



December 2019/ January 2020 Project Highlights

City Manager's Office

- A kick-off meeting with PaleBLUEdot, the City's consultant for the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory, took place in early December. A new timeline will be developed for the projected six-month process. In addition to an inventory, staff recommended and City Council approved two additional reports: a climate vulnerability assessment and a renewable energy potentials study. A cross-section of staff representing several departments will provide expertise and assistance with the data gathering.

The GHG Inventory will provide benchmarking of citywide greenhouse gas emissions. The data generated will follow the recommendations of three organizations that have recognized standards in GHG Inventory data collection (Global Covenant of Mayors, STAR Community Rating System, and City Inventory Reporting and Information System CIRIS). The consultant selected will be tasked with collecting GHG data to increase the awareness and understanding of Ames citizens regarding our city's carbon footprint, to forecast projections if no community changes are made, and to identify opportunities for emissions reduction in the future.

- The "Claim Ames" campaign to support Census 2020 will launch with Iowa State University President Wendy Wintersteen and Mayor John Haila holding a Census 2020 press conference at 11 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 13, in the City Council Chambers.

Work continues on the campaign, which will include video, social media, bus boards, and print and radio advertisements. A "Claim Ames" logo has been developed, and we have started to include Census 2020 information in editions of the monthly City Side newsletter.

Also, a Claim Ames link has been placed on the front page of the City's website (Also available at www.CityOfAmes.org/ClaimAmes).

- A Community Needs Assessment is underway and spearheaded by the Story County Quality of Life Alliance. This assessment is done every five years and looks at needs and service gaps throughout Story County.

Les Miller and Nancy Franz are assisting with the data gathering, group facilitation, and data analysis. Information for the assessment is being collected from online data sources, surveys, and focus groups. Assessment results will be made public and can be utilized in a variety of ways to improve and enhance services and service delivery, secure grants, and/or form new partnerships. The anticipated completion date for the assessment is fall 2020. The needs assessments from 2010 and 2015 can be found on the Story County Quality of Life Alliance website: <http://www.storycountyqol.org/>

- Micromobility continues to be worked on. Conference calls were scheduled with staff representatives from the cities of Bloomington, IN; Ann Arbor, MI; Oxford, OH; and Columbia, MO and information collected will be included in the staff report to City Council within the next couple of months.

Fire:

- Crews participated in cold water rescue training and scenarios at Ada Hayden Heritage Park. Using Ice Rescue Suits and equipment, crews honed their water rescue skills in preparation for winter activities at the park and other surrounding waterways.
- Crews toured and pre-planned the Ames Water Pollution Control Facility. During the tour, crews reviewed the facility's confined spaces and discussed confined space rescue operations at the facility.
- Both Fire and Inspection crews have been busy pre-planning and finalizing inspections at the new Vintage Coop, located in North Ames.

Parks and Recreation:

- Three Parks and Recreation staff members who are prairie burn certified burned thirty-one acres of prairie in December to help maintain and restore native prairie in the park system. Twenty-five acres were burned at Ada Hayden and six acres at East River Valley.

During each burn, non-native and woody plants are removed, allowing prairie plants more nutrients and room to grow. Prairie plants can survive fires since they have deep roots and grow from a point underground. Prairies are burned at regular intervals to help keep them healthy. The fire helps remove dead plant material, enabling prairie grass seeds to more easily find their way down to the soil. A prairie fire also eliminates competition from other plants that might take nutrients and resources from prairie grasses.

If specific areas do not carry fire well due to encroaching woody vegetation, those areas will be mowed to encourage prairie grass growth. Mowing and burning are used in tandem at Ada Hayden to promote the development of prairie ecosystems.



- Parks and Recreation offered 43 free classes over the two weeks of winter break and had approximately 650 people attend the classes. The classes are offered so individuals can try new classes, and at the same time, donate food items for local food pantries. This year, seven large plastic bins of food were collected and donated to a food pantry. In addition, 50 people attended the 11th year anniversary Zumba party.

Also, two free classes titled “Simple Exercises to Improve Your Balance” were offered. This is an introduction to our new Dynamic Aging Class that began in January.

Planning and Housing:

Planning:

- The new Guest Lodging (AirBnB) ordinance is now in effect. We received 16 applications for Vacation Lodging and Bed and Breakfast Special Use Permits. The Zoning Board of Adjustment will hold individual hearings on these requests through March.
- City Council will be asked to initiate a voluntary annexation for the Champlin family properties on Dartmoor Road and Zumwalt Station Road. There is approximately 145 acres included with the request. City Council will discuss this request at its meeting on January 14, 2020.
- Ames Plan 2040 scenario evaluation materials are available at www.cityofames.org/amesplan2040. City Council is soliciting public input on the growth scenarios on January 7, 2020 and may provide direction to staff on preferred options at its January 14, 2020 meeting. Council will hold its next workshop on Ames Plan 2040 on February 18, 2020.

