



# May 2022

Southern Iowa Council of Governments (SICOG) is pleased to announce the hiring of an Executive Director. After careful consideration and several interviews, SICOG has hired Beth Waddle as the new Executive Director. She will begin her duties on Monday, May 16. Beth has over 20 years' experience in economic development. The last 19 years she has been the executive director of the Adams Community Economic Development Corporation. In that position she has written and administered grant funds, managed a revolving loan fund, created budgets, written contracts, and has worked closely with regional and state partners, sitting on various regional boards and committees. "We had several great candidates," said Dan Christensen, Chairperson of the Search Committee. "Beth by far had the most experience similar to SICOG's program of work and a proven track record in business administration as well as a clear vision for SICOG's future."

"The Board is confident that SICOG is moving in the right direction," said Jerry Walker, Chairperson of the SICOG Executive Board of Directors. "The search committee brought the board it's recommendation after interviewing all candidates. The Board then had the opportunity to interview their selection. The vote was unanimous to hire Ms. Waddle."

There are still two openings at SICOG: one as a planner and one as a planning tech. One of Ms. Waddle's first major acts will be to interview and hire for these two positions. Then the SICOG staff will be back to full capacity. If you know of someone who would be an asset in these positions, please have them check out the job descriptions at sicog.com.

Walker continued, "know that SICOG is here to serve our region. We continue to work for each of our communities and counties. Please call the office at 641-782-8491 and let the staff know what projects your community is working on."

## SICOG Communities Score Three Wellmark Foundation Grants

SICOG prepared three applications for The Wellmark Foundation's spring MATCH solicitation. All were funded at the requested level. Afton received \$65,000 toward a \$130,000 trail and sidewalk project. Lenox received \$100,000 toward a \$250,000 trail and sidewalk project. Winterset received \$100,000 toward a \$1 million all-inclusive playground project. With these awards, all three projects are nearly fully funded. Our region has a limited number of trails, and Afton and Lenox are leaders in developing a trail network over the past twenty years. After these segments, both towns will have approximately 2 miles of trail networks. Both trails connect the schools to the rest of the community and the new segments will connect recreational areas to the network. Winterset's all-inclusive playground will be a one-of-a-kind feature in the region and will attract families from all over to enjoy a playground designed for people of all abilities. Just this week, Winterset was notified it's request for a Land and Water Conservation Fund is tentatively awarded as well. That \$100,000 grant moves that playground closer to reality. SICOG has also applied for a few other grants for each of these projects with several grants awarded and a few that are still pending.



The Wellmark Foundation is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

## Two Downtown Housing Grants Awarded

The Cities of Creston and Corning were awarded Downtown Housing Grants. These were two of four applications submitted by SICOG in January. The Corning application was for a local business owner who wants to convert unused space into two apartments. His project was awarded \$200,000. The Creston project involves a developer seeking to renovate unused space on two upper floors into 12 apartments with \$600,000 in grant funds. This developer will also make renovations in the main floor (with other funding) to bring it back as viable retail space. Both projects will help meet housing needs in the region. The Downtown Housing Grant is a one-time program using COVID funding. If other property owners and local governments desire to improve their downtown housing stock, please contact SICOG and we can discuss funding options.



## State Recreational Trails (SRT)

The final legislative appropriation for the State Recreational Trails (SRT) program for State Fiscal Year 2023 (SFY 2023) has not yet been determined by the Iowa Legislature. Pending legislation appropriates \$2.5 million this year. In anticipation of an appropriation for the program, this message provides notice that the Iowa DOT will accept project applications for SFY 2023 according to the existing July 1, 2022, application deadline. Interested applicants are encouraged to begin working on funding applications in preparation for this deadline.

Please contact Scott Flagg, State Recreational Trails Program Manager, at [scott.flagg@iowadot.us](mailto:scott.flagg@iowadot.us) or 515-239-1252, if you have any questions. Application materials are available on the program website at [https://iowadot.gov/systems\\_planning/Grant-Programs/-Federal-and-State-Recreational-Trails](https://iowadot.gov/systems_planning/Grant-Programs/-Federal-and-State-Recreational-Trails).

## Planner's Desk – Planning Fatigue

Most of you may have heard the term, "planning fatigue." As a planner, I don't like the term, but it is a reality that planners must address. Planning fatigue is when an entity or person completes a series of planning activities in a short space of time. What brings the fatigue is when the planning activities fail to result in action and change. No one wants to be part of something that makes no difference. A plan that is unused or used only when a community leader finds the plan helpful for his/her agenda leads to fatigue and even some level of resentment. Unfortunately, it reduces the participation and buy-in for future planning that may be needed. I offer a few suggestions to combat this problem while continuing to plan for future needs:

- Make a concerted effort to use and carry out the plans you have completed.
- For plans or key ideas in plans that are not carried out, review each issue and each plan, instead of just ignoring them.
- Come up with tangible goals and purposes for any future planning you do, so that the community knows when the plan is being pursued.
- Make sure all planning meets a specific need and relates back to other community goals and previous plans.
- Track plan implementation and make sure the public is informed when plan activities are completed, maybe through an annual newsletter, city website, etc.
- Have key plan hard copies available and in view at meetings, and open them when topics are discussed.

