

Lowden City Attorneys Leaving Law Firm, Council May Seek Local Representation

Sue Hall, Reporter

Lowden's city council on March 2 looked at employee wage adjustments, possible handbook changes, a recent digging glitch during the Harding Avenue sewer line installation project, and a change occurring in the law offices of Hopkins & Huebner, the city's contracted attorneys.

A letter received by the city clerk at the end of February announced that Brent Hinders and James Theobald will be leaving the Des Moines law firm in May. These two had provided the city with legal representation.

The options they presented in the letter were to retain them at their new firm called Hinders, Updegraff and Franklin or to continue without them at Hopkins & Huebner. They will help with the transition of choice.

Council member Kasey Sander said it was an opportunity to search locally for another lawyer, to have attendance at meetings by a city attorney.

Council member Alan Carlson said if local representation was possible, that would be his preference, too. Mayor Derrick Lange said advertising would begin immediately for legal representation. Feedback will be reviewed in April.

Employee and Work Matters

Council member Carlson said that if public works employees receive pay boosts when they pass various certification levels, the same should apply to the city's new clerk, who is also in a three-year municipal professional permit training program. There have been two of three courses completed to date with another scheduled this coming June.

Council consensus was to revisit the request for a clerk pay increase after certification is completed.

Public Works Director Nick Wichtoski said that if the city has offered his assistant Jason Martin a 50¢ pay incentive for acquiring his CDL license, Wichtoski reminds council he did not similarly receive that pay increase when he got his CDL.

Council member Nick Lange said the offer was made because Martin had asked for a higher starting wage than the city wanted to pay him, so they agreed to add to his wage rate a 50¢ increase when he got his CDL. "He wanted more, and the city used the CDL incentive, instead."

This discussion morphed into a need to review the city's employee handbook. Council member Austin Lange said he intends to re-write the language that addresses absences, late arrivals and other time off the job. The handbook hasn't been updated since 1992.

How should compensatory time off be handled? Council member Nick Lange said he can use it at will. Others thought a prior request needs to be made when it's going to be used.

Austin Lange said the city's time sheets are a joke. What should be used is a time clock. Or maybe a phone check-in-out system using Wi-Fi at city hall.

These employee job concerns will be on next month's agenda.

Public works director Wichtoski said while digging in right-of-way for the Harding Street sewer line replacement, contractor Needham Excavating, Walcott, hit a 1 1/2-inch water main affecting two properties, one of which still needs the service line. The water line that was hit has been pinched off for abandonment, because sewer and water cannot go through the same casing. Therefore, a new route needs to be established for the water line that will likely be north of the new sewer line.

Reports and Other Business

City Clerk Heather Conrad presented a resolution, which council authorized, to apply for a reimbursable scholarship for the June municipal professionals' institute. She apprised council that health insurance for city employees is increasing \$50 per policy. She has applied for a May 1 grant for sidewalk repairs. And a resolution assigning transfer of funds was presented and approved. \$3,249 in miscellaneous library donations went to the Lowden library fund and \$14,472 went from the general fund to the debt service cash fund to close out the McKinley street project for May's final payment. These two transfers clear up the city's cash report.

Council approved a request from Cedar county law enforcement to allow the firm Flock Safety to install an automatic license plate reader camera in city right of way at the intersection of Harding Avenue and highway 30. There is no cost to the city for maintenance.

Council approved a request from Claire Hack to install on his property a 12-foot wide by 25-foot-long prefab enclosed storage building with overhead door on a concrete pad at the side of his garage at 900 McKinley Avenue.

PWD Wichtoski reported the weekly recycling collection change implemented after last month's council meeting has improved less handling through the city's compactors.

EMS had six service calls. The fire department had five calls in February.

The library report shows circulation higher in February of this year than a year ago. Overall, circulation is higher to date than last year at this time. For February, 12 books were circulated during the blind date with a book program all month. In March is Read Across America, and naturalist Sarah Subbert will present programs for Irish sourdough bread and a lucky treasure hunt. The farm theme 'Plant a Seed, Read!' summer reading program is scheduled for Tuesdays in June.

The city's public hearing for the FY27 budget property tax levy rate is scheduled at 5:30 p.m. March 23 at city hall.

Cover Crop and Plant Disease Workshop in Ames March 24

Iowa Learning Farms will host a cover crop and plant disease workshop as part of their "Beyond the Basics: Advanced Cover Crop Series" in Ames from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, March 24. The event is open to farmers and landowners at no cost and includes a complimentary meal.

"Cover crops play a critical role in keeping Iowa's soil and water resources healthy. Though cover crops have many benefits, challenges like plant pathogens and disease can negatively impact the following cash crop," said Mitch Harting, water outreach specialist with Iowa Learning Farms. "This workshop will help farmers understand pathogen movement between cereal rye and corn, and the best management practices to reduce yield declines."

