Boulton says Iowa in a battle for its soul

Gov. candidate says 2018 election is critical moment

BY CHUCK VANDENBERG
PCC EDITOR

FORT MADISON - State Sen. Nate Boulton made a stop in Fort Madison Sunday afternoon to pitch for the governor’s seat in 2018. Boulton met with approximately 20 people at Lee County Supervisor chairman Rick Larkin’s house for about an hour. He talked about a variety of issues, but said the 2018 election cycle will be an election for the “Soul of the Iowa.”

State Senator Rich Taylor introduced Boulton saying that Boulton was a candidate that could win in November and doesn’t “take crap from anyone”. Boulton is a 37 year old labor attorney and first term senator who won his district, which includes east Des Moines and Pleasant Hill, in 2016 with 60% of the vote.

“I think Nate being nice and young will attract those young independents,” Taylor said. “I think out of all of our candidates, and we have some good candidates, but I think Nate’s the one that can win in November and we have to have a candidate that can win against, well, I think we know who that will be.”

“If you can’t get fired up about this kid, you’re not going to get fired up about anyone.”

Boulton grew up in southeast Iowa in Columbus Junction whose father was a worker at Bandag in Muscatine.

“I’m proud of my southeast Iowa upbringing and I know what I want to do with that law degree. I want to fight for people like my parents and grandparents.”

Boulton spent time before being elected litigating against the Branstad

Fort Madison resident Angela Roller meets with gubernatorial candidate Nate Boulton Sunday afternoon at Lee County Supervisor Chairman Rick Larkin’s home, while fellow State Sen. Rich Taylor (left) and Fort Madison’s Bob Morawitz look on.

Incentives a “delicate dance” for officials

Bringing jobs into the state and its communities is somewhere on the list of every person who’s in office and every person who’s ever run for office. Jobs mean income, an improved quality of life, an increased tax base, and a domino effect on just about every facet of local and state budgets.

Politicians, economic development officials, elected officials, and just about everyone else has their respective toes curled when they hear a large employer is moving within their boundaries.

Apple announced this past week that they were building a large data center in Waukee, a town of about 14,000 just west of Des Moines. Apple, one of the world’s richest companies, will get $20 million from the state and another $194 million in abatements from the City of Waukee.

Man, that’s a lot of money. It’s more than Lee County gave Orascom in 2012 to secure the construction of the fertilizer plant south of Waver at a cost of just over...
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Sunday accident sends cyclist to the hospital

BY PCC STAFF

FORT MADISON - A one-vehicle motorcycle accident has sent one man to the Fort Madison Community Hospital with injuries Sunday evening.

Emergency crews were called to the scene at about 6 p.m. The accident happened on a wet turn in the southbound lanes of Hwy 61 just south of 330th Avenue on the north side of Fort Madison.

According to reports the man was thrown when the vehicle lost control. The motorcycle slid another 100 feet or so and the victim, who's name wasn't immediately available, was thrown into the ditch into a clump of trees and brush on the west side of the highway. He was put on a backboard and transported the hospital by Lee County EMS personnel.

Wever Fire & Rescue, Fort Madison Police and the Lee County Sheriff’s Department also responded to the accident.

Photo by Chuck Vandenberg/PCC

Above, a motorcycle lays in the middle of the highway after it was involved in a one-vehicle accident in the southbound lanes of Hwy 61. The driver was transported to Fort Madison Community Hospital with injuries. At left, rescue personnel tend to the victim near a clump of trees about 40 feet off the roadway.

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IOWA LOTTERY WINNING NUMBERS

Lotto Drawings

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Please help Great River Regional Waste Authority keep Fort Madison clean and safe during your visit. Trash and Recycling bins have been placed in multiple locations throughout the Rodeo grounds for your convenience. We encourage you to properly dispose of your trash and recycle any materials that can be recycled.

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I. The meeting was called to order by President Lamb at 6:00 p.m. Directors Young, Wondra, Ross and Hotop were present. Also present were Superintendent Slater, Director of Curriculum and Student Services Harmon and Secretary Elmore. Directors DiPrima and Hope were absent. 

