

No public comment at Wapello school board hearing

By JIM RUDISILL
Staff Writer

WAPELLO – No members of the public, except for one reporter, showed up for the Wapello School Board’s April 2 public hearing on the school district’s proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 property tax levy. No written or other oral comments were reported, either.

The five school board members and school staff present spent most of the required half-hour chatting on unrelated topics.

District business manager Eric Small and Superintendent Mike Peterson took less than three minutes to address key issues in the district’s proposal.

Peterson expressed concerns that school districts around Iowa remain in limbo as they try to finalize their budgets, because the legislature has not set State Supplemental Aid for next year. Small said the school’s proposal was based on no increase in the SSA.

According to the public hearing

notice, in the unlikely case that there is no increase in SSA, the proposed total property tax rate for the district in FY 2026 would increase over 50 cents to just under \$13.75 per \$1,000 taxable valuation. The projected Grand Total of property taxes raised would be \$3,365,143, which compares to the \$3,148,915 anticipated to be collected in the current 2025 fiscal year.

Meanwhile, the minimum SSA increase proposed at the state level

for FY 2026 has been 2 percent, proposed by Gov. Kim Reynolds and passed by the Iowa Senate. The Iowa House has countered with the passage of a bill that calls for a 2.25 percent SSA boost, a \$22 million one-time payment to rural districts and other funding increases.

The Senate version would mean a nearly \$157 increase to the current \$7,826 State Cost Per Pupil (SCPP), while the House bill would add \$176 to the SCPP.

Until a funding formula is signed into law, Small told the board that he and Peterson felt it was safer to use no increase, pointing out the proposed levy could be lowered.

The property tax levy public hearing was the first of two required public hearings that must be held. The second hearing will be to consider the district’s proposed FY 26 budget.

PUBLIC RECORDS

■ **Eliza Za Thang**, 25, of Columbus Junction, was arrested at 10:32 a.m. on March 21 for violation of a no-contact order.

According to charging documents, Thang was at a Columbus Junction residence in a vehicle with a person when a no-contact order existed between Thang and the person.

■ **Hrang Mang**, 63, of Columbus Junction, was arrested at 10:32 a.m. on March 21 for speeding and violation of a no-contact order.

According to charging documents, Mang was at a Columbus Junction residence in a vehicle with a person when a no-contact order existed between Thang and the person, after speeding on Main Street in Columbus Junction.

■ **Amanda Renae Jorgensen**, 44, of Ottumwa, was arrested at 4:10 p.m. on March 22 for first-offense possession of a controlled substance (cannabidiol) and failure to affix a drug stamp.

According to charging documents, at about 3:58

p.m. on March 22 on County Road G62 and S Avenue, Columbus Junction, Jorgensen had in a vehicle multiple bags, a cylinder container, a black tube and a small plastic bag containing cannabis, weighing a total of about 55 grams.

■ **Roque Toloza, Jr.**, 43, of Ottumwa, was arrested at 6:32 p.m. on March 22 on possession of a controlled substance, possession of a controlled substance (cannabidiol), possession of drug paraphernalia and drug tax stamp violations.

According to charging documents, at about 6:38 p.m. on March 22 on County Road G62 and S Avenue, Columbus Junction, Toloza had in a vehicle nine bags of psilocybin mushrooms totaling 296 grams with packaging, two containers containing yellow waxy cannabis totaling 204 grams with packaging, and a bag containing about seven grams of marijuana.

■ **Thawng Hi**, 49, of Columbus Junction, was arrested at 6:21 p.m. on March 23 for second-degree

burglary.

According to charging documents, at about 5:32 p.m. on March 23 at a Fredonia residence, Hi entered a person’s home without permission, causing the door to not latch properly following Hi’s entry.

■ A juvenile was arrested for fifth-degree theft.

■ **Rogelio Alexander Rodriguez**, 18, of Fredonia, was arrested at 4:06 p.m. on March 24 for fourth-degree criminal mischief.

According to charging documents, at about 3 p.m. on March 24 at a Columbus Junction residence, Rodriguez went into a residence, flipped over a couch and damaged several items, including a television, a glass tray and a glass cup, causing about \$450 damage.

■ **Eliza Za Thang**, 25, of Columbus Junction, was arrested at 6:19 p.m. on March 24 for assault with bodily injury.

According to charging documents, at about 4:51 p.m. on March 24 along a Columbus Junction road-

way, Thang assaulted a person, causing a laceration under the jaw and severe bleeding from the nose.

■ **Henry Ikomba Mata-ta**, 43, of Coralville, was arrested at 6:15 p.m. on March 25 for two counts of failure to appear, following 2024 charges of driving with a suspended license and failure to provide proof of financial liability (dismissed).

■ **Michael Lee See**, 53, of Muscatine, was arrested at 10:26 p.m. on March 25 for ineligibility to carry weapons.

According to charging documents, at about 9:39 p.m. on March 25 at County Road X61, County Road G44X and 180th Street, Muscatine, See was stopped for a traffic violation and found to have a machete in the vehicle while being ineligible to carry dangerous weapons.

■ **Daniel James Hank**, 43, of Wapello, was arrested at 10:37 a.m. on March 26 for violation of probation.

■ **Gary Allen Reinier**, 39, of Wapello, was arrested at 9:44 p.m. on March 26 for

first-offense operating while intoxicated, possession of drug paraphernalia and carrying weapons while intoxicated.

According to charging documents, at about 8:51 p.m. on March 26 on Highway 92 west of X17, Reinier was called in for driving recklessly, almost ran a person off the road, showed signs of intoxication and had in the vehicle’s cab a firearm and a makeshift smoking device.

March 20-26 incidents

Motorist assist.....	4
Accident with animal.....	3
Hit-and-run.....	1
Accident, damage.....	1
Out with subject.....	2
911 transfer.....	1
Abandoned 911.....	1
Alarms.....	2
Animal complaint.....	4
Assault.....	1
Assistance.....	1
Attempt to locate.....	1
Burglary.....	1
Business check.....	4

Civil paper.....	8
Sign/wire/trees.....	1
Disturbance.....	2
Extra patrol.....	2
Carbon monoxide/smoke	1
Brush/field fire.....	5
Controlled burn.....	27
Follow-up.....	2
Fraud/scam.....	1
Information.....	5
Juvenile issues.....	5
Medical.....	11
Medical transport.....	4
Noise complaint.....	1
Park check.....	6
Parking complaint.....	2
School perimeter check	10
Reckless driving.....	5
SOR compliance check	14
Suspicious person.....	2
Suspicious vehicle.....	2
Speak with officer.....	4
Traffic control.....	1
Theft.....	3
Tobacco violation/grant...	1
Trespassing.....	2
Traffic stop.....	65
Vehicle unlock.....	3
Vandalism.....	1
Welfare check.....	1
Total.....	222

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