

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

AMES, IOWA

JANUARY 24, 2023

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CONFERENCE BOARD

The Regular Meeting of the Ames Conference Board was called to order by Chairman John Haila at 5:00 p.m. on January 24, 2022. Present from the Ames City Council were Chairman John Haila, Amber Corrieri, Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Tim Gartin, Anita Rollins, and Rachel Junck. Linda Murken, and Latifah Faisal represented the Story County Board of Supervisors. Kelly Winfrey represented the Ames Community Board of Directors and Joe Anderson the Nevada School Board of Directors. The Gilbert and United Community School Boards of Directors were not represented.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 27, 2022: Moved by Murken, seconded by Corrieri, to approve the Minutes of the September 27, 2022 meeting of the Ames Conference Board.

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

UPDATE FROM SHARI PLAGGE, CITY ASSESSOR, ON THE PROGRESS OF THE OFFICE:

STAFFING: Plagge stated that it had been a busy time in the Assessor's Office since the last meeting of the Conference Board. The office is currently working on filling the Appraisal Tech position with phone interviews starting this morning with in-person interviews next week. She stated that current plans would have the position filled by mid-February.

She explained that the Deputy Assessor position had been posted, but that discussion with Human Resources regarding the candidates lead to the decision to postpone filling the position until later. She also stated that the two temp positions had been a tremendous help with the data conversion process, and that all staff had been putting in overtime to have data complete enough for valuations.

DATA CONVERSION AND ENTRY: Plagge stated that the residential class had completely been put into the Camavision system. She explained that the condo consolidation process had been extremely helpful, with 1,574 parcels consolidated into 63 individual parcels. Plagge indicated that she had had conversations with several property owners about the consolidation process which led to so many consolidations. She explained that the new parcels were now Res3+ parcels, and that all Res3+ parcels, including these new ones, were in the process of being visited. Finally, she stated that a commercial consultant would be helping with the conversion process starting next week.

Plagge stated that land values were going to be a summer project that would begin when the Board of Review adjourned. She also stated that there would be a sales analysis conducted in the summer to aid in the land value process.

TAX APPEALS: Plagge stated that the 34 appeals that were open when she joined the office had been worked down to 11 cases, with 8 of the cases being from 2021. She stated that 8 had been denied, six had been settled, 12 had been withdrawn, with the majority of the withdrawn cases being condo cases that had since been consolidated or sold to new owners for more than the assessed valued. She

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indicated that there was one additional case that is in litigation, but that the appeal was due to the process, not the actual value. She indicated that there was a list of the appeals showing active cases in the back of the budget packet for review.

Betcher noted that there had been several years of cases with the Research Park and wanted to know if that had been settled. Plagge stated that there had been an appeal with the Board of Review but no cases beyond that while she had been in the office.

Plagge also informed the Board that she had gone to four hearings in person, and all of those had been won by the Assessor's Office. She also talked about some of the settlements reached, using Menards as an example.

OTHER INFORMATION: Plagge stated that policies and procedures were being reviewed for the office, with the goal of streamlining those procedures. She stated that she would be working with Human Resources after going over them herself and Plagge will also be looking at job descriptions within the department to get some duties realigned. She stated that this work would occur after assessment rolls were issued, as the main focus in the office right now was getting the conversion done and getting rolls mailed.

Plagge stated that the third page of the packet she had provided to the Conference Board was the assessed and taxable values, and showed the percentage changed. Murken discussed that the overall percentage change appeared to be wrong, and Plagge acknowledged that the total was an error, but that the individual percentages by class were accurate.

Plagge stated that the Iowa Department of Revenue is working on a new DOV system and that it has had an adverse impact on the Assessor's Office, particularly the fact that staff had to hand enter information that the IDR used to do itself. As an example, she told the Board that a sale of an entire condo complex that was 300 units would require each of those units to be entered individually. She explained that eventually the DOV was to be uploaded instead of entered, and that that process was being worked out by the IDR.

Haila noted that Allen Bierbaum of the Ames Community School District had asked at a previous meeting if Plagge felt that she had the staff to get the job done. Plagge stated that once all the information was entered into the system she would have a better idea if current staff would be adequate with keeping information up to date. She explained that the standard was to touch each parcel every six years, and that right now if someone were to look at the volume of parcels vs number of staff, the Assessor's Office would be considered understaffed. She also indicated that if more condos were to be consolidated it would lighten the workload, although it would increase other parcel types. She stated that the 2 temp workers have been vital in getting the information entered into the system and had greatly improved the speed of data entry.

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Haila asked about the process of the conversion and how it stood with the need to be compliant with the Iowa Manual by January 1, 2024. Plagge stated that compliance will be achieved this year for 2023 and the commercial and some multiresidential properties are left to enter. She stated that part of the reason land values were put on hold until the summer was to be able to value improvements using the newest cost manual.

Plagge also wanted the Board to know that regular staff meetings are occurring so she could give information to the staff, consult staff to get their ideas, and to make sure that everyone was on the same page and delivering the same message. She stated that staff input is invaluable to the process.

