

April 2, 2025

The Public Hearing for Max Tax Levy FY2026 the City of Bertram was held on the above date at 6:30 pm at City Hall. Mayor Scott Flaherty presided over the meeting. The council members present were Louise Hall, John Klimek, Bill Mulholland, Chris Price and Jim Unzeitig. City Attorney Kevin Shea is absent.

Hall makes a motion to open the Max Tax Levy FY2026 Public Hearing. MSB: Price. Aye: Hall, Mulholland, Klimek, Price, Unzeitig. Motion passed by unanimous vote at 6:31 pm.

- Public Hearing Max Tax Levy FY2026:
 - Council Member Price stated with legislation that was passed 2 years ago the state has capped the tax rates at 8.1 and property taxes can only be raised on non-congressional election years. Does not want to increase property taxes but the city needs to continue as a city. The city gets the majority of revenue from Property taxes. Due to the last census population decreased which lowered the amount of Road Use Taxes and Local Option Sales Taxes the city receives. City streets have been inspected and giving a life expectancy of 8 to 10 years, city has 6 linear miles of streets, average cost per linear mile is \$30,000 to \$400,000. Fehr Graham did a study for the city which includes culverts and road plans, city needs to budget for these repairs. City park does not have ADA Bathroom, City Hall parking lot is not ADA compliant, and I am not sure if the bathroom at city hall is ADA compliant. These are also things that will need to be budgeted for. Fehr Graham is looking into grants.
 - Resident want to know when the last time property taxes were raised. The city responded prior to 1989. Stated can only raise taxes on non-congressional election years and derecho and covid those things put the city behind. Bertram is moving to 7.10 while also every other city is at or moving to 8.1 this year.
 - Jan Mc Keag: Has lived here a long time, wants to know are the main things the city is paying for. Council Member Price: Insurance as a city, mowing, snow removal, 28E agreement with Linn County Sheriff. Wants to know what year all the streets were coated. City Responded January 2000, aware that big trucks through are rough on the streets.
 - Dixie Long: Stated at last meeting Mayor Flaherty stated that streets were Number 6 on his priority list and annexation and water were higher. Mayor Flaherty stated annexation takes time and streets have moved higher on his list.
 - Resident: Stated he does not believe the city has priority straight and needs to focus on the roads. Council Member Price stated a lot of Mayor Flaherty meetings with Fehr Graham were about getting grants to help pay for the water tower and other options that would benefit the town as a whole. DNR and State are consistently changing the laws about wells and septic, so the city had a study done to look at options about growing the city with utilities, culverts, and right of way. Council Member Klimek stated there were previously multiple meetings discussing a water tower.
 - Bob Malone: When the city first tried to annex people didn't want to due to the country's tax rate. I would prefer to go to the country.
 - Sadie Farris: City needs to be responsible. She helped the council annex property in. Agrees that property taxes could be raised but not by this much.
 - Guy Gibson: Wants to know who monitors road or contractor work that is being done. Council Member Price stated that council members went through and inspected after the crack sealing was completed July 2023. Gibson wants to know if contractors have to be bonded, add city to their insurance and if line certified? He has worked with DNR and stated the culvert by his house has ash tree put in it by the city. Council Member Price stated he will have a look and have it removed. Gibson stated the State of Iowa has funding for solar lights in Solon and Mt Vernon and wants to know why Bertram doesn't have them. Council Member Price stated Bertram does not own the light poles and would be more expensive to put in. Gibson stated not solar light but grant for speed lights. Stated has never seen anyone pulled over in town. Mayor Flaherty stated that it is a topic that is on the agenda for the next council meeting.
 - Ron Meader: Commented on not being able to increase property taxes in congressional election year. Council Member Price stated he forgot to mention that the state has not set the rollback and won't until October, which will determine if the property taxes get raised to what the cities are voting on. The max would be 7.1 but could not change at all. Meader stated he would preferred a

tapered property tax increase. Feels like the city is focused on big projects and should start to introduce small projects and show progress.

- Residents want to know what makes sure that the next council using property tax increase on roads. Mayor Flaherty stated the voters do.
- Mayor Flaherty wants to remind residents that most of the council and city employees have full-time jobs and need to be advised when an issue arises.
- Bob Malone: wants to know what the average tax increase will be when 7.1 takes effect. Council Member Price stated it would be roughly \$207 annual increase per \$100,000 of assessed home. Malone wants to know if the state tells the city what the property tax can be. Council Member Price stated yes, they said does and going forward will be a 2% max. Agrees that the percentage seems high but if special assessment for projects has to be done it will be done at 25% and the council wants to avoid that.
- Penny Kula Reminds residents that anyone can be fun for City Council and come to the meetings and help the council out and tell them what they want. Stated she was on council for years and it is a thankless job.
- Resident requested to see 3 years of revenue.
- Resident questioned why not a gradual increase. Council Member Price stated the roads have a 8-to-10-year life span and the city will not be able to afford without the increase.
- Council Member Unzeitig stated that as a contractor himself he does not want to get bids from contractors if the city is not ready to proceed. To be it right has to hire engineering due to being over the state bid threshold of \$36,000 and that Council Member Price has rough numbers. It has not seen inflation like we have had over the last 5 years.
- Council Member Price stated Seal coating cost \$16,000 per linear mile, has meetings set up in the next week for more information.
- Resident Stated the council is putting out big numbers and are proposing a large increase in taxes, wants more facts, what's going to happen and what are the residents getting.
- Russ Rabik wants to know more about DNR. Council Member Price stated 12 people using a well at one time is considered a public well. DNR is changing rules and wants to have wells that are dug able to service 3 or 4 house. There are places in Bertram that might not be able to stay private well if the state ever cracks down, which is part of why we did the study and are looking into options.
- Council Member Price stated the council tries to be fiscally responsible and do what is best for Bertram. Try not to spend revenue frivolously but it happens to everyone. He doesn't want a special assessment to come out for any resident due to not planning ahead.
- Hall Makes motion to close Max Tax Levy FY2026 Public Hearing. MSB: Price. Aye: Hall, Klimek, Mulholland, Price, Unzeitig. Motion passed at 8:05 pm.
- Price Makes motion to approve FY2026 Proposed Property Tax Rate. MSB: Klimek. Hall: Aye, Klimek: Aye, Mulholland: Aye, Price: Aye, Unzeitig: Aye. Motion passed by unanimous vote at 8:07 pm.
- Hall Makes motion to adjourn. MSB: Price. Aye: Hall, Klimek, Mulholland, Price, Unzeitig. The motion passed by unanimous vote at 8:09 pm.

Raven Kuehl, City Clerk