

Forest City adopts fiscal year 2026 budget

Riverfront enhancement work done; council okays pay request

ROB HILLESLAND
Summit-Tribune

Following a public hearing on the city's proposed fiscal year 2026 budget in which no comments were received, Forest City Council members approved a resolution to adopt the budget during their second April meeting.



Huffman

City revenues from taxable valuations will drop from \$147,047,862 in the certified current fiscal year budget to \$145,325,072 in the new fiscal year starting on July 1, 2025. During the April 7 meeting, City Administrator Daisy Huffman acknowledged property tax rates in the proposed budget are increasing due to the city's declining property tax revenues.

"This is the budget you all approved that I moved forward with from back in February," said Huffman before the voted on the resolution to adopt the proposed budget. "We made no changes to it and received no comments."

According to city's proposed property tax notice providing notice of the public hearing, city regular residential property (actual/assessed valuation of \$100,000/\$110,000) should see an increase from \$786 to \$908 (15.52%). City regular commercial property (actual/assessed valuation of \$300,000/\$330,000) is slated to increase from \$3,468 to \$4,057 (16.98%). The changes are from the current certified fiscal year that ends on June 30, 2025, to the proposed next fiscal year that begins on July 1, 2025.

Riverfront enhancement project

In other business, the council approved a \$60,195 payment request with Veenstra & Kimm for dam removal and riverfront enhancement project costs. It will increase recreation opportuni-



ROB HILLESLAND PHOTOS, SUMMIT-TRIBUNE

Stones and moving equipment are shown along the Winnebago River north of the swinging bridge in Forest City.



Enormous stone boulders were strategically placed in the Winnebago River in Forest City.



ties and enable fish navigation on the Winnebago River near the swinging bridge at the back of Pammel Park. Huffman also said that Forest City Parks Director Todd Espeland was working to replace some damaged boards on the bridge near the construction site.

"The project is done," Huffman said. "This is not the final estimate. This is progress, I think, through the end of April, so it is now completed." Street and Sanitation Superintendent Andrew Faber confirmed that project work, including grass seeding was finished.

Large stone sections were layered and set in the river to replace the former dam, which also makes for a more scenic river section through the city. The total contract price of \$184,950 with Shift General Contracting of Cedar Rapids includes \$28,000 for mobilization, \$40,000 for dam removal, \$6,500 for clearing and grubbing, and \$5,000 for grading that were all 100% completed. Other costs in the overall project

include a total of more than \$77,000 for various stone installations.

Recycling changes

After reviewing a proposed increased rate from Midwest Recycling of \$6,500 per month (up from \$4,200 per month currently), city council members heard a recommendation from Faber for city employees to resume the recycling pickup once again.

"We may want to look at doing it ourselves again," Faber told the council. "I think we can do it more timely. We can do it with three guys instead of six and run just one truck. I think we could do a better job for our citizens and save some money if we pick it up ourselves."

"I've heard more negative comments since these guys started and the biggest thing is the time and when it gets windy," said Councilman Dan Davis. "If you can do it cheaper and less negatively, I'll make the motion to take it back over."

The council members voted unanimously to revert back to doing the recycling pickup in-house once again.

"Thank you, Andrew, for taking that over again," Mayor Ron Holland said.

Council members also approved a \$6,241 change order for

the city's wastewater treatment plant update project. It includes a \$320 contract cost decrease for internet-based subscription service, \$901 cost increase for a grate cover over the sump pit, and \$5,660 cost increase for an additional electric circuit and receptacle at the oxidation ditch to power heat tape.

With the change order, the total revised contract price for the wastewater treatment plant project is \$19,679,241. The general contractor is Staab Construction Corporation of Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Junk and litter concerns

During staff reports, Street and Sanitation Superintendent Faber reported issues of having to collect litter east of the receiving park off John K. Hanson Drive.

"I picked up a truck full, and a half, of garbage from those winds," Faber said. "There is a problem. I'm not sure how to get it taken care of but I wanted to bring it to everyone's attention." He said items ranged from diapers to tin cans and cups, pieces of siding, and much more.

"It's a problem in there," Faber continued. "I'm not sure where to start with the garbage. It's mostly in the east ditch."

Faber recommended that council members drive through the area to see it for themselves. Mayor Ron Holland suggested checking with landowners and residents in the area.

"I believe you have loose garbage, loose whatever, outside those houses," Faber said. "I do

believe there are a lot of places that have stuff stacked up out there. Stray cats and wild animals could have something to do with it."

Discussion shifted to whether the properties in there are too far away or obstructed from the street to see what Mayor Holland called "a mess." The mayor said the city has addressed private properties before to initiate cleanup, but legal concerns were raised about whether the city can write something up that can't be seen from the street.

"I think it should fall back on the people that own it," Mayor Holland said. No action was taken on the item at the meeting but it is likely to be revisited in the near future.

In other business, the council approved:

- Bid of \$1,555 from Lance Heimer for the city's John Deer X724 with a 62-inch mower, after rescinding a prior bid approval for the mower due to an accounting error with bids received.

- Bid of \$35 per hour from Rick Burress of Rick's Mowing for the city's nuisance mowing in 2025.

- Price quote not to exceed \$6,500 from auditor T.P. Anderson and Company PC in Humboldt to once again provide the city's audit services.

