

**Levy** *From page 1A*

tax levy, will be held at 6 p.m. in the County Annex, 503 Franklin Street, Wapello.

Iowa law requires most local governments to hold two public hearings prior to adopting a new fiscal year (FY) budget.

Supervisors Scot Hunt and Shawn Maine (supervisor Kevin Hardin was absent from the meeting) agreed to hold the county's hearing on the budget's Proposed Tax Levy on March 23 at 6 p.m. in the supervisors' room of the County Annex, 503 Franklin Street, Wapello.

The hearing will provide local residents and property owners with an opportunity to comment or ask questions about the proposed levies and tax amounts to be raised.

According to a notice of the public hearing, the Taxable Valuation - General Services for Louisa County (with the current FY 2026 figures in parentheses) is \$765,867,012 (\$760,016,971), and the Requested Tax Dollars - Countywide (Except for Debt Service) is \$5,974,750 (\$5,935,998).

Since no anticipated property tax dollars are planned for Debt Service, the Requested Tax Dollars - Countywide do not change from the figures above.

The projected FY 27 Countywide Tax Rate is \$7.80129 per \$1,000 valuation, slightly below this year's rate of \$7.81035 per \$1,000.

The notice also provided information on just rural taxes. It showed that the Total Valuation - Rural Services in FY 27 is \$598,387,879 (FY 26 - \$597,397,300), with Requested Tax Dollars - Additional Rural Levies projected at \$1,760,439 (\$1,635,680).

The Tax Rate - Rural Additional is projected to be \$2.94197 per \$1,000 (FY 26 - \$2.73801), while the anticipated Rural Total tax rate is \$10.74326 per \$1,000 (\$10.54836).

The public hearing notice also provided information on comparisons involving a \$100,000 residential

property in FY 26 and a \$110,000 property in FY 27. Based on those comparisons, an urban owner who is paying \$370 in FY 26 can expect to pay \$382 in FY 27, while a rural owner will see an increase from \$500 in FY 26 to \$526 in FY 27.

The notice also provided comparisons for a \$300,000 commercial property in FY 26 and a \$330,000 property in FY 27.

Those figures showed an urban taxpayer's FY 26 tax of \$1,610 climbing to \$1,785 in FY 27; while the rural commercial property owner's tax bill will go from \$2,174 in FY 26 to \$2,458 in FY 27.

The reasons identified for increased property tax revenue included higher operation and maintenance costs, insurance premiums, employee benefits, and utilities.

The second of the required public hearings will be to receive comments on the proposed 2027 county budget. The date for that hearing has not been set.

According to past discussions on property tax levies, the county can reduce the amounts but cannot raise them once they are published.

In another action, the supervisors accepted a recommendation from the Louisa County Planning and Zoning Commission and approved doubling the commission's zoning application fees.

According to a chart of the new fees, the two-fold increase will apply across the board to all categories involving zoning applications, including dwelling, additions, accessory building/structure, commercial building/structure, industrial building/structure, and home occupation.

The specific fee will be determined by square footage or, for home occupation permits, whether the proposed occupation is a business or industry.

Under the proposed changes, application fees for dwellings would increase from \$100 to \$400, depending on the dwelling's square footage. The permit for dwellings up to

1,000 sq. ft. will increase to \$100; 2,000 sq. ft. - \$200; and any dwelling over 2,000 sq. ft. - \$400.

Permit fees for additions will also double. That will mean a permit for an addition of up to 500 sq. ft. will now be \$50; up to 2,000 sq. ft. - \$200; and for any addition over 2,000 sq. ft. - \$400.

Square footage will also continue to be the determining factor for other zoning application fees. The fee for any accessory building/structure up to 300 sq. ft. will be \$50 under the proposed doubling, while accessory building/structures over 300 sq. ft. will be \$100.

Application fees for commercial buildings/structures up to 2,000 sq. ft. will be \$200, and \$400 for any over 2,000 sq. ft.

Industrial buildings/structures up to 5,000 sq. ft. will have a zoning application fee of \$500, while the fee will be \$1,000 for any industrial building/structure over 5,000 sq. ft. under the proposed fee increase.

An increase in the county's home occupation zoning application fees will mean any home business will now be assessed a \$100 zoning application fee, while the fee for a home industry will go to \$200.

The \$200 fee to hold a public hearing of the LCPZC will remain at \$200; the \$100 fee for a Louisa County Board of Adjustment public hearing for a variance will also not be changed and remain at \$100, while the fee for a special use/exception or map extension will also not change.

