

# NEWTON DAILY NEWS

LOCAL NEWS AND VIDEOS FROM JASPER COUNTY, IOWA

## Today's Forecast



81°

Feels like: 81°  
Wind: 5 S  
Humidity: 2 %

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FONT SIZE:

## Fly Iowa to land in Newton

Fly Iowa, the annual airshow and aviation expo, is taking flight to Newton in 2011.

Local committee members Jim Jones and Ethan Nasalroad appeared at Monday's council meeting to talk about the event, currently planned for Sept. 17. Fly Iowa is promoted by Iowa Aviation Promotion group, a non-profit organization seeking to increase the number of pilots and aviation supporters throughout the state.

The event rotates to a different city every year with the 2010 show wrapping up last September in Burlington.

"This event is more than just an airshow," Jones said, "It might be considered the state fair of aviation in Iowa. While there will be an airshow for entertainment, the goal is to draw as many people to the Newton Airport as possible to see exhibits and displays of ways aviation benefits them and our state."

Organizers hope between 6,000 and 7,000 people will attend the event, which will include exhibits from aviators across the state. Admission for Fly Iowa is free.

Nasalroad and Jones are heading up Newton's Fly Iowa 2011 committee and the group is working on creating a schedule and budget for the event. The IAPG provides a grant for seed money but the local committee will need to work for some fundraising.

"We have one of the most beautiful and best laid out airports in the world," Jones said. "This is a grand opportunity to showcase that airport in particular but also the speedway and Newton, our location and our people. There has never been, in my opinion, a time when we have so needed an event like this. We were just delighted that the state of Iowa came to us and gave us that opportunity."

Also last night, Newton City Council discussed the citywide tax abatement program. Newton has had residential tax abatement since the early 90s and the current program — 100 percent abatement for the first two years and 50 percent for the following three years — has been in place since 2003. The goal of the program is to encourage new housing in the community, which in turn helps to grow the residential tax base.

"My overall recommendation is that we should have some sort of residential tax abatement program," Community Development Director Bryan Friedman said "I think that given where Newton is positioned within the central Iowa housing market and given our competition, a lot of which does have tax abatement programs, I think it would put us at a competitive disadvantage to not have a program."

Friedman also advised council consider modifying the program with a cap to the maximum amount that could be abated. Most communities in the surrounding areas that use tax abatement place a cap on the value. Grinnell offers three years of 100 percent with a cap of \$50,000 and Altoona offers five years at 100 percent capped at \$75,000.

"It's real difficult to gauge the impact of our tax abatement program," Friedman said. "It certainly hasn't created a big surge of new housing, but it has been an important factor to some development."

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Council member Marvin Morris noted that several nearby communities, such as Baxter and Pella, do not have residential tax abatement and still seem to do well with new housing starts. Mayor Chaz Allen noted that Baxter utilizes tax increment financing to spur new housing development.

The council also approved refinancing city bonds to save an estimated \$246,000 over the next nine years.

City officials and council members will host a public budget meeting next Monday at 5:30 p.m. in council chambers. At the meeting, community members will be able to offer thoughts or ideas on the upcoming city budget.

## READER POLL

If Newton city elections were held tomorrow, which at-large council candidate would you vote for?

Fran Henderson  
James Klier  
Brenda Morris  
Noreen Otto  
A write-in candidate

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