

March 26, 2024

The Benton County Board of Supervisors met in regular session with Supervisors Primmer, Bierschenk and Seeman present. Primmer called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. at the Benton County Service Center. Members of the public are invited to join in during open session or watch the livestream at <https://www.youtube.com/bentoncountyiowa>. *Summarized Resolutions will be available in the Auditor's office and at: www.bentoncountyiowa.gov*

Chairman Primmer called the proposed maximum tax levy public hearing to order. There was numerous members of the public and press present. Auditor Rippel explained the purpose behind having to hold a separate meeting today was due to HF718 (Iowa Acts Chapter 71). During the 2023 legislative session, they passed a requirement for an annual mailing to each taxable property owner to go out no later than March 20 and that entities had to hold a special meeting just for this. Rippel realizes these notices have been confusing to many residents and explained that this wasn't created by her, but legislation and department of management. There have been many joint meetings to try and help explain some of the reasons behind passing HF718. The information on the statements is aimed at informing taxpayers about forthcoming budgets for K-12 School District, County and City (for urban residents) which tax within the district where the property is located. These statements are not on an individual basis, but for the taxable entity as a whole. So for example, Vinton-Shellsburg School, the proposed tax rate amounts on the statement would be looking at as if it were a blanket over the county, the valuations within that school district within Benton County alone. Rippel also explained the maximum levy rate of 3.50 in General Basic has been set as such since the 80s. With the increased values in the county this year and comparing to last year and using the same levy rate as that predicted a 3.11 % growth of our tax asking. Benton County was then forced to reduce our General Basic Levy to be held within the allowable 3% growth overall. We can still use the General Supplemental Levy because the General Basic is still considered at the maximum. Out of the 99 counties, there were about 30 who were levying above that for various reasons and legislation trying to bring them back down. It can be very frustrating with all the unfunded mandates that we can't control, that we are getting held at a growth rate, yet other things continue to increase. Primmer stressed the wages and cost of living increases hasn't helped and that main street hasn't had that, nor has Grain.

Wayne Siela, county tax payer asked for a proposed budget detailed and comparing the last five years. He understands the different funds but wants it as a whole dollar figure instead. Auditor Rippel will provide him with that. This hearing had to take place and get approved before she can propose the next step in the budget process with the Department of Management.

Kellie Van Ree, brought up concerns with recent increases in areas such as county texting program, outsourcing background checks, along with maybe other unnecessary increases. Jill Marlow, asked how many years were left on the county's debt service and with the other increases such as EMS levy, and continued costs. Marlow stressed to the Board how they really need to look at their overall spending and plan for their future expenses better. If the county continues to have growth, then they should be able to reduce levies.

After no further discussion, the proposed maximum tax levy hearing was closed.

Seeman moved/Bierschenk seconded: To approve the maximum proposed property tax levy's as such:

County Wide Tax Rate-6.88792

Additional Rural Rate of 3.90577.

Primmer, Seeman and Bierschenk voting aye. Nays none. Motion carried.

Seeman moved/Bierschenk seconded: To Adjourn. Voting aye were Primmer, Bierschenk and Seeman. Motion carried.

Richard Primmer, Chairman

ATTEST: _____

Hayley Rippel, Benton County Auditor