Housing & Community Development:

- Staff is seeking public comment regarding amending the 2019-20 CDBG Annual Action Plan to include a Public Improvements Program to install a Shared Use Path from the east side of Franklin Park to Wilmoth Avenue. The comment period will end on January 19, 2020 and the public hearing will be held at the January 28, 2020 City Council meeting.
- At its January 14, 2020 meeting, City Council will consider approval of a contract with Civil Design Advantage for civil engineering design services for platting of 321 State Avenue.
- Staff will be presenting information to City Council at its January 14, 2020 meeting regarding the process for pursuing Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) in conjunction with the development at 321 State Avenue.

- The Departments of Planning and Housing, Public Works, and Fire are planning a joint neighborhood meeting to discuss pending City initiated projects related to the College Creek/Old Ames Middle School neighborhood. The primary topics include: 321 State development, potential Fire Station #2 relocation, and construction of a cycle track between Tripp Street and Lincoln Way. More information on the date and time are to follow.

Police

- A city-wide project to replace the voice radio system is underway. The replacement will come in two phases with a temporary and then a permanent radio system. The temporary replacement radio towers will take the City users to a temporary system in the next two to three months. Equipment changes in the Communications Center will precede the distribution of new radios. Training for all users is included as part of the transition. The permanent system towers sites will transition users to a final radio system in late 2020 or early 2021. The radios needed for the City have been ordered and the configuration of those radios is underway.
- The current Ford Explorers used as patrol vehicles will be replaced with Ford Explorer Hybrids. While the Hybrids are more expensive on the front end, fuel savings are expected to offset those costs. Police vehicles spend a significant amount of time idling. The Hybrids will utilize the battery during those times, saving fuel and engine wear and tear.
- A Shelter Feasibility Study was recently completed with a recommendation to expand the current facility or build a new facility. The current facility often cannot meet the needs of the community. The study focused on creating a modern facility that would support a contemporary animal management program, including animal housing and care needs. Staff safety and public interaction were also key parts of the review. Estimated costs were higher than hoped so the next steps will be to work with the consultant to align a development program with acceptable costs.
- To facilitate the migration of CyRide to the temporary version of the new radio system, on December 11, 2019, the City and RACOM, the new radio system vendor, conducted radio coverage tests around the city. The tests were conducted from a CyRide bus that covered all CyRide routes throughout the city. Radio traffic on the new radio system was loud and clear from all locations tested. During the holiday break CyRide buses and CyRide dispatch installed the new radios and began to conduct all radio operations on the new system.

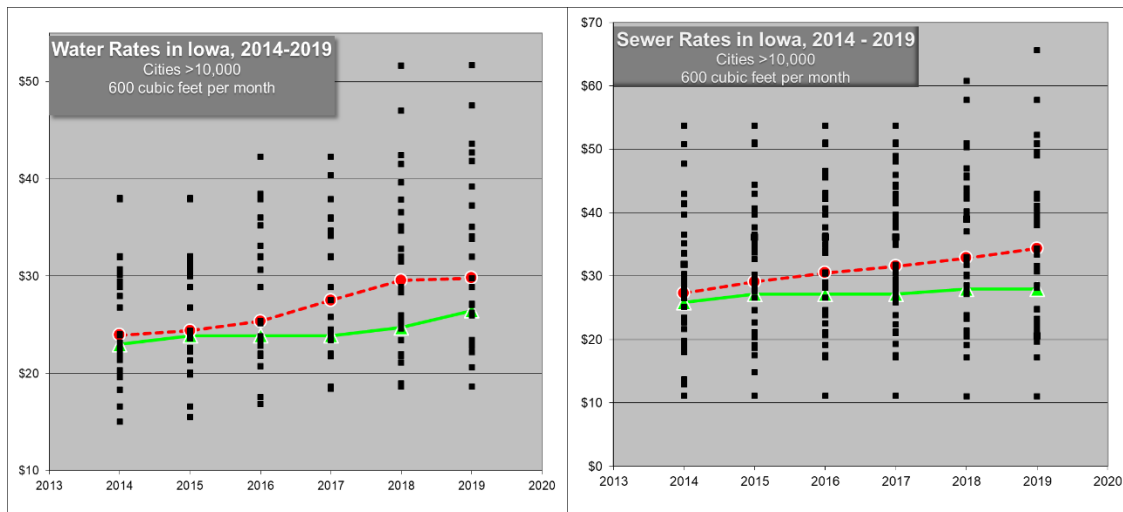
Water & Pollution Control

- The Ames Water Treatment Plant received another award in December! The design team of FOX Engineering, HDR Engineers, and Barr Engineering, along with the City of Ames, were recognized by the American Council of Engineering Companies-Iowa Chapter for excellence in design. The facility not only received the Grand Prize in the Water and Wastewater category, it also brought home the Grand Conceptor award as the single most outstanding engineering project of the year in Iowa across all categories.