II. Recognition of guests. President Lamb welcomed members of the audience in attendance and explained the procedures for the meeting.

III. Reading of Foundation documents. The Board read and reviewed the Foundation documents consisting of the vision, mission and belief statements for the Fort Madison Community School District.

IV. Monthly communications
   a. Curriculum Corner. There was none.
   b. Superintendent Goal Report. Superintendent Slater updated the Board on the presentation of goals to all staff of the Fort Madison Community School District. The Board reviewed the goals and how the progress towards meeting the goals will be reported.
   c. Support agenda. It was moved by Young and seconded by Wondra to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed on a 5-0 voice vote.
   d. Support Staff handbook.
      It was moved by Young and seconded by Wondra to approve the Support Staff handbook as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
   e. Substitute handbook.
      It was moved by Young and seconded by Wondra to approve the Substitute handbook as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
   f. Consider approval of salary lists.
      a. AFSCME Associates list.
         It was moved by Wondra and seconded by Young to approve the AFSCME Associates salary list as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
      b. Unit 1 Bus Drivers.
         It was moved by Hope and seconded by Ross to approve the Unit 1 Bus Drivers salary as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
      c. Certified Staff Procedural manual.
         It was moved by Young and seconded by Wondra to approve the Teacher handbook as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
      d. Teamsters Unit 2 Handbook.
      e. Teamsters Unit 1 Handbooks.
      f. Substitute handbook.

V. Consent agenda. It was moved by Young to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.

VI. Consent agenda. It was moved by Wondra and seconded by Hope to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.

VII. Action Items
   a. 210.2 Board Meeting Procedures. It was moved by Wondra and seconded by Hope to approve policy #210.2 as presented. The motion passed on a 6-0 voice vote.
   b. Certification of attendance.
   c. Building tour.
   d. Building tour.
   e. Building tour.
   f. Building tour.

VIII. Budget hearing.

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Curriculum reports
Employee contract termina-
Curriculum reports
Employme...
get the clock set up. Wouldn't you know it, he came the morning of the eclipse.

The “visitation” by the clock repairman was sort of surrealistic. He drove an hour to get here, spent an hour adjusting and balancing the Sligh (pronounced “Sley”) Clock, and then took off, thanking us for the “fun” he'd had. No charge. He said he gave away one free clock adjustment per month, money wasn’t everything, and we were it. He also advised us to do something nice for another person that day. We did do something nice for another person that day. We gave away a mess of garden string beans to a friend.

It was time for The Eclipse. I got out my welding mask and Ginnie made a viewer from a cereal box. We sat in the front yard, like two kids at the movies, and had a wonderful time. The only thing missing was popcorn, so we shared a Snickers bar. Vehicles rolled by on Highway 34 and honked their horns. We waved back.

Immediately following the Eclipse, a fierce wind came up out of the south, blowing our lawn chairs over. We scrambled to pick up our things and wondered if there was any significance to the unexpected wind.

Earlier that day, at morning chores, I had noticed one of our pullets making signs that she wanted to nest, or lay an egg. After The Eclipse, I went out to check for eggs. Lo-and-behold, there were two brown eggs, one small egg and one oblong larger egg. Had The Eclipse anything to do with getting our first eggs from our spring pullets? Hmm.

Not able to contain myself, I cracked the eggs. The larger oblong egg was a double-yolker! Praise be to God in the highest! Ginnie and I fried the eggs up in butter, sat right down, and enjoyed our first farm-fresh eggs. The bright orange yolk reminded me of the sun on this day of The Eclipse.

Tell me again that there is no significance to the moon blocking out the sun.

By the way, Ginnie and I highly recommend the mov- ie, “Wind River,” starring Jeremy Renner.

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Reynolds Administration at the Iowa Supreme Court over issues of mental health facility closures. “We stepped in when they shut down the mental health facilities in Clarinda and Mt. Pleasant. They shut those down with no vision to replace those lost services. We had people die as a result of that.”

