 10 OCTOBER 8 NOVEMBER 12

It's time to talk. Do you have ideas, solutions or thoughts about the City of Hiawatha? Mayor Dodson wants to hear from you!

Join him at Roasters Coffee House in Hiawatha!



Sign up today, **FOR FREE**, at
www.hiawathapubliclibrary.org/imagination-library

