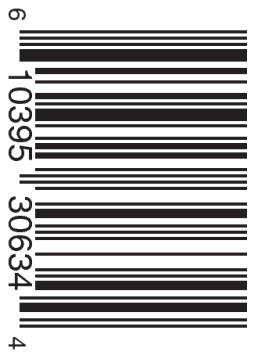


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TWO SECTIONS

Supervisors discuss assessments, taxes

By APRIL KELLEY

Rising property tax concerns kicked off the regular meeting for the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors on Monday, April 7.

Mitch Fridolfson attended the meeting to speak during the general public concerns portion of the meeting.

He started the discussion by saying, "I have a concern about our annual property taxes. My business went up \$100,000 this year."

He went on to describe properties similar to his that were assessed at and sold at much lower amounts than his.

"Housing is another concern. Our market doesn't really bear houses that are about \$650,000. We have court cases to prove that and they drop them back down because of that," Fridolfson said.

"It wasn't really consistent of how everything came up and down," Fridolfson said.

He went on to explain that several houses in the area are assessed at well over a million dollars when their mortgages are much less and the bank values them at half that cost.

Fridolfson went on to mention that he has had the opportunity to take his business to another town where he would have a lower tax assessment.

"I don't want to do that. I was born and raised here, but

it's one of those things where I look at the Fort Dodge market and I've actually have businesses in Fort Dodge as well, tax values have never changed and actually went down this year," Fridolfson said.

Fridolfson told the Supervisors that he had spoken to Humboldt County Assessor Linda Pallesen.

"She told me at first that she was going to lower mine and she would sign off and lower it and then the next day she told me no," Fridolfson said.

Supervisor Sandy Loney suggested protesting the taxes through the proper channels.

"The only thing that gets me is I don't want to sue the county. I just want to be treated fairly. That's all I ask for," Fridolfson said.

"Something's going to have to change otherwise we are just really pushing business out of town," Fridolfson said.

He claimed he had spoken to other business owners who had chosen not to bring their business to Humboldt because of the assessed values of homes and businesses and the subsequent taxes from that.

"We spent how much money on this industrial park? How much money have we spent on land and stuff too? If we want businesses to come to the

SEE ASSESSMENTS, 3A



Conlin Cressler, 2-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. Brandon Cressler of Humboldt, was all smiles last week as he took time out to play at John Brown Park in Humboldt. Warmer weather this weekend will likely attract more participants to area parks. Independent photo. To buy this photo and more from our gallery, visit our website at www.humboldtnews.com.

Humboldt City Council approves lower tax levy

Taxable valuations decrease slightly

By PHIL MONSON

After a public hearing with no objectors, the Humboldt City Council approved a property tax levy for the 2025-26 fiscal year at their meeting on Monday night, April 7.

The tax rate will be \$15.8934 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. It is down slightly from the current rate of \$16.1869 for the 2024-25 budget.

Total expenditures are estimated to be \$11,236,864 with total revenues anticipated to be \$10,973,874.

"This is the second year we have been able to do this (formula) under House File 718 approved by the legislature a couple of years ago," Humboldt City Administrator Cole Bockelmann said.

"Our taxable valuations went down and our levy went down. The problem with the formula and the notice which had to be mailed out recently assumes a 10 percent assessment increase, which we didn't have in Humboldt. It was less than 1/10 of a percent of our total assessed value," Bockelmann said.

"Our levies are pretty static for debt service. Our general operations went down because our levy went down. The only one that went up was our unified law enforcement. We lowered our employee benefits by quite a bit," Bockelmann said.

"Overall, our property tax

revenues went down and our levy went down by about \$0.25 per \$1,000. Again, the rollback is out of our control along with valuations," Bockelmann said. "That's probably the biggest decrease we've had in quite a few years."

During the public comment portion of the meeting, a local resident asked how the state lawmakers' efforts to do away with the property tax rollback formula which has been in place since the 1970s.

"Removing the rollback was one big part of that bill. The other big part is changing the levy proportion ally over five years to match that. Your levy would phase down as the rollback is phased out," Bockelmann said. "The way it is proposed would be net zero in the end. By getting rid of the rollback, you would be taxed 100 percent of your property's value but the levy would scale down with that."

"It's all being debated right now and hasn't been approved yet," Bockelmann said.

Humboldt Mayor Dan Scholl asked if the new law will do away with tax credits for homestead, military and over age 65.

"It will be changed to exemptions on your property tax, so you won't be taxed at all," Bockelmann said. "The homestead would be converted to a \$25,000 exemption, so they would take \$25,000 off of your taxable value. The changes will take place for fiscal year 2026-27. It would switch on July 1,

2026."

Bockelmann said the Iowa League of Cities sent out a memo earlier in the day in response to the potential impact of the property tax reform bill state lawmakers are working on. Bockelmann went to Des Moines recently to discuss the matter with state representative Mark Thompson.

