

April 20, 2026

COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
Harold E. Getty Council Chambers  
4:10 p.m.

Pre-Meeting Items

Roll Call.

Members present: Mayor Dave Boesen in the Chair. Roll Call: Mr. Schmitt, Mr. Morrow, Ms. Berry, Mr. Martin and Mr. Simon. Ms. Creighton-Smith arrived at 4:13 p.m. Mr. Salamanca was absent.

Agenda, as proposed or amended.

Simon/Martin  
that the agenda as proposed be approved. Voice vote-Ayes: Five. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes of the April 6, 2026, Council Work Session, as proposed or amended.

Simon/Martin  
that the minutes of the April 6, 2026, Council Work Session, be approved. Voice vote-Ayes: Five. Motion carried.

Work Session Items

Discussion of Black Hawk County water quality.

Ms. Berry provided an overview of what prompted her to bring this topic before council.

Kamyar Enshayan, University of Northern Iowa Center for Environmental Education, shared that he has been studying nitrate in Waterloo and surrounding cities. Over sixty Iowa cities have battled high nitrate levels in their drinking water over the past twenty years and the contamination stretches across the state and that wells are not immune from nitrates. He further shared the various health risks from exposure to nitrates.

Mayor Boesen questioned if this presentation had been made to the Waterloo Water Works.

Kamyar Enshayan stated that he had not yet taken this information to the Waterloo Water Works.

Ms. Berry questioned what type of filtration can be done in the household.

Kamyar Enshayan shared that a reverse osmosis system in the home can be utilized to filter water, however the systems are expensive.

Mr. Morrow commented that he would bring this topic to the Waterloo Water Works Board meeting on Wednesday.

Mr. Schmitt questioned if the Waterloo Water Works Board was made aware of this work session.

Ms. Berry commented that she did share in February that the work session was coming.

Mr. Schmitt questioned if anything else can be done to reduce the levels.

Kamyar Enshayan commented that though no health standards have been violated, we now know from studies that 10mg/L is too high. So the question is how we figure out how to address it and better serve our community.

Mayor Boesen commented that the other conversation should be about what is coming here from upstream.

Ms. Berry clarified that this does not lie solely on the shoulders of the city, and that changes could be made at the state and federal levels.

#### Discussion of Middle Cedar Watershed Management Authority update.

Wayne Castle, Assistant City Engineer, shared that representatives from the Middle Cedar Watershed Management Authority are here to provide an update on their activities. He introduced Mary Beth Stevenson, City of Cedar Rapids, Watershed and Source Water Program Manager and Middle Cedar WMA Chairperson, and Alyssa Comer, Environmental Specialist, East Central Iowa Council of Governments.

Mary Beth Stevenson provided an overview of the structure of their organization and shared their activities and efforts to help manage water quality.

Mr. Morrow questioned if the tiling in the fields contributes to the higher nitrates.

Mary Beth Stevenson confirmed and shared their strategy for addressing the leakage from tiling and expressed that it is only one part of the story and that infield solutions are also necessary to improve the health of our soil.

Mr. Morrow questioned if ponds help the situation.

Mary Beth Stevenson shared that farm runoff ponds are one of the solutions but are not a one-size fits all.

Ms. Creighton-Smith questioned if crop rotation is a component.

Mary Beth Stevenson commented that crop rotation is important, along with adding additional crops to add diversity.

Mr. Schmitt asked if their focus included flooding.

Mary Beth Stevenson shared that Black Hawk Soil and Water are the boots on the ground

working on the on-farm solutions and that the Watershed Management Authority is taking a look at the bigger issue of how to address the watershed as a whole to help them do what they do best.

Sherman Lundy, Geologist, BMC Aggregates, commented that Mary Beth is talking about expanding local practices into regional practices to research alternatives for holding the water in place over the various landscapes.

Mr. Simon asked if numbers were available on how many crop farmers are in the state and counties and what participation percentages are and if that number has increased or decreased. He further questioned if it would be a federal, state, or county requirement to increase those numbers.

Mary Beth Stevenson explained that participation numbers are available from the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship as far as who is signing up for cost-sharing, but it is more difficult to track the farmers who are not involved with the government programs. She shared that there has been an uptick in the use of cover crops but does not have a number to provide today, but many more are needed to adequately address the water quality issues.

Mr. Morrow questioned if her organization is utilizing the cooperatives and seed companies to spread the word.

Mary Beth Stevenson confirmed and said that those entities are the number one source of information for many of the farmers.

Ms. Creighton-Smith asked if they were working with the Iowa Faith and Climate Network because she knows they are working with small farmers.

Mary Beth Stevenson said she is familiar with their work and shared that they are amazing and one more voice to bring people together.

#### Discussion of Black Hawk County Watersheds project.

Wayne Castle, Assistant City Engineer, introduced the speakers from the Black Hawk County Soil and Water Conservation District, were Vern Fish, Jeri Thornsberry and Sherman Lundy. He shared that the engineering department was approached by the Black Hawk County SWCD about bringing a watershed improvement project to Waterloo. He explained that in 2011, engineering staff had attempted to take on a similar project internally, but were unsuccessful due to the amount of time and resources required. This proposal was shared with Mayor Boesen, who asked staff to learn more about it. He said that after meeting with the SWCD and the Iowa DNR, he feels this is an exciting and beneficial project for Waterloo.

Vern Fish, 3488 Kingswood Place, provided background on their program and their involvement with the Dry Run Creek Watershed Project. He commented on the Iowa DNR's desire to expand, and that Waterloo is an ideal partner. He explained that they would need a letter of support from the City of Waterloo, followed by a formal Agreement/MOU, to continue work on a grant to hire a coordinator and continue the project. He commented that they would need a place for the coordinator to work, and explained that they would provide the funding, supervision and a vehicle. He proposed that setting up space at City Hall would be ideal because it allows better coordination with city staff.

Wayne Castle listed the benefits to the city, which include, in part, funding opportunities, improved water quality and helping the city meet permit requirements. He shared the potential watershed location.

Jeri Thornsberry, 704 Sheridan Road, shared the next steps and identified the role that the SWCD would serve.

ADJOURNMENT

Simon/Schmitt

that the council adjourn at 4:54 p.m. Voice vote-Ayes: Six. Motion carried.

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Kelley Felchle  
City Clerk