Finally, any local government with aspirations to grow and develop should have a comprehensive plan. While such a plan is most suited for larger towns of 1,000 people or more, many smaller towns complete a comprehensive plan that has Iowa's Smart Planning elements and principles. These kinds of plans should serve as the overall vision for the community. Other planning documents should help implement this plan. When people see how the planning efforts fit together, they are more likely to buy in, participate, and support whatever ideas come from it.



IEDA Enhance Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Grant	Funds for capital projects, such as trails, libraries, community centers, pavilions, entertainment venues, museums, recreational facilities, and more (Eligible: local governments and certain nonprofits).	Anticipated June 1
REAP Open Spaces Program	State funding for recreation, conservation, and outdoor resources projects, including land acquisition and development. Funding is available up to 100% of the costs. (Eligible: local governments).	June 15
Iowa Women's Foundation Building Community Childcare Solutions Grant	OPENS JUNE 1. This grant funds innovative solutions to childcare issues in a community (Eligible: local governments and certain nonprofits).	June 15
IEDA Destination Iowa Program	Destination Iowa is an ARPA \$100 million pool of funds that consists of four funding programs. These are: Economically Significant Development Fund, Outdoor Recreation Fund, Tourism Fund, and Creative Placemaking Fund. The first three funds are more traditional in nature and include capital projects that address these three areas. The creative placemaking pool funds a small number of very large placemaking projects on a long-term basis (Eligible: local governments and certain nonprofits, with some exceptions).	September 1
CDBG Community Facilities and Services	This annual competitive program offers grants to assist communities for a variety of projects including day care facilities, senior centers, vocational workshops and other community services such as storm water projects. (Eligible: local governments)	Ongoing, until funds run out
Iowa Historic Preservation Tax Credits – small projects	Up to 25% of project cost in the form of a State tax credit to offset the costs of the building rehabilitation or restoration. Project must affect a designated historic building on the National Register of Historic Places. Projects can have eligible costs up to \$750,000 (Eligible: property owners – governments can partner to mobilize the project).	Ongoing
ITC/ IRDC "Power of Connection" Community Grant Program	Grants up to \$5,000 for capacity building, strategic planning, studies or assessments for a variety of community programs and issues (Eligibility: rural communities)	Ongoing
Highway Safety Improvement	Provides grants for low-cost, systematic safety improvements in the \$10,000/mile range, focusing on lane departure crashes. (Eligible: local governments)	Ongoing
Traffic Engineering Assistance Program (TEAP)	Provides 100 hours of engineering assistance for operations and traffic safety issues. (Eligible: local governments)	Ongoing

## SICOG Executive Board Meeting of March 29, 2022

Chairperson Jerry Walker called the meeting to order at 1:24 p.m. at the SICOG office. The following members were present: Birt, Christensen, Fitch, Holmes, Davidson, Leners, Lesan, Nelson, Riley, Trickey, and Walker.

Staff Present: Waddle and Brimm

Birt made a motion to approve the agenda. Riley seconded the motion, all ayes. Motion carried.

Holmes made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2022 meeting. Birt seconded the motion, all ayes. Motion carried.

Trickey made a motion to approve the financial reports as presented for the month of March. Birt seconded the motion, all ayes. Motion carried.

Lesan made a motion to sign the Memorandum of Understanding for the housing rehabilitation contracts with the Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO). Christensen seconded the motion. All ayes, motion carried.

Birt made a motion to pay the invoice from Dorsey Law Firm in full, at this time. Leners seconded the motion. All ayes, motion carried.

Fitch made a motion to approve forming a loan review committee to review and compile the information from the RLF applications. Fitch's motion included utilizing the volunteers for the loan review committee of Birt, Nelson and Leners. Riley seconded the motion. All ayes, motion carried.

Other items discussed included: EDA, building renovations, budget & financials, search committee, grant report, and D & O Insurance premium.

Walker adjourned the meeting at 2:10 p.m.

Minutes Submitted by Brimm

## SICOG Executive Board Special Meeting of April 14, 2022

Chairperson Jerry Walker called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. at the SICOG office. The following members were present: Birt, Christensen, Holmes, Leners, Lesan, Riley, Taylor, Trickey, Walker and Zabel.

Fitch joined the meeting by phone.

Staff present: Waddle and Brimm.

Riley made a motion to approve the agenda. Birt seconded the motion, all ayes. Motion carried.

Christensen reported for the search committee and made a recommendation on behalf of the committee on the best candidate for the position and the starting salary and benefit package. Discussion followed and the members were given an opportunity to ask questions.

Trickey made a motion to hire Beth Waddle as the new Director of SICOG with the starting salary as recommended by the committee and the benefits to include 4-weeks of vacation to start and all the other regular benefits as provided to other staff members. Waddle's hire date will be May 16, 2022. Birt seconded the motion. All ayes, motion carried.

Christensen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:29 p.m. Leners seconded the motion. All ayes motion carried.

Minutes Submitted by Brimm