The treatment plant was also featured in an article in the magazine Treatment Plant Operator that focused on the innovative design elements that resulted in receipt of LEED certification. The article is available on-line at <https://www.tpomag.com/editorial/2019/12/upping-the-ante>.

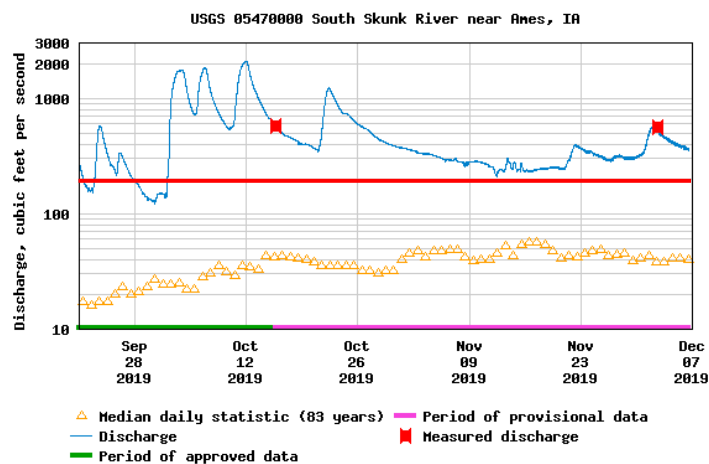
- The results of the 2019 Iowa Water & Sewer Rate Survey have been compiled. This statewide survey, performed by the Water & Pollution Control Department for more than 40 years, provides an annual snapshot of what consumers are paying on their utility bills each month.



In the graphs above, the trends over the past five years are shown. The black dots show how much a utility is charging a customer each month. The red dashed line shows the

trends in the statewide median utility bill. The green solid line shows the rates here in Ames. The graphs reveal that Ames continues to be in the lowest 1/3 of water and sewer rates in Iowa.

- Work on the improvements to the Low Head Dam in North River Valley Park have been stymied by continued elevated flows in the South Skunk River. The contractor needs the flows to be below 200 cubic feet per second to be able to work safely and at a high level of quality. The graph that follows shows the river stage since mid-September, with the red line marking 200 cfs.



- A Request for Proposals will be released in January for design of the demolition plans for the old Water Treatment Plant. The 1990's-era Technical Services Complex that houses the Water Meter and Laboratory Services Divisions will remain. The demolition will include provisions that minimize the percentage of materials that ultimately end up in a landfill. The same design consultant will be asked to design a planned conference room and storage area adjacent to the TSC building in the footprint of the old Administration Division offices. It is likely that a Professional Services Agreement would be brought to Council in February.
- A new Environmental Engineer joined the Administration Division at the end of the year. Ashley Geesman was promoted to fill the vacancy created by Neil Weiss' promotion to Assistant Director. Ashley has been a Laboratory Technician with the department since 2015, and recently graduated with her Masters degree in Environmental Engineering.

The following additional vacancies in the department are in the process of being filled.

- Water Plant Operator (2 vacancies)
 - Treatment Plant Maintenance Worker (2 vacancies; one at each plant)
 - Laboratory Technician (1 vacancy)
 - Conservation Marketing Intern (1 vacancy)
 - Water Plant Student Operator (2-3 vacancies anticipated in May)
- Staff continues to meet with multiple collaboration partners for potential watershed-based nutrient reduction projects. One of the more intriguing possibilities being explored would be a partnership with the Iowa Soybean Association (ISA).

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding that would provide a measure of assurance to utilities that voluntarily undertake nutrient reduction projects by pledging that any voluntary nutrient reduction would be able to be “banked” against any future restrictions on point source dischargers.

When the program is developed to the point that the City might be ready to enter into an agreement with either the ISA or the Iowa DNR, staff would intend to present an update to the City Council.

- A cybersecurity assessment for the Water Utility is planned for mid-February. Staff have arranged for a “cyber resilience review” to be conducted by the US Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency. The intent of the assessment, which will be performed in partnership with the City’s Information Technology Division, is to develop an understanding of our operational resilience, our ability to manage cyber risk, and identify improvement options that conform to recognized best practices.