

(The following is a synopsis of the minutes of the West Branch City Council meeting. A video recording is available for inspection at westbranchiowa.org. The minutes are not approved until the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.)

**West Branch, Iowa
Council Chambers**

**City Council
FY26 Budget Work Session**

**January 13, 2025
6:00 p.m.**

Mayor Roger Laughlin called the West Branch City Council FY26 Budget Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m. Roll call: Council members Jerry Sexton, Colton Miller, Mike Horihan, Jodee Stoolman and Tom Dean. City Staff present: City Administrator Adam Kofoed, Finance Officer Heidi Van Auken, Police Chief Greg Hall, Fire chief Kevin Stoolman, Public Works Director Matt Goodale, Park & Recreation Director Erin Laughlin, and Library Director Jessie Schafer. Attending via Zoom: Sergeant Cathy Steen.

City Administrator presentation of proposed FY26 budget highlights

Kofoed said the city is in a much better position than we were twelve months ago due in part to inflation being a little more stable and cuts made to the budget. He said road use tax funds were up a little higher than normal attributing to some of the surplus. He also noted that several FY24 City Council goals have been completed. Kofoed also commented that the water fund is looking good. Kofoed gave his assumptions for the FY26 budget with estimating employee salary increases to up to 4.5%, health insurance premiums 6% increase and an unknown liability insurance increase that will most likely be felt by all. Kofoed mentioned other budget highlights such as; expense for updating the city's comprehensive plan, city office transition (due to an upcoming retirement), retaining five well-paid police officers, park improvements and increasing fire department pay.

Public Works proposed budget

Goodale reviewed the public works various budgets under his purview. Goodale proposed re-sealcoating all of the roads in the cemetery which are in need of resurfacing. He also said he is budgeting to replace some of the trees taken out in the past few years with shade trees which require less maintenance. Goodale said water and sewer funds are increasing due in part to utility costs for the new sewer plant, the addition of the deputy clerk position and higher salaries.

Police Department proposed budget

Hall stated he was able to cut \$115,000 from the FY26 budget (from FY25 which included contract fees from outside agencies.) Hall proposed to decrease the training budget due in part to the types of certifications of former employees but to keep some money in the budget for academy costs should they be needed. He also discussed the need for updating car and body cameras as they are old and in need of replacement and a necessary tool for police.

Fire Department proposed budget

Stoolman proposed his budget highlights for FY26 to include salaries increase for on-call pay, truck captains and secretary salaries. He also said new technology/software purchased this year (used for charting calls) will increase his budget. Other highlights include the purchase of new defibrillators and gear replacement. He also mentioned revenues from townships were up approximately \$5000.

Public Library proposed budget

Schafer reviewed the library's proposed budget and stated that not much has changed from the current year, but said that the increase is reflective of inflation costs. Schafer noted that she had already presented her proposed budget to the Library Board who approved it previously. Schafer noted some highlights for FY26 which include sidewalk repairs, interior painting and increased technology costs. Schafer also informed that Council that she continues to work on lowering utility costs by reducing hours of operation, switching to smart thermostats and LED bulbs.

Parks & Recreation proposed budget

Laughlin (new to the position in 2024), explained some of the FY25 budget improvements since she took over. Laughlin said she has been able to reduce some operating costs related to extra phone lines no longer needed at Cubby Park and Town Hall, reviewed and increased youth sports fees (to make them self-sustaining), and more program planning of non-sports activities for residents. Laughlin proposed the following items for FY26; increase in training and education for certification, cost-share with public works for a new mower, park improvements for a shade structure at Cubby Park, bike repair station at the Hoover trail and resurfacing the Hoover Trail.

Town Hall, Community Development, TIF LMI proposed budget

Kofoed reminded the Council the city can no longer levy taxes for Civic Center (Town Hall) and therefore must find other ways to operate the facility. Kofoed noted that reservations have increased but so have utility costs. Staff will continue to monitor ways to keep expenses even with revenues. Under Community Development (which includes hotel/motel revenues), Kofoed said he is budgeting for Main Street West Branch dues in the amount of \$17,500 and \$50,000 for the partnership with the Iowa Initiative for Sustainable Communities program with the University of Iowa. (Kofoed said he would talk about this program at the next Council meeting.) Kofoed also discussed funding for Hoover's Hometown Days and the Council had mixed ideas on how the city should participate financially. Kofoed also discussed the growing LMI funds and what the Council would like to see done with the monies. Sexton suggested that a committee is formed in the upcoming months to create a program on how residents can apply for those dollars to improve their properties.

General Fund Services proposed budget

Kofoed said the only change was to salaries for the city clerk transition and bumped up the Council salaries which would include Council training should the desire to attend.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS - NONE

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Miller, second by Dean. Motion carried on a voice vote. City Council meeting adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Roger Laughlin, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leslie Brick, City Clerk