"It fundamentally changes the system and gets rid of the rollback system and the levies accordingly. The biggest change is it would cap our annual property tax revenue growth by 2 percent annually. It would also impact TIF (tax incremental financing) funding because new construction is exempt from that 2 percent. But it doesn't specify how TIF is handled," Bockelmann said.

"If you think back of how we finance a lot of our projects, it could be really detrimental if the levies go way down. Without an exemption, I don't know how we would make our debt service payment," Bockelmann said.

"The legislators and the people who are drafting the changes are open to comment, that's why I went to Des Moines last week and met with Mark and had a good discussion. This is the biggest attempt to overhaul the system since it came out in the 1970s," Bockelmann said. "I'll keep you posted. I would anticipate some changes in the next two weeks."

The council approved holding

SEE COUNCIL, 3A



Humboldt High School FFA held their drive your tractor to school day on Tuesday, April 8. Independent photo by Kylie Portz.

Iowa Senate passes 2% per-pupil increase

By ROBIN OPSAHL
Iowa Capital Dispatch

Iowa K-12 public schools would receive a 2% increase in state per-pupil funding next year under legislation the Iowa Senate approved Monday on 32-15 vote.

Senate File 167 sets the State Supplemental Aid (SSA) rate for the upcoming fiscal year. SSA is the growth rate for public K-12 school funding, allocated to schools on a per-pupil basis.

The Senate, and Gov. Kim Reynolds, had put forward the 2% SSA rate. But in February, the Iowa House returned the legislation to the Senate af-

ter increasing the SSA rate from 2% to 2.25%. The House amendment also added other funding components like a \$10 increase to the state cost per pupil, changes to transportation equity aid payment and weighting for school districts with shared operational costs, as well as a one-time allocation of \$22.6 million to help school districts with rising costs and the impacts of inflation.

Since the House vote on Feb. 18, the measure did not see public discussion again before Monday, April 7. Lawmakers had already failed to meet their self-imposed deadline

to pass school funding within 30 days of the governor's budget release, in addition to failing to pass the measure before school districts' budget proposals were due in early March. However, there are still a few weeks before the school districts' final budgets must be submitted to the state by April 30.

House Speaker Pat Grassley told reporters in several news conferences that House Republicans were committed to providing some additional funding supports for Iowa K-12 schools, components that were part of the hold-up in passing this year's SSA rate.

"We understand that we may not get all of those things that we include in our bill, but we'd be hopeful that there'd be at least some consideration," Grassley told reporters in late March. "Whether it's operational sharing, whether it's some one-time, inflationary factors — we continue to be hopeful that at some point in time enough Iowans engaging in this conversation will at least put some of those things on the table."

The gridlock ended Monday as Senate Republicans returned with an amendment that set the SSA rate at 2%, but included some components of

the House amendment. The \$22.6 million appropriation was removed, and the proposed raise to the state cost per pupil was lowered from \$10 to \$5.

While the House language gave a standing unlimited appropriation for transportation equity aid payment beginning in fiscal year 2026 to make sure the statewide adjusted transportation cost per pupil was not lower than the statewide average cost, the Senate language set a 5% rate for payments to the transportation equity fund per pupil.

SEE INCREASE, 5A

390-acre nature area north of Renwick becomes a reality

Project is largest acquisition Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation has been involved with

By KENT THOMPSON

Work is now complete on a 390-acre nature area in the county which was nothing more than a dream a decade ago.

The area features wetland and riparian restorations, native prairie plants, an oxbow and habitat for a large number of native wildlife and species of plants and pollinators.

Humboldt County Conservation Director Todd Lee re-

calls how it all began nearly eight years ago.

"It all started in 2017 when I received a call from Ross Baxter with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). 'I knew what they did but I hadn't dealt with them on other projects at that point."

"Mr. Baxter said he had been traveling on Highway 17. It was in the spring and the water was high and Prairie Creek was out of its banks. He drove

by the Kent Kiburz property and he notice the abundance of waterfowl. He said he pulled over, took a few pictures and there were all kinds of different ducks and geese and Trumpeter Swans. He thought it might be something we (Humboldt County Conservation) would be interested in looking at and partnering with them (INHF) in acquiring," Lee said.

"I talked to Ross and he said the property in question that was for sale, was 390 acres. The total purchase price was \$1.7 million dollars. 'I was frank with him. I told him a project that size would be quite an undertaking for a county of our size,' Lee recalled. 'At that time, we were around 200 acres for hunting habitat areas we had in the county. I asked him, 'how are we going to pay for this?' 'He laughed and said, 'trust me, this is what we do,' Lee remembers."

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SEE NATURE AREA, 3A



The former Kent Kiburz property north of Renwick, a haven for native wildlife and now home to 277 acres of native prairie, 75 acres of timber and 38 acres of wetlands, is now owned by Humboldt County Conservation and promises to be a destination spot for hunters, trappers and other wildlife enthusiasts.