Rob Hillesland is community editor for the Summit-Tribune. He can be reached at 641-421-0534, or by email at rob.hillesland@globegazette.com.

Winnebago County releases road, bridge plan

Twelve bridge replacements, 17 miles of road resurfacing

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County Engineer Scott Meinders has announced that the Winnebago County Board of Supervisors recently approved the county five-year program for 2026-2030. The program outlines the road and bridge construction projects that are planned in that timeframe.

Meinders said the current plan includes 12 bridge replacements and 17.5 miles of resurfacing while still leaving funding sources in strong positions.

The large-scale construction projects primarily include pavement resurfacing and replacement of bridges, in this case with pipe or box culverts.

"The plan is necessary to procure and program funding necessary to complete the projects," Meinders said. "It also provides the foresight necessary to obtain environmental clearances, Iowa Department of Transportation approvals, and bring projects to bid letting, which can take several years."

Meinders said there is a strong



ROB HILLESLAND, SUMMIT-TRIBUNE

New pavement, painting, and shoulders were installed for miles on 400th Street in the fall of 2020 from Leland, east to Winnebago Lutheran Church. Many more paving projects are planned on Winnebago County roads in upcoming years as part of the county's five-year plan for roads and bridges.

expectation for projects in the first two or three years of the program to be completed and that the latter years may be more prone to being re-prioritized later.

Fiscal year 2026 projects include a \$225,000 bridge replacement on 430th Street over the drainage district 1 main ditch. It will be replaced with box culverts. There will also be two bridge replacement to pipe culvert projects, each budgeted at \$75,000. The pipe culverts will be installed over the drainage district 3, lateral 9 ditch.

Bridge to box culvert replacements budgeted at \$400,000 on 70th Avenue over Buffalo Creek and at \$25,000 on 410th Street over Beaver Creek are scheduled for 2027. One large pavement resurfacing project on County Road A42 is set for 2028 for \$2.2 million. Funds of \$1.75 million from federal aid and \$450,000 from the farm-to-market account are anticipated to pay for the east A42 hot mix asphalt paving of more than eight miles, from County Road R34 to the Forest City corporate limits.

The plan calls for three additional bridge replacements in 2029 with the most expensive costing an estimated \$400,000 on 400th Street over the drainage district 11 main ditch (box culverts). A \$240,000 bridge to box culvert replacement is also planned in 2029 on 70th Avenue over the drainage district 3, lateral 8 ditch.

The final year of the program in 2030 includes a \$2.5 million concrete overlay on County Road R72, from U.S. Highway 69 to County Road A38. It will encompass more than five miles. A pair of \$800,000 hot mix asphalt resurfacing projects are also scheduled for 2030. They will occur on County Road R60 from County Road A14 to County Road A16 as well as on A16 from R60 to 200th Avenue. Each of the two pavement resurfacing projects will cover about two miles.

The largest of several more bridge replacements planned in 2030 will be on 440th Street over the drainage district 1 main ditch (box culvert). It is estimated to cost \$400,000.

"The county five-year plan does not show planned maintenance projects, such as micro-surfacing, fog seals, patching, or thin overlays," Meinders said. "It does not show replacement of bridges less than 20 feet in length or facility improvements."

Meinders said the plan also does not guarantee funding, especially

in the case of local funds. He noted that the plan is re-prioritized every year and reviewed against probable funding.

"There may be projects in the plan that are not accomplished," Meinders said.

Meinders said the five-year plan will shape the condition of county roads and bridges and the solvency of the county's funding sources in the year 2030. He calculated that with 147 miles of pavement, eight miles would need to be resurfaced every year to keep up with deterioration. However, since funding only allows a project of that size every three or four years, more focus has been placed on maintaining and preserving pavements to extend their lifespan.

He cited an intensive bridge replacement program in the 2010's to catch up on failing county bridges with more local funding since being redirected to economical pavement surface treatments. Those include chip seals, micro-surfacing, and fog seals.

"Under the plan presented, our financial investments fall short of the rate of deterioration but in 2030 our pavement system will be in good condition with a diversification of age," Meinders concluded. "If we continue to invest local tax dollars into maintenance, I think we can be cautiously optimistic about our local infrastructure condition."

Forest City man pleads guilty in meth dealing case

GLOBE GAZETTE STAFF

A Forest City man who conspired to distribute methamphetamine was convicted Thursday in federal court in Sioux City.

Andrew Jay Frazee, 31, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute over a pound of methamphetamine.

At the plea hearing, Frazee ad-

mitted that in November 2024, he and others conspired to distribute over a pound of methamphetamine in and around Hancock County.

Evidence showed that on Nov. 19, law enforcement observed Frazee and his vehicle in a ditch in rural Hancock County. Upon contact with law enforcement, Frazee

exhibited signs of impairment and deputies noted the smell of marijuana, according to a press release from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa.

A search of the vehicle was conducted where deputies found approximately 325 grams of methamphetamine, a smoking device, baggies, over \$1,200 cash, a scale

and marijuana, the press release states.

Frazee admitted recently buying large quantities of methamphetamine and distributing to others.

Sentencing will be set after a presentence report is prepared. Frazee remains in custody of the United States Marshal pending sentencing.

Frazee faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, a \$10 million fine, and at least five years of supervised release following any imprisonment.

The case was investigated by the Hancock County Sheriff's Office and the Iowa Division of Narcotics Enforcement.