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The Gazette

Eastern Iowa's independent, employee-owned newspaper

Friday, October 3, 2025



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School seeks to invest in work-based learning



Christopher Beebee, 19, works on sewing pajama pants during an intro to clothing class Thursday at Williamsburg High School. The class is part of the school's family and consumer science program that would benefit from a proposed \$8 million bond referendum. (Elizabeth Wood photos/The Gazette)

Williamsburg voters weigh \$8M bond to expand space for the programs

By Grace King, The Gazette

WILLIAMSBURG — An almost \$8 million school bond referendum would modernize and expand classrooms to better serve students enrolled in work-based learning classes in industrial technology, family and consumer science, and agriculture if approved by voters in the Williamsburg Community School District.

The proposed \$7.945 million would fund two additions to Williamsburg Junior/Senior High School

and renovations to existing classroom space for the special education program and the auditorium lobby.

The proposal is more than \$14 million less than a school bond referendum that failed to garner enough approval from voters in the school district just last year.

Election Day is Nov. 4. "We've outgrown all of these spaces. The physical nature of our classes means we have so much equipment we're running low on room. It's a daily struggle to operate in there sometimes," said Krista Casterline, who

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Jaitza Briones, 14, sews a mug cozy during an intro to clothing class Thursday at Williamsburg High School in Williamsburg. Family and consumer science teacher Krista Casterline said students will work on creating skirts, robes, hoodies and a few other clothing patterns in the class.

Alliant looks to other sites for plant

Utility says it is 'deprioritizing the original Fairfax location'

By Olivia Cohen, The Gazette

FAIRFAX — Alliant Energy, which has been exploring building a new natural gas-fired power plant in Fairfax — a proposal that was met with resistance from some residents and officials at the nearby Eastern Iowa Airport — said in a statement to the city that it is "deprioritizing" the Fairfax location.

The news came via a statement from the company that was read aloud near the end of the first of two information town hall meetings being held in Fairfax this month.

"We appreciate the invitation to participate in the town hall series regarding our proposed combined cycle project. While Alliant Energy has not selected a site for the proposed project, we are deprioritizing the original Fairfax location at this time," wrote Emily Kaiser, Alliant's manager of community development. "We continue to evaluate the other viable sites in the region through our site selection process."

Alliant has not said where those other sites are located, or why the Fairfax location — adjacent to the Traverro plant on the south side of the city — was being deprioritized.

The announcement comes as the Fairfax City Council has been working its way through adoption of an ordinance that would create a zoning code exception to allow for construction of a power plant.

Residents at a recent City Council meeting pushed back against the plant's proposed location, citing concerns about potential health impacts of the plant, noise and odors, and quality-of-life issues.

The Fairfax City Council, which passed the first of three readings of the proposed

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Farm leaders, Grassley press Trump as farmers lose Chinese market

'We're looking at new crop sales for soybeans at 20-year lows. ... That's a big problem'

By Tom Barton, Gazette Des Moines Bureau

Iowa farm leaders and Republican U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley are pressing President Donald Trump's administration to take urgent action after China

cut off purchases of American soybeans, threatening one of the state's most important export markets.

China, once the top buyer of U.S. soybeans, has turned to Argentina and Brazil in response to Trump's tariffs on Chinese imports and Beijing's retaliatory duties on U.S. farm goods. Reuters reported China recently purchased about 1.3 million tons of Argentine soybeans, the same week

the Trump administration announced a \$20 billion bailout package for Argentina.

Grassley on Tuesday said he was frustrated with the timing of that aid and worried about the impact of lost sales for Iowa farmers.

The veteran senator said he had spoken with U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins about relief options and that the administration is

considering using tariff revenue to provide direct support to farmers.

"I'm hopeful the administration will come up with a plan to improve morale among farmers," Grassley said, calling the situation "reminiscent" of the farm crisis of the 1980s. Though, he added that "nothing's put together yet."

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