

## **MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

City Hall, 220 Clay Street

February 19, 2024

The meeting of the Committee of the Whole met at City Hall at 5:25 p.m. on February 19, 2024, with the following Committee persons in attendance: Mayor Daniel Laudick, Councilmembers Gil Schultz, Chris Latta, Daryl Kruse, Aaron Hawbaker, Dustin Ganfield, Hannah Crisman, and Kelly Dunn. Staff members from various City Departments, Steve Bernard – Cedar Falls Utilities (CFU) General Manager, William Magee - Northern Iowa Railway Company President/CEO, John Riherd – Butler County Engineer, a representative from the Waterloo Courier, and members of the community attended in person.

### **Committee of the Whole:**

Mayor Laudick called the meeting to order and introduced the first item on the Committee of the Whole Agenda, Railroad Crossing Elimination (RCE) Grant Application 2024 – Potential regional application: Cedar Falls, Butler County, and Shell Rock. Planner I Chris Sevy provided an overview of and update on the 2024 RCE Grant application that includes the removal of 24 railroad crossings. Discussion included safety enhancement, removal of the flood gate, and potential anticipated financial impacts from eliminating the ability to provide coal to CFU via train if access is removed through this grant. CFU General Manager Steve Bernard responded to questions about coal consumption and transportation of coal for future needs. A consensus was reached by the Council for staff to move forward with the grant application process.

Mayor Laudick introduced the second item on the Committee of the Whole Agenda, City of Cedar Falls, Budget Presentation. Jennifer Rodenbeck, Director of Finance & Business Operations provided an overview of the budget process for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) and presented a recommendation for a max tax levy of \$11.93 after extensive review and consideration of existing obligations and new Council goals developed in City Council Goal Setting Work Sessions. The FY24 tax levy was \$11.40, meaning the proposed max tax levy for FY25 is \$.53 more than FY24. Discussion included new state budget and tax requirements, residential and commercial assessed valuations, backfill funding, the Rental Conversion Program, and how unfilled staff positions may impact the FY25 budget.

The Council was informed that whatever tax levy rate was recommended and potentially approved tonight at the Regular City Council meeting can always be lowered after future deliberation but will not be able to be increased beyond what is approved at this time.

A motion was made by Hawbaker and seconded by Crisman to recommend to City Council to set the FY25 proposed tax levy rate at \$11.93 and to hold the special public hearing on April 1, 2024, at 5:15 p.m. It was moved by Ganfield and seconded by Kruse to amend the motion to decrease the proposed rate to \$11.90 with the remainder of the motion staying the same. Hawbaker moved to call the question. Motion to call the question carried unanimously. The Mayor then put the motion to amend to a voice vote. The motion to amend failed, with Schultz, Latta, Hawbaker, Crisman, and Dunn voting Nay. The Mayor called the original motion that would propose \$11.93 for the max tax levy for FY25 budget and upon voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Minutes by Kristin Thomas, Administrative Supervisor