Plagge then turned to a table showing an estimate of the increases required to values and states that these increases were in the range of other large communities in the state. She also directed the Board to look at a graph she provided that explained that even though assessed values would be increasing, taxable values would not increase at the same rate, and over time with fluctuations up or down in value the taxable value should remain more even. Gartin observed that the general public does not know this information, and Plagge stated that she would be sending the graph and a letter out with assessment rolls. She also stated that she would provide the information to the Conference Board, and that any member was free to contact her with any questions.

DISCUSSION ON APPOINTMENTS TO BOARD OF REVIEW: Plagge stated that a member of the Board of Review had resigned for health reasons. She stated that she wasn't sure as to the process that the Conference Board used to fill positions. Haila stated that in the past it had fallen to the Chair to fill the position, but said he was open to suggestion due to how difficult filling Board of Review positions could be. Gartin stated that he had an idea of some people that could fill the vacancy. There was some discussion as to the requirements necessary to be a Board of Review member.

DISCUSSION OF THE CITY ASSESSOR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS: Plagge stated that previous budgets had not been broken down to the extent that she preferred and that she had broken it down further to keep more extensive track on items. She indicated that she felt that it would be easier to determine where money is being spent and where it can be reorganized or better spent. She stated that if something wasn't evident in the columns for previous fiscal years it's because it had been put in the miscellaneous category or combined with various other fees in a single category that reflected payments to the City of Ames. She felt that further breakdown of the fees made the information more readily available and transparent.

Beatty-Hansen asked if the percent change was between the re-estimated year for 2023 and 2024 and observed that payroll did not show a re-estimate. Plagge stated that total payroll expenses from last year would actually reflect a decrease due to her salary not being at the estimated salary in the previous budget and the two empty positions.

Plagge stated that one of the questions she commonly gets regards how increases for staff come about. Plagge explained that what it is in the budget is simply to get a number in. With the Memorandum of Understanding between the Conference Board and the City of Ames she is going through the City Human Resources process to get the individual increases. She also stated that even though the Budget

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showed a 5% increase for all staff, not everybody would be getting a 5% increase. She stated that a 5% increase was similar to what other Assessor's Offices were doing and that some Assessor's were drastically increasing their pay in an attempt to retain staff, some increasing by 10 and up to 22%.

Haila asked if the positions on the budget were commensurate with other jurisdictions. Plagge stated that this would be part of the process of working with Human Resources and working on job descriptions and pay structures for each position.

Plagge explained that she had increased the amount for continuing education so that staff could attend more classes. She stated that she felt the progression of the office requires education so that staff members could advance in their careers and future vacancies could be filled more easily.

Plagge indicated that it would be necessary to hold on to the old CAMA system, ProVal, for another year or two just to make sure that the information could be accessed as the conversion process continued, but that this would be removed as an expense after that. She explained that she had also visited with Vanguard about reorganizing the current contract for modules that had been purchased but she felt the office didn't need, so that money could be spent better or towards modules that would be more beneficial to the Assessor's Office.

Plagge stated that the largest item on the final page of the budget was the money towards appeals. She stated that this was due to the high cost of appraisals, the potential necessity for outside counsel in certain cases, and the expected high volume of appeals to the Board of Review, which in turn lead to appeals to the Property Assessment Appeal Board or District Court.

Haila asked if it was realistic to expect a decrease in values for litigation like this in the future, noting that in the past there had been years where the legal expenses were high but that costs had come down afterwards. Plagge stated that it could be expected but that there was no way to predict how many appeals there would be.

Haila also stated that he wanted to point out that there was a large consultant fee that was a one time item that had been very beneficial to the Assessor's Office last year having no assessor.

Moved by Gartin, seconded by Winfrey, to approve the recommendations of the City Assessor's Report.

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

Moved by Corrieri, seconded by Murken, to receive the proposed budget.

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

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Winfrey to set 5:30 p.m. on February 28, 2023 as date of public hearing on the proposed FY 2023/2024 City Assessor's budget (adoption of budget will occur after hearing is held).

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

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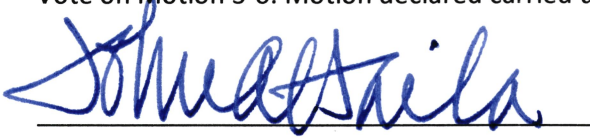
UNFINISHED BUSINESS: No unfinished business was brought forward.

NEW BUSINESS: No new business was brought forward.

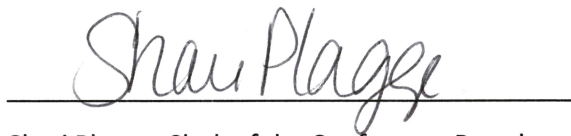
CONFERENCE BOARD COMMENTS: No comments were made by the any party of the Conference Board.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Betcher, seconded by Murken, to adjourn the Ames Conference Board Meeting at 6:00 p.m.

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



John A. Haila, Conference Board Chairman



Shari Plagge, Clerk of the Conference Board