

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
AMES CONFERENCE BOARD**

AMES, IOWA

JANUARY 28, 2020

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CONFERENCE BOARD

The Regular Meeting of the Ames Conference Board was called to order by Chairman John Haila at 5:30 p.m. on January 28, 2020. Present from the Ames City Council were Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin. Linda Murken, Lisa Heddens, and Lauris Olson represented the Story County Board of Supervisors. Other members in attendance were as follows: Jamet Colton, Ames School Board of Directors; Joe Anderson, Nevada School Board of Directors; and Jennifer Britt, United Community School Board of Directors. Gilbert School Board of Directors was not represented.

MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 26, 2019: Moved by Corrieri, seconded by Murken, to approve the Minutes of the February 26, 2019, meeting of the Ames Conference Board.

Vote on Motion: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

RE-APPOINTMENT OF JAMI LARSON TO BOARD OF REVIEW: Moved by Betcher, seconded by Colton, to approve RESOLUTION NO. 20-037 re-appointing Jami Larson to the Board of Review.

Roll Call Vote: 3-0. Resolution declared adopted unanimously, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these Minutes.

DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED FY 2020/21 BUDGET FOR CITY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE: City Assessor Greg Lynch reviewed the 2020/21 proposed budget for the City Assessor's Office and asked if the Conference Board members had any questions.

Story County Supervisor Olson asked Mr. Lynch to elaborate on the work delegated to the interns that costs \$40,000. Mr. Lynch deferred to Chief Deputy Assessor Brenda Swaim who said a content management system had recently been implemented which caused a backlog of documents that needed to be scanned and entered, there was a city-wide photo project that required more hours, and condominium units needed to be entered. There had been basically no response to the advertised position, so the hourly wage needed to be increased.

Ms. Olson asked why there were so many condominium appeals in 2019. Mr. Lynch said there was an entity called "Tax Representatives" who contacted commercial property owners and sold their services for saving taxes for a few years. One tax representative filed over 600 protests on apartments in 2019, but there have been more than that in the past with revalued properties.

With regards to the taxable status of Northcrest Independent Living, Ms. Olson wanted to know why it was in litigation. Mr. Lynch explained that Northcrest was installing a very large addition to include independent living, skilled nursing, and assisted living. There was a ruling in 2018 by the

Property Assessment Appeals Board that shed new light on this type of a property, and other assessors who had continuum life services complexes had the independent living units classified as taxable, while keeping skilled living and assisted living tax exempt. The property that was purchased to the west of Northcrest was for the new complex. The land value under that portion of the property was changed to taxable for 2019. The exempt status was placed on it by a ruling of the Iowa Supreme Court in 1989, but with the new ruling, he believes it sheds new light on the issue.

Moved by Corrieri, seconded by Colton, to approve the recommendations of the City Assessor's report.

Roll Call Vote: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Mr. Lynch reviewed the proposed budget, noting that the 3% cost of living rate increase was based off the 2.75% - 3% negotiating starting point between the City and different unions and the 2% merit rate followed what the City asked for. City Council Member Martin asked what the process was for evaluating the City Assessor and the Deputy City Assessor. Mr. Lynch said his predecessor brought that process to the Mini Conference Board for review.

Story County Board Member Heddens asked if the City did not increase to the amount approved for the Assessor, would the Assessor's office maintain what was approved or would they mirror the City. Mr. Lynch said they always follow what the City does. Council Member Betcher requested further information on what the 57.4% increase in equipment rental and maintenance was for. Mr. Lynch deferred to Accountant Dawn Tank. Ms. Tank said they were purchasing a new server with a five-year care package for \$3,277, which was the major portion of the increase. The maintenance for the copier/fax/print machine was based off the number of copies they made, and with the new assessing model, more assessment roles were needed, which generate more costs along with postage, paper supplies, and Board of Review expenses.

Mr. Lynch explained that an outside consultant was hired to build the residential assessment model in 2017 and is now building another model for 2021. He briefly explained how the new model will work to gauge accuracy in assessments.

Mayor Haila clarified for the Conference Board that this was a maximum proposed budget which may not be used entirely.

Moved by Olson, seconded by Betcher, to receive the proposed budget.

Vote on Motion: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Martin, seconded by Colton, to set 6:00 p.m. on February 25, 2020, as the date of public hearing on the proposed FY 2020/21 City Assessor's budget.

Vote on Motion: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

RE-APPOINTING GREG LYNCH AS CITY ASSESSOR: Mayor Haila commended Mr. Lynch on his continuing education and knowledge. Ms. Heddens asked if it was by ordinance that the City had an assessor. Mr. Lynch responded that the *Iowa Code* allowed cities with populations over 10,000 to have their own city assessor in addition to the county assessor if they so choose.

Moved by Corrieri, seconded by Colton, to approve RESOLUTION NO. 20-038 re-appointing Greg Lynch as City Assessor.

Roll Call Vote: 3-0. Resolution declared adopted unanimously, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these Minutes.

CONFERENCE BOARD COMMENTS: Mr. Martin explained that one of the goals of the City Council was to be able to reach people in certain geographic areas of the City. He expressed interest in using the Beacon GIS system technology to reach people by phone or email. Council Member Corrieri said she contacted Mr. Lynch about it who contacted Beacon. The next step was for the Mini Board to get in contact with Beacon to discuss it further and potentially add on a module to address the requests of Council.

Council Member Martin noted that he wanted to go back to the merit portion of the salary increases. He said he respects the work of the City Assessor's Office and just has a process question. Mr. Martin stated that the City Council hires the City Manager, and they have a process for evaluating the City Manager's raises; whereas, the City Manager determines the merit pool for his employees.

Moved by Martin, seconded by Olson, to ask the Mini Board to report on the process for evaluation of the Assessor and the Deputy and send a memo to the Conference Board on that topic within six months.

Council Member Gartin asked to clarify how Mr. Martin would want to do something different. Mr. Martin replied that, right now, he is just wanting to know how the evaluations are done. The report could include a recommendation, but right now, there is not any clarity on how evaluations are even being done.

Ms. Corrieri stated that there is not a formal review process. The Mini Board meets once a year. The budget is approved and it includes merit increases and cost-of-living increases; that is the process. If they want to talk about a review process, the Mini Board could, but would have to meet outside of its once-a-year cycle.

Nevada School Board Member Joe Anderson asked to know who comprises the Mini Board as it was his impression that all members of the Conference Board are invited to be part of the Mini Board. Mayor Haila stated that each member is appointed. Mr. Anderson asked how it was set up and who set it up that way. He noted that he was not aware of any legal basis of the Mini Board. Council Member Corrieri stated that the Mini Board just makes recommendations, and those are brought to the full Conference Board for consideration. City Assessor Greg Lynch noted that it might have been set up originally to minimize the amount of conversation during the full Conference Board meetings. Mayor Haila explained that he would have the City Clerk get the history of how it was set up and have it sent out to the Conference Board.

Council Member Betcher inquired if what Ms. Corrieri explained answered Council Member Martin's motion.

Moved by Martin, seconded by Olson, to amend the motion by adding to the scope of the report

recommendations for changing the process of evaluation.

Vote on Amendment: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Vote on Motion, as amended: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Heddens to adjourn the Ames Conference Board at 6:02 p.m.

Rachel Knutsen, Deputy City Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor

Gregory Lynch, Ames City Assessor