He also, along with a group of attorneys, challenged the administration when they shut down a juvenile home in Toledo, Iowa, a lockdown facility for adolescent at-risk girls and challenged a decision to close Iowa Workforce Centers.

“That was in 2012 when it was the hardest because they had just appointed three supreme court justices. The administration got out the veto pad and shut down those facilities and the funding for the facilities. “They shut those down underemployed Iowans who needed those services. They didn’t just veto the funding, but vetoed a unanimous supreme court decision. So I’m here to tell you the Branstad-Reynolds machine can be defeated and we will do it again in 2018.”

Boulton said public schools have been de-funded for the past seven years in a row, the administration went into counties who had lifted the minimum wage and lowered it back down.

“This is an agenda that is hurting Iowa and Iowans,” he said. “I was proud to stand with Rich Taylor and other senate Democrats and fight this every step of the way.”

Boulton said that without education reform the risk of teachers leaving the state. A discussion with teachers held after the collective bargaining bill was passed, had teachers asking Boulton how they undo what had just been done.

“We have to look at getting and keeping the best and brightest into that profession. We have to be competitive and if we don’t have a system that prioritizes education we’re going to see teachers leaving for other states. We need to fully fund education and make sure we can recruit the next generation of teachers into this state. That’s an Iowa value and it should be our first and foremost priority.”

Boulton said Iowa is a national leader in renewable energy and that’s starting to show results. He said 1/3 of the state’s energy comes from renewable sources, but he said 50% should be a goal in Iowa by 2025.

“We need to be ready to make that transition. We can invest in rural and midsize economies in this state, not in individual private companies with millions of dollars for short-term limited goals.”

He said Governor Kim Reynolds has been visibly trying to distance herself from the Branstad administration as the election cycle heats up.

“She was a full partner in creating this mess. She was right there by his side and we’re gonna make sure Iowa voters don’t forget about that,” he said.

“I think this election is about the soul of our state. We cannot let this hurtful agenda be carried over after the 2018 election. We won’t want this to carry on because they’ll finish everything they’ve started, collective bargaining, IPERS, workers compensation, they’ll finish everything they’ve started.”

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**5-DAY WEATHER FORECAST**

**MON 28 Aug**

- Light rain
- Low – 60.3°F | High – 75.3°F

**TUE 29 Aug**

- Scattered clouds
- Low – 64.9°F | High – 75.5°F

**WED 30 Aug**

- Sunny
- Low – 60.8°F | High – 77.3°F

**THUR 31 Aug**

- Light rain
- Low – 64.9°F | High – 75.5°F

**FRI 1 Sept**

- Moderate rain
- Low – 66.5°F | High – 73.9°F

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**VISIT**: Continued from Page 1

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Local officials weigh in on corporate incentive trends

INCENTIVES - Continued from Page 1

$2 billion. The Apple Data Center planned for that area carries a $1.4 billion price tag. But many Demo- crats are clamoring for leadership change and a cap on the incentives that are being paid to bring these jobs into the state and its counties.

I spoke with Iowa 2018 gubernatorial candidate Nate Boulton on Sunday afternoon to get his take on what he calls “corporate coupons” the state is using to attract businesses. I also spoke with State Senator Rich Taylor and Fort Madison Mayor Brad Randolph about balancing the value of landing these types of employ- ers while at the same time being good stewards of public funds.

Boulton said he didn’t think the state should do away with all tax credits because it does keep us competitive with other states, but he said the current system isn’t working.

“There are certain technology credits that we need to keep with regard to cutting-edge technologies because that keeps Iowa competitive, he said. “But we have to get out of this transactional system where we give a certain number of dollars for a certain number of jobs, because the ratios are way out of whack and there’s no promise for growth,” Boulton said.

“In some cases we’re even bringing in competition for our good long-term companies that are already providing good jobs. I think the first thing the state legislature needs to start looking at is caps on these credits and exemptions so we aren’t in situations where the incentives end up being four times as expensive as originally intended.”

Boulton said there also needs to be accountability in the system so if the credit isn’t resulting in the jobs or wages that were part of the agreement then govern- mental agencies would have a sunset or other ways to get out of it.

