

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

AMES, IOWA

JANUARY 22, 2013

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CONFERENCE BOARD

The regular meeting of the Ames Conference Board was called to order by Chairperson Ann Campbell at 6:30 p.m. on January 22, 2013. Present from the Ames City Council were Jeremy Davis, Matthew Goodman, Jami Larson, Peter Orazem, Victoria Szopinski, and Tom Wacha. Story County Board of Supervisors present were Wayne Clinton and Rick Sanders. Representing the Ames School Board were Teresa Simpson and Bill Talbot. Gilbert School District was represented by Marcia Dezonias. United School District was not represented.

MINUTES OF THE JULY 10, 2012, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE BOARD: Moved by Clinton, seconded by Goodman, to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Conference Board held July 10, 2012.

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

ASSESSOR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS: Ames City Assessor Greg Lynch highlighted information from the City Assessor's 2013/14 Annual Report. He specifically explained Taxable Valuations by Class at 100% Assessed Value and at Rolled Back or Taxable Values. The percentage of change between the 2011 and 2012 values was noted. The 2012 rollback factor was 52.8166%. According to Mr. Lynch, the increase in the rollback is the primary driver of the net 5.4% change in taxable value from 2011 to 2012.

Department activities were reviewed by Mr. Lynch. Residential properties are starting to rebound from problems experienced in past years. He brought the Council's attention to Attachment D contained within the Report, which shows the quarterly sales activity. The overall sales volume for new homes decreased 30% from 2010 to 2011, but in 2012, it increased back up to 43. The sale price for new homes also increased. There were 575 sales in 2012 compared to 492 in 2011. The overall sales volume for existing homes increased by 16.87%, and the average sales price per square foot increased 2.05%. The median sales price showed a slight increase of 1.49% from \$161,500 in 2011 to \$163,000 in 2012. According to Mr. Lynch, that, coupled with a median sales ratio of 99.3% for sales that are believed to be included in the Iowa Department of Revenue's sales ratio analysis for equalization, leads to the conclusion that residential revaluation for January 2013 would not be required. He also stated that since the Assessor's Office current software that is used to generate values is no longer supported, they have developed a new model and are currently calibrating it. It will be used to revalue residential properties.

In regards to commercial properties, based on information provided by the Iowa Department of Revenue through October of 2012 and on other sales that have occurred since then, Mr. Lynch estimated the median sales ratio to be 98%. This is down from a year ago when it was 100.7%. The 98% range is well within the range of 95% to 105%, which excludes it from equalization by the Department of Revenue; based on that, no city-wide commercial revaluation is warranted.

Department accomplishments for 2012 were highlighted by Mr. Lynch.

Assessor Lynch reported on staff changes within the office. Brenda Swaim, who has been with the Assessor's Office since 1996 was appointed as Deputy Assessor in 2012. The former Deputy

Assessor, Paul Overton, had been appointed the Boone County Assessor. Matt Emerson was hired on July 1, 2012, as the Database Manager/IS Administrator.

Mr. Lynch detailed the City Assessor's budget proposal for 2013/14. Pertaining to salaries, he is asking for a 2.0% cost-of-living increase and a 1.00% merit pool, for a total of 3.00%, for the Assessor and all other staff. The Health Insurance line item was increased by 8%. Mileage reimbursement increased by \$.01/mile; it is paid at the current IRS rate. Mr. Lynch reminded the Conference Board that the Assessor's Office now uses the City's Information Technology Division for all of its needs.

The Board of Review line item was reviewed by Mr. Lynch, and a summary of the cases that had come before the Property Assessment Appeal Board was given. For 2012, 15 cases were filed; ten of those cases involved parcels held in a cooperative form of ownership.

Regarding the GIS and Mapping portion of the Assessor's Budget, Mr. Lynch advised that they had contracted with Pictometry for new aerial imagery. The flight occurred in March 2012, but because of early foliage, the photography was not acceptable. The company gave the Assessor's Office those images at no cost and re-flew the City in November 2012. They are hoping to be on a three-year cycle for aerial photography.

An explanation of the funds and balances uses and proposed was given by City Assessor Lynch. He noted that the projected ending balance is about 30% of the annual budget; it is felt that that amount of reserves is adequate.

The annual survey, as required by the Conference Board, was summarized by Mr. Lynch. Of the 100 forms mailed, 37 were returned. The Board's attention was brought to the comments that were contained within the Report.

Mr. Lynch pointed out that the percentage of change between the Proposed and Current Budget shows a decrease except for Assessment Appeals/Court Costs. The total percentage increase in the Assessor's Budget is 1.9%, which is the least amount of increase during Mr. Lynch's tenure.

Moved by Sanders, seconded by Szopinski, to approve the proposed City Assessor's 2013/14 budget, as above-discussed.

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

Moved by Sanders, seconded by Szopinski, to receive the proposed budget (adoption of the budget will occur after the hearing is held).

Roll Call Vote: 3.0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Sanders, seconded by Szopinski, to set 6:30 p.m. on February 26, 2013, as the date of public hearing on the proposed FY 2013/14 City Assessor's budget.

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

COMMENTS: Council Member Larson added that the *Iowa Code* mandates that the City Attorney represent the Conference Board and states that the city may be reimbursed for its expenses. As part of an evaluation of the duties of the City Attorney in connection with the City's recruitment for that position, Acting City Attorney Judy Parks had done an analysis of the costs incurred over the past two years by the City Attorney's Office to provide the services to the City Assessor's Office. That analysis revealed that, depending on the number of appeals, the costs came out

between \$5,000 and \$10,000/year, which was at the rate that other City departments are charged for the City Attorney's services. It was noted that those fees were much less than using the services of a private attorney. Mr. Larson said that City Assessor Lynch had agreed to add that reimbursement to the City for the services of the City Attorney in the future. For 2013/14, that amount will be \$10,000.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Sanders, seconded by Davis, to adjourn the Ames Conference Board at 7:00 p.m.

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

Ann H. Campbell, Chair

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Gregory Lynch, City Assessor