



Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Hotel-Motel Tax Report Tops First Council Meeting of 2026

Holding its first 2026 meeting – and the first led by new Mayor Dave Casotti – the Boone City Council heard city administrator Ondrea Elmquist outline the findings of a hotel market study report commissioned last year.

The city retained Hotel R&D, LLC, to analyze Boone's hotel market and potential, and determine the feasibility of developing a new hotel in the city. The Oshkosh, Wis., firm, which has performed more than 500 hotel market and feasibility studies in 39 states, Canada and Europe, submitted its report to the city on Dec. 17.

The study notes that Boone "extends well beyond a stopover point."

"The findings in this report confirm seasonally high levels of business and leisure visitors destined for Boone yet select accommodations in nearby alternative markets," its executive summary states. "Expansion of the city's business park and a general uptick in new business openings in recent years appears to have fueled the potential for new hotel demand. The introduction of a high-quality conference center and attached 40-room upper midscale Cobblestone Hotel further accelerated the city's destination status in 2018."

The report also points out that the city's limited number of hotel rooms has "forced visitors involved in the early-development stages of Daisy Brands to seek lodging in the City of Ames."

The study lists four potential sites for hotels with the "optimum location" adjacent or near the Fareway Event Center because it "not only benefits a new hotel but enhances the community's effort in expanding the marketability of the event venue."

The other suggested sites are adjacent to the optimum location; near the entrance of the Central Iowa Expo near the intersection of highways 17 and 30; and on the north and south sides of Highway 30 near the future site of the Daisy Brands dairy-processing facility near the Boone Municipal Airport.

"The conclusions of this hotel market study determine that the city of Boone will support and benefit from new lodging development. The city offers growing corporate room demand and has the ability to 're-capture' business that is currently leaving the city for alternative accommodations in Ames and other nearby markets," the report states. "Further, there is a significant imbalance between the number of acceptable hotel rooms to the capacity of the Fareway Event Center, one of the city's strongest hotel demand assets."

On a 5-2 vote with Third Ward Councilwoman Lisa Kahookele and First Ward Councilman Jordan Hammer dissenting, the council also allocated hotel/motel tax revenues for the coming fiscal year, paring \$282,000 in requests down to the \$220,000 in available funds. The organizations and the funds awarded are: Boone County Agricultural Association (fairgrounds), \$3,000; Boone County Historical Society, \$3,000; Boone Community Theater, \$2,000; Boone County Convention & Visitors Bureau, \$94,000; Seven Oaks Ski Patrol, \$2,500; Fourth of July celebration, \$13,000; Ames Regional Economic Alliance, \$55,000; Boone County Chamber of Commerce, \$6,000; Boone County Economic Growth, \$10,000; Boone Farmers Market, \$1,500; Downtown Boone \$30,000.

The new year also brought the appointment and reappointment of a number of elected and appointed officials. Casotti announced the following committee appointments effective Jan .1:

- Policy and Administration: Councilwoman at-large Linda Williamson, Chair; Fifth Ward Councilman Kole Hilsabeck, and Third Ward Councilwoman Lisa Kahookele.
- Public Safety and Transportation Committee: Hilsabeck, Chair; Second Ward Councilman Cory Henson, and Councilman at-large Kyle Angstrom.
- Utility Committee – Angstrom, Chair; Fourth Ward Councilman Terry Moorman, and First Ward Councilman Jordan Hammer.
- Economic Development Committee – Moorman, Chair; Henson, and Williamson.

The mayor appointed:

- Hilsabeck to the Boone County Communications Board, effective Jan. 1.
- David Byrd to the Central Iowa Regional Housing Authority (CIRHA) for a three-year term, ending Feb. 1, 2029.
- Elmquist to CIRTPA technical and policy committees and HIRTA Transportation Advisory Group for one-year terms, ending Dec. 31, 2026.

Casotti also reappointed:

- Chris Hayes to Emergency Management Director for a one-year term ending Dec. 31, 2026.
- Betty Schmitz to the Human Service Committee for a three-year term, ending Dec. 31, 2028.
- Emily Graeve to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for a five-year term, ending Dec. 31, 2030.
- Waylon Andrews as a primary member of the CIRTPA technical and policy committees for one-year terms and a primary member of the HIRTA Transportation Advisory Group, ending Dec. 31, 2026.

In other business, the council:

- Building Department official Dave Ades said Boone's continued growth resulted in healthy demand for electrical, mechanical, plumbing, sign and building permits as the city added approximately \$41 million in property valuations. As a result, the city collected \$21,000 in electric permit fees; approximately \$9,000 in mechanical permits fees; \$25,000 in plumbing fees; \$1,500 in sign permit fees; and more than \$276,000 in building permit fees. "That doesn't reflect the big (permit applications) we're going to get from Daisy this fiscal year," he said.
- Voted unanimously to award a \$1.178 million bid from Minturn, Inc., of Brooklyn, Iowa, for the water treatment plant ground storage reservoir rehabilitation project.
- Approved Benefits Policy for the police commander and sergeants, who are not members of a collective bargaining unit. Longevity pay is based on continuous years of service with the city, regardless of position held.

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