He said the state needs to get back to focusing on providing what these companies need in the way of skilled labor resources.

“We need to focus on getting back to emphasizing what attracts these companies and that’s quality of life and a skilled work force. If we have that, we’re going to be competitive without being the lowest bidder - and a skilled work force. If we have that, we’re going to attract the companies and that’s quality of life and skilled labor resources.

Randolph said that Fort Madison’s basic economy is strong, and he believes in the potential of economic incentives to a point.

“You always have to look at the employers we have as far as retail, industry, and commercial that have been part of the Fort Madison fabric and framework for years. They are great employers for our commu- nity and have been great community partners,” he said.

“We tend to take that group for granted - those companies that are paying taxes, employing our resi- dents and contributing to our community in a ton of different ways like payroll, payroll taxes, and all those things that go with being an employer.

He said most of the time it’s easier to help or entice an existing building to expand, than it is to try to attract a new one, but he said the city, and its various economic development groups, stand at the ready when a potential customer shows interest in the area.

Randolph mentioned a previous negotiation with a company that wanted to locate in Fort Madison, but was demanding a 100% rebate on their property taxes over 20 years as an incentive to build in the Fort Madison city limits.

“I have some trepidation probably in giving out in- centives because I look at the businesses and individ- uals that are here contributing. Then I look at a new possibility and you’re going to give it all away to a new business and we’re paying the taxes. We decided we couldn’t do it because I had to hold the line. At some point you have to look at what impact it will have on the city.

“Sometimes we think that we’re always looking for the next big catch. I think we’ve done a pretty decent job of still being ready when there’s a potential of someone locating here. We’ve been quick reacting and business friendly that way, but we need to understand that it’s easier to expand an existing business than entice a new one. Having said that, we always try to build on what we have. Competition is extremely tough and every community has a similar set of incen- tives to offer.

State Senator Rich Taylor said recent incentives are just too much to be giving out.

“We have to have a change of leadership. We can no longer follow this path of ignoring the problems that help loans in favor of corporate tax welfare. We’re ignoring the needs of the people and giving handouts to corporations. It just has to stop,” he said.

“We gave Apple $213 million in abatements. That means if we hire those 50 people and pay each one of them $150,000 per year for 30 years, that’s in essence what we’ve given away. It’s too much and we’re not doing our homework. And we have the resources that they’re looking for. The young people that are getting themselves well educated to take these jobs. We have the land, the renewable energy - we have things to offer other than these large incentives and corporate charity.

“It’s a delicate dance in an effort to get wins and you can’t be shortsighted. At what cost do you ‘win’?”, Randolph said.

He said Fort Madison has used Tax Increment Financing, which is an incentive that, in a nutshell, allows the business developing or redeveloping prop- erty in a district to keep the property taxes on the improved property for a certain number of years to help offset the costs of the improvements. There are some nuances in the system, but basically the property taxes for a certain amount of time, typically 20 years, are abated.

Some instances such as the Iowa Fertilizer Plant have resulted in a payment in lieu of taxes at a much discounted rate, through the TIF or incentive period. Governmental bodies are getting creative with TIF models and use them on almost all development. Recent projects in Fort Madison, including Boulders Inn and the soon-to-open Fareway Grocery, received abatement incentives and, in some cases, to cash out- cate here and in Boulder’s case, expand in Fort Madi- son.

Randolph said those deals can be complicated. But incentives used for Siemens worked very well for the city because the incentives were paid off early and now more of the Siemens real property taxes are landing in city and county coffers for public improvements.

Well, as the song goes, “It’s tricky.” We all love to see progress, but it’s impressive that we have someone giving a balanced look at how the incentives can im- pact our communities. It’s also impressive that, at one point, we just said no. There are no guarantees. There’s no guarantee that the fertilizer plant will be functional in 20 years and we would have lost those property tax dollars, but in the same breadth you have to consider they - and Boulders - and Fareway - and Siemens, for that matter, may not have even been here to begin with.

It’s tricky.