

City of Camanche  
March 31, 2025

The City Council of the City of Camanche, Iowa met in special session on March 31, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. at Camanche City Hall. Present on roll call: Mayor Pro Tem Dave Bowman presiding, and Council members Edens and Weller. Absent: Council members Farrell and Klahn. Also present were City Administrator Andrew Kida and City Clerk Schneider.

Moved by Councilman Edens, second by Councilman Weller to approve the Agenda. On roll call – all Ayes.

Mayor Pro Tem Bowman opened a Public Hearing regarding the FY2026 Maximum Tax Levy at 3:00 p.m. and asked City Administrator Kida to give a brief overview of the levy. He said with HF718 last year, Cities are required to have a Max Levy Public Hearing at a time separate from a regular Council meeting. The proposed levy, including the debt levy, is \$13.10 up from \$12.49. He called attention to the Capital Improvement Plan, adopted 5 years ago that projected the levy in FY2026 to be at \$13.00. He believes we can get the levy down to \$13.00 with moving some employee benefit expenses back to the \$8.10 levy. We are right on target with where we planned to be. Kida noted there was very little change to the total taxable valuation for the City as a whole and little change to the General Fund. The largest change was to Special Revenues to pay for Police and Fire Retirement, as we have been understaffed. Also, Other Employee Benefits can be reduced to bring that number down. He pointed out the Debt Service Levy has increased due to the debt incurred for the Splash Pad. Everything else is pretty much the same.

Mayor Pro Tem Bowman called members of the Public who had signed in up to the podium. Some declined to speak initially. First to speak was Gary Winslow, 2950 Oakwood Trail. He asked at what point do you stop taxing the heck out of us. He said his property tax in 30 years has gone from \$800 to \$3,600 a year and said the City does absolutely nothing for me where I live. Mayor Pro Tem Bowman said we are here to take your statements today.

Gregg Maxwell, 2127 10<sup>th</sup> Street, said property values up about 1%-my understanding is it's more like 2 ½-3%, the way it looks in assessments, then the levy rate changes. If we do the max rate, it looks like we will not so that's a plus, that's like another 5+%. You tag those two together, it's 7-8%. It's a pretty hefty increase in today's world. Taxpayers really can't handle that kind of increase. You did shuffle some payroll and benefits from General Fund to Water and Sewer Funds, which I know there's some logic to that, but the ultimate thing is I think about \$100,000, probably a little more than that's going to end up coming out of people's checkbooks in terms of higher water bills and stuff like that. So, it all matters, it all adds up. I just ask that everything we can do to keep that levy rate down, even below \$13.00 would be much better. In fact, no change at all would be the best. I've talked multiple times about finding ways to cut back expenses. We've got plenty of room to look into some of that rather than continual drive to increase revenue. We can cut our expenses and make better use of the taxpayers' money then we don't have to drive to push revenue so hard. So I just feel like in today's world people are hurting and as a City we need to recognize that in everything we can. I'm just certain there's things we can do better on. We could look a little deeper and do a little better job on some of that stuff. The community's aging, we're going to have more people on fixed income. These big tax increases, they hurt, you know, and they're going to make a

difference in people's lives and whether they are going to be able to stay in their homes. So, again, those things matter. Just want you to keep those things in consideration, alright?

Jamie Liddle 1012 21<sup>st</sup> Avenue, thought he would take the opportunity to give his opinion. It just seems like year after year it's the handout approach. It leaves the taxpayers liable for the shortfalls year after year. You go into it, you see it one year and then assessments, taxes and levy and everything go up. You think it's going to level off, this will have to change this year, then, not it's not. He just wants to let Council know that you guys are the ultimate goal when we spend all this money. He wants to go to bat for the taxpayers in this town once. When you look back, if we can't afford everything now, with everything that's been added, pensions, IPERS, everything else, what are we going to do 20 years from now? Then I read in the minutes from a meeting this year that we are going to make the Cemetery Sexton a full time position. So then you've got not only wage, you've got taxes and insurance on that, then you guys hired somebody that was going to do some of this job. Then come to find out, oh no, that's not going to happen because that's public safety so he's going to spend the winters training. So it's just things like this give me a lot of questions so I just think that sometimes you gotta look at making adequate cuts instead of leaning on the people. He think's taxpayers would like to see a different approach. Everything has a consequence. You just gotta look farther down the road. There's cuts that need to be made. Do I know where they are at? Do I have the say to say that? No.

Dave Willis 1433 3<sup>rd</sup> Street brought his letter from the County and is looking at the hypothetical example of the \$100,000. On the paper it says the percentage of change is going to be 18.5%. He thinks he heard it is supposed to be 13.5% so he is hoping he would hear an answer on that today. But maybe tomorrow night that will be discussed.

John Dixon 1429 3<sup>rd</sup> Street said he is kind of in the same boat here, probably because he doesn't understand, but when you look at the County's letter, on a \$100,000 house, you know your proposed tax rate goes up 18.5%. He said he's lucky, he can afford his taxes, but he thinks what we need to do here is make sure that we are providing basics, fire, police, public works, streets, water and sewer. What he is worried about is debt service eventually. He sees that debt service for next year is the same. He would like to see debt go away. He is a believer in having money in the bank when you need something. He said he is not against the Splash Pad but doesn't think we should borrow money for it, we should plan ahead and not pay interest on it. He thinks the taxable rate should be spent on those major things that cities need and we should get rid of our debt, period.

Kida then offered to address some of the citizens' concerns. He said he offered Mr. Maxwell an opportunity to come in at any time of Mr. Maxwell's choosing to come and look at things to cut, adding that he is still welcome to do that. Kida is happy to do that. For Dr. Dixon, Kida understands Dr. Dixon's position on debt, but debt is a double-edged sword when it is viewed that way. However, when you try to save up for something like the \$2 million 9<sup>th</sup> Street project, a Council can vote to spend that money on something else and your long-range plans are no longer there. In addition to that, many of these plans become way more expensive in the time it would take to save the money to do them. Also, Cities borrow at a much lower rate. Kida offered to everyone that he would go over the budget line by line at any time. Dr. Dixon clarified that he has no problem borrowing for streets. He does have a problem borrowing for non-essential things. Those are the things we get grants for, get money donated for. You do

not borrow money for things that are not in the essential bucket. He said he is making a plea to the Council to stop borrowing for non-essential things such as the Splash Pad, Library or Fareway. He said he is not against these things; he thinks they are nice.

In regard to the comments about the Cemetery Sexton position, it has not been made full time and that was not in the minutes. There was discussion to have it be a shared Public Works/Cemetery full time position, but not full time at the Cemetery position. It becomes difficult to hire and retain part-time employees to consistently run the Cemetery and that is the reason for the discussion, but again, this was not done.

It was asked, what is the goal followed by a comment that if we do this stuff, possibly alluding to the non-essential items, we aren't going to have more people. Someone else wanted to know who brings these ideas to Council. Clarification was provided after a comment was made that these ideas came from Council based on a Community survey.

Mayor Pro Tem Bowman closed the Public Hearing and adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.

Austin Pruett  
Mayor

Toni Schneider  
City Clerk/Treasurer