Zoning administrator Brian Thye pointed out during the supervisors' meeting that the new fees represented the first fee increase in nearly 25 years.

The supervisors also received regular department updates from the emergency management agency (EMA) administrator, Kenney Marlette, and the county engineer, Adam Shutt.

Marlette reported that he was continuing to work on his online certification requirements and reminded

the board members that the FY 27 EMA annual budget had been approved.

He also reported submitting a federal grant application for \$21,000 funding, which is used to help cover part of his salary.

However, he said a similar application he filed last year still has not been approved by the federal government.

Marlette also said an application to help cover the cost of new security devices at the courthouse and other county offices was still pending.

He also reported that a tabletop exercise to train for severe weather was set for March 17.

In his report on the secondary roads department, Shutt said his crews were busy hauling rock and planned to move around 600 tons of material each day for the next 61 days.

He also mentioned attending a recent state legislators' forum, where local legislators indicated that a property tax cap was likely to be passed this year.

The board also:  
\* Approved \$254,785 in claims; and

\* Agreed to sign a \$55,929 purchase agreement with Unisyn Voting System for seven scanners and six ADA-compliant touch screens.

The supervisors also approved 2026-2027 law enforcement contracts with Grandview (\$22,635), Fredonia (\$9,630), Morning Sun (\$32,899), Letts (\$14,789), and Oakville (\$6,944).

Maine pointed out that law enforcement contracts are now primarily based on call volume rather than per capita, as they were assessed in the past.

**Last Ikes  
Fish Fry for  
2026 is next  
Friday**

The last Ikes Fish Fry, for 2026 is scheduled for Friday, March 20 starting at 6 p.m. at the Ikes Clubhouse on County Road X61, East of Wapello.

Adults get in for \$15 (all you can eat) and kids 10 and under eat for \$5.

The meal includes fried and scored carp, pollock, and chicken nuggets, plus baked beans, bread and butter, coleslaw, chips, and fries. Throughout the night, raffles are held with paddles sold for \$2 before spinning the wheel.



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**Roundabout** *From page 1A*

member Bill Stigge to suggest a design that would eliminate the curve and provide a straighter entrance into the roundabout from G62.

"Why not come straight in?" he wondered, pointing out that the straight route would mean a better alignment with State Street and the other roadways.

Shafer pointed out that if the county road were straightened, the existing Ideal cement plant would likely be impacted and forced to move. Other officials agreed and said they did not want to risk losing the cement plant over the issue.

Project cost could also be a factor in the ultimate design.

Shafer said rough estimates provided by Shutt indicated the roundabout, which would be scaled to handle large vehicles and equipment, would cost between \$700,000 and \$800,000; the Townsend Avenue turnoff would possibly add another \$400,000; and the State Street connection would carry an estimated \$350,000 price tag.

The city is negotiating with the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) to assume management of existing Highway 61 through the city, and even though that could provide over \$1 million in assistance from the state agency, it is not known when any revenue would flow since the project could extend for another 10 years.

In addition to discussing the roundabout, Shafer also reported possible progress with the DOT on the construction schedule of a proposed frontage road west of Wapello.

According to the discussion at the council meeting and earlier at a county board of supervisors meeting, the

DOT indicated the frontage road might not be completed immediately. That could mean westbound traffic leaving Wapello would be forced to use a south route, adding 10 to 15 minutes to the trip.

City officials suggested this could be especially problematic for fire and other emergency responses, since the first reports indicated the construction might be lengthy.

However, Shafer said it now appeared the DOT might agree to have the frontage road work done earlier, reducing the detour to just a few months.

As the discussion on the roundabout and other phases of the project slowed, city officials acknowledged the idea of a roundabout in town might face some questioning and urged local residents to contact them to register their opinions.

The proposal will remain on the council's meeting agenda for the foreseeable future.

In another action, the council agreed to donate \$50 for the April 4 Wapello Community Club Easter Egg Hunt, scheduled for 1 p.m. at the Wapello Elementary School.

City officials said organizers were continuing to seek donations of money, prizes, snacks, and other items from the community. Anyone wishing to donate can leave items at the attention of Mike Delzell at City Hall or Stephanie Short, 414 Kennedy Drive, Wapello.

Wapello Fire Chief Josh Michel also reported that Wapello Fire and Rescue had responded to 54 calls in February, bringing the total for 2026 to 78. Michel also reminded city officials of the March 7 combination grand opening and

cornerstone dedication of the new fire station. The event, which included the annual Firemen's Ball, was rescheduled from last November because of weather concerns at that time.

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