Attendees will also get insight into how they can implement alternative cover crops on their operation.

The workshop will feature Alison Robertson, extension field crop pathologist at Iowa State University, who will share information on the disease interactions between cereal rye cover crops and the corn that follows. Robertson will also offer a hands-on demonstration, allowing attendees to see seedling disease first-hand among different cover crop treatments. The agenda will also include Mark Kenney, a local farmer who will offer insight into managing an oat cover crop as an alternative to rye. Additionally, Ethan Thies, conservation field specialist with ISU Extension and Outreach, will discuss other alternatives to cereal rye ahead of corn and best management practices to avoid disease when using cover crops.

The field day will be held at the Alliant Energy Agriculture Innovation Lab, located at 3800 University Boulevard, Ames. The event is open to farmers and landowners, though reservations are required to ensure adequate space and food. For reasonable accommodations and to RSVP, contact Harting at 515-294-8912 or ilf@iastate.edu by March 17. Attendees will be entered in a drawing for ISU Prairie Strips honey.

WATER ACT

FROM P2

our soil, in improving our water statewide, but they need state and federal policies that make regenerative agriculture financially feasible for more producers. When policy supports farmers who embrace best practices for nitrate reduction, including wetlands, buffer strips, bioreactors, and cover crops, we take the first steps towards healthy water for the entire state.

We simply must bring in every Iowan to be a part of the solution, and we really can. Whether we drink and paddle, whether we till and sow, whether we float and noodle, or whether we do all of it, water is in all of our futures, and now is the time to fight for it.

State Representative Elinor Levin is a Democrat from the Iowa House District 89 in Iowa City and is the Ranking Member of the House Natural Resources Committee.

www.tiptonconservative.com

	NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY Proposed BENNETT Property Tax Levy Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027	
Location of Public Hearing: Bennett Community School 300 Cedar Street Bennett, Ia 52721	Date of Public Hearing: 3/23/2026	Time of Public Hearing: 05:00 PM
Location of Notice on School Website: https://www.bennett.k12.ia.us/district/school-board/		

At the public hearing any resident or taxpayer may present oral or written objections to, or arguments in favor of the proposed tax levy. After the hearing of the proposed tax levy, the Board will publish notice and hold a hearing on the proposed budget.

	Current Year Final Property Tax Dollar Levy FY 2026	Budget Year Effective Property Tax Dollar Levy (No change in Property Tax Dollars Levied) FY 2027	Budget Year Proposed Property Tax Dollar Levy FY 2027
General Fund Levy	1	943,306	943,306
Instructional Support Levy	2	99,307	99,307
Management	3	248,173	248,173
Amana Library	4	0	0
Voted Physical Plant and Equipment	5	177,537	177,537
Regular Physical Plant and Equipment	6	43,722	43,722
Reorganization Equalization	7	0	0
Public Education/Recreation (Playground)	8	0	0
Debt Service	9	0	0
Grand Total	10	1,512,045	1,512,045

	Current Year Final Property Tax Rate FY 2026	Budget Year Effective Property Tax Rate (No change in Property Tax Dollars Levied) FY 2027	Budget Year Proposed Property Tax Rate FY 2027
Grand Total Levy Rate	11.41249	11.28642	11.87358

Property Tax Comparison	Current Year Property Taxes	Proposed Property Taxes	Percent Change
Residential property with an Actual/Assessed Value of \$100,000/\$110,000	541	582	7.58
Commercial property with an Actual/Assessed Value of \$300,000/\$330,000	2,353	2,717	15.47

Note: Actual/Assessed Valuation is multiplied by a Rollback Percentage to get to the Taxable Valuation to calculate Property Taxes. Residential and Commercial properties have the same Rollback Percentage at \$150,000 Actual/Assessed Valuation. The Proposed Property taxes assume a 10% increase in property values for the year as a comparison to the current year.

Reasons for tax increase if proposed exceeds the current:

The District's tax increase is intended to address rising costs associated with facility improvements and building maintenance, while also supporting the implementation of updated curriculum and instructional resources that reflect current standards and meet the diverse needs of our students.

CITY NAME: NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - CITY OF TIPTON - PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY CITY #: 16-141
TIPTON Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

The City Council will conduct a public hearing on the proposed Fiscal Year City property tax levy as follows:
Meeting Date: 3/23/2026 Meeting Time: 05:30 PM Meeting Location: 301 Lynn Street Tipton, IA 52772

At the public hearing any resident or taxpayer may present objections to, or arguments in favor of the proposed tax levy. After the hearing of the proposed tax levy, the City Council will publish notice and hold a hearing on the proposed city budget.

City Website (if available)
<http://www.tiptoniowa.org>

City Telephone Number
(563) 886-6187

Iowa Department of Management	Current Year Certified Property Tax 2025 - 2026	Budget Year Effective Property Tax 2026 - 2027	Budget Year Proposed Property Tax 2026 - 2027
Taxable Valuations for Non-Debt Service	136,824,540	141,466,496	141,466,496
Consolidated General Fund	1,079,480	1,079,480	1,105,053
Operation & Maintenance of Public Transit	0	0	0
Aviation Authority	0	0	0
Liability, Property & Self Insurance	128,749	128,749	125,949
Support of Local Emergency Mgmt. Comm.	16,233	16,233	20,323
Unified Law Enforcement	0	0	0
Police & Fire Retirement	0	0	0
FICA & IPERS (If at General Fund Limit)	295,816	295,816	285,955
Other Employee Benefits	250,058	250,058	265,827
Capital Projects (Capital Improv. Reserve)	0	0	0
Taxable Value for Debt Service	146,195,880	151,242,517	151,242,517
Debt Service	382,327	382,327	422,074
CITY REGULAR TOTAL PROPERTY TAX	2,152,663	2,152,663	2,225,181
CITY REGULAR TAX RATE	15.55390	15.04208	15.53653
Taxable Value for City Ag Land	471,309	486,117	486,117
Ag Land	1,416	1,416	1,461
CITY AG LAND TAX RATE	3.00375	2.91288	3.00375

Tax Rate Comparison-Current VS. Proposed

Residential property with an Actual/Assessed Valuation of \$100,000/\$110,000	Current Year Certified 2025/2026	Budget Year Proposed 2026/2027	Percent Change
City Regular Residential	738	761	3.12

Commercial property with an Actual/Assessed Valuation of \$300,000/\$330,000	Current Year Certified 2025/2026	Budget Year Proposed 2026/2027	Percent Change
City Regular Commercial	3,206	3,555	10.89

Note: Actual/Assessed Valuation is multiplied by a Rollback Percentage to get to the Taxable Valuation to calculate Property Taxes. Residential and commercial properties have the same rollback percentage through \$150,000 of actual/assessed valuation.

Reasons for tax increase if proposed exceeds the current:

Liability, Property & Self insurance and employee benefits have increased as well as FICA & IPERS costs. Operating costs within the budgets have also increased.

CITY NAME: NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING - CITY OF STANWOOD - PROPOSED PROPERTY TAX LEVY CITY #: 16-140
STANWOOD Fiscal Year July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027

The City Council will conduct a public hearing on the proposed Fiscal Year City property tax levy as follows:
Meeting Date: 3/23/2026 Meeting Time: 06:00 PM Meeting Location: City Hall

At the public hearing any resident or taxpayer may present objections to, or arguments in favor of the proposed tax levy. After the hearing of the proposed tax levy, the City Council will publish notice and hold a hearing on the proposed city budget.

City Website (if available)

City Telephone Number
(563) 942-3340

Iowa Department of Management	Current Year Certified Property Tax 2025 - 2026	Budget Year Effective Property Tax 2026 - 2027	Budget Year Proposed Property Tax 2026 - 2027
Taxable Valuations for Non-Debt Service	22,573,036	21,520,955	21,520,955
Consolidated General Fund	182,842	182,842	174,320
Operation & Maintenance of Public Transit	0	0	0
Aviation Authority	0	0	0
Liability, Property & Self Insurance	20,763	20,763	53,697
Support of Local Emergency Mgmt. Comm.	0	0	4,079
Unified Law Enforcement	0	0	0
Police & Fire Retirement	0	0	0
FICA & IPERS (If at General Fund Limit)	20,739	20,739	13,545
Other Employee Benefits	23,181	23,181	7,031
Capital Projects (Capital Improv. Reserve)	0	0	0
Taxable Value for Debt Service	22,573,036	21,520,955	21,520,955
Debt Service	73,758	73,758	72,811
CITY REGULAR TOTAL PROPERTY TAX	321,283	321,283	325,483
CITY REGULAR TAX RATE	14.23299	14.92884	15.12395
Taxable Value for City Ag Land	340,086	331,949	331,949
Ag Land	1,022	1,022	998
CITY AG LAND TAX RATE	3.00375	3.07879	3.00375

Tax Rate Comparison-Current VS. Proposed

Residential property with an Actual/Assessed Valuation of \$100,000/\$110,000	Current Year Certified 2025/2026	Budget Year Proposed 2026/2027	Percent Change
City Regular Residential	675	741	9.78

Commercial property with an Actual/Assessed Valuation of \$300,000/\$330,000	Current Year Certified 2025/2026	Budget Year Proposed 2026/2027	Percent Change
City Regular Commercial	2,934	3,460	17.93

Note: Actual/Assessed Valuation is multiplied by a Rollback Percentage to get to the Taxable Valuation to calculate Property Taxes. Residential and commercial properties have the same rollback percentage through \$150,000 of actual/assessed valuation.

Reasons for tax increase if proposed exceeds the current:

Increase of city insurance expenses