

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

JUNE 16, 2020

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 16th day of June, 2020. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin were present. *Ex officio* Member Nicole Whitlock was also present.

Mayor Haila announced that it was impractical to hold an in-person Council meeting due to the Governor of Iowa declaring a public health emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. City Hall is closed to the public until July 1, 2020. Therefore, this meeting is being held as an electronic meeting as allowed by Section 21.8 of the *Iowa Code*. The Mayor then provided how the public could participate in the meeting via internet or by phone.

AMES PLAN 2040 WORKSHOP: Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann said the community character and culture principles will be reviewed. Mr. Scott shared snapshots of community taxonomy.

Mayor Haila referenced the Complete Streets page, and asked for clarification between a boulevard and an avenue. Mr. Scott said the existing roads already notified as boulevards have been expanded. Mr. Diekmann added that the vocabulary and placetypes were introduced in the Complete Streets Plan. He said most times boulevards are wider and more landscaped but context, transportation types, land use, and community character are also part of how the road types are determined. Mayor Haila asked about the yellow circles on the page, and Mr. Scott said those are crossroads of major streets. Council Member Betcher asked if the team has identified sections of boulevards as institutional. Mr. Diekmann said they did not try to identify jurisdiction on this map, rather street type.

Mr. Scott reviewed the Community Character and Culture principles:

1. Maintain and enhance Ames' heritage
2. Recognize the value of the arts in enhancing Ames' appearance and expanding its cultural options
3. Provide for community involvement and diverse opportunities
4. Recognize and reinforce a sense of place for existing and new areas
5. Add distinctive design characteristics
6. Improve design quality
7. Create options for activity

Ms. Betcher asked about the first principle and the choice of the historically significant structures and archaeological resources. She said Bandshell Park isn't notable for archaeological purposes but is part of a historic district. She said she wants to be clear that it's not only the structures that are historically significant. Council Member Gartin said he's trying to understand the practical difference this will make. Mr. Scott said the first principle has been revised but was included in the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP), and not every community has a whole chapter for this principle.

Mr. Shukert said there will be a map indicating areas that are historically or architecturally significant. Ms. Betcher asked if that's a place where the Historical Preservation Plan can be brought in as a related document. Mr. Scott concurred.

Mayor Haila asked if the principles are just facts or if they can be effective tools for planning. Mr. Diekmann said not every policy is about development requirements, rather vision and goals over the next 20 years. Ms. Beatty-Hansen asked if the first priority would be a good place to recognize that we live on land that once belonged to others. Ms. Betcher said she was thinking about that as part of the vision statement. She said "heritage" and "history" are different. Mr. Diekmann said a vision statement is meant to look forward rather than document history. He said acknowledgments could be appropriate in certain areas. Mr. Diekmann said he used heritage as a broad term and it was meant to be inclusive of the past 150+ years. Ms. Beatty-Hansen said she would like to see her suggestion placed in the document somewhere. Mr. Martin said it could be appropriate somewhere but he's not sure where. He said the first priority is focused on places and spaces and suggested adding cultural institutions. Mr. Diekmann asked for examples of cultural institutions. Mr. Martin said arts, theater, and the impact of Iowa State University (ISU). Ms. Betcher said she believes this would be the place to add language regarding indigenous peoples. Mayor Haila asked about the Community Character and Culture vision statement at the beginning. He suggested changing "spirit of community" to "spirit of community and equity." Ms. Betcher said she thought "spirit of community" was talking about bringing people together, but the word community in the vision statement is saying Ames will advance aesthetic and design improvements that support a spirit of community. It was suggested "respect its heritage" could be changed to "respect Ames' heritage" or "respect our heritage." Mr. Scott said the intent was to have a vision statement at the beginning of each chapter. Mr. Gartin asked if anyone will read this document, and wondered what Council's purpose is in reviewing the priorities. Ms. Betcher said it seems like an appropriate place to be careful in articulating the character of Ames. She said she thinks there are people that will read the document so it's important the language is precise and guiding.

Mr. Shukert said a lot of the things being discussed are critical and represent community values. He told the Council this chapter is about urban design or physical development, and this chapter may not be the best place for the kind of language Council is discussing. He said it feels like many important things need stated up front, but it might be a heavy load for this chapter. Mayor Haila asked that staff and RDG make notes on Council input. Mr. Diekmann said RDG can place the input in the most meaningful place.

Regarding Principle 2, Ms. Betcher wondered about taking "visual and performing" out so it reads "the arts." Mr. Diekmann said he believes the team was mostly focusing on physical elements of the city and social issues were included if related to the physical structure of the city.

For Principle 3, Ms. Betcher asked about "minority groups," and wondered if minority groups are already captured in "underrepresented populations." Mr. Martin said the third priority is probably the best place to include language on pursuing equity. Ms. Betcher suggested "and equitably meet diverse needs."

It was suggested by Mayor Haila that the fourth priority could include language about being multi-modal and pedestrian friendly. Mr. Diekmann said the transportation chapter would more clearly

cover that, and that the sidewalk environment was specifically mentioned because of areas like Somerset. Ms. Betcher asked what the “recognized character” is. Mr. Diekmann said it varies across the City. He said the policy is not intended to say that things cannot change. He said Redirection areas have been clearly identified in the land use chapter, and in some single-family and two-family areas, there could be infill opportunities. He said character is important, but it isn’t 100% preservation.

Ms. Betcher asked if Priority 7 was for new development or if it’s also referring to redevelopment and infill. Mr. Scott said it means development in all areas of the community. Ms. Betcher asked if the Plan is missing anything regarding Ames as part of a bigger region and how it connects to other communities. Mr. Scott said he feels that needs to be reflected in the Plan somewhere.

Mr. Diekmann said the principles from multiple chapters were used to create potential actions. He said the potential actions are meant to help Council understand what implementation measures might be necessary to fulfill the combination of community and character, transportation, land use, and housing principles and how they go together.

The potential actions were reviewed.

1. Create infill and development standards for compatibility in residential areas and transition areas focused on design over density.
2. Apply high quality design features throughout the community and with all types of development.
3. Sub-area planning will include evaluation of existing character and how the area is intended to evolve to identify differences.
4. Modify zoning standards to address placemaking, environmental protections, building design goals for priority areas of the city.
5. Utilize city programs, i.e. façade grants, and zoning standards to promote historic preservation.
6. Update commercial zoning to recognize placemaking priorities compared to automobile access and parking priorities.
7. Plan for coordinated City beautification through gateways, medians, corridors, to support identity and beautification.
8. Consider art as an invitation to explore and experience diversity within the community through visual pieces as well as gatherings and performances; include spaces to allow for these interests.
9. Include outreach initiatives with the Comprehensive Plan implementation and administration requirements to encourage diverse participation in planning and design efforts.

Mr. Scott said there are four unifying themes that have consistently come up throughout the process: Sustainability, Health, Choices, and Inclusivity. He reviewed the principles of the plan and how they tie back to the unifying themes. Mr. Diekmann said the unifying themes aren’t meant to take away anything from other pieces of the plan, rather highlight the common threads throughout the plan. Mr. Scott said the team is looking through plans to see how other cities have addressed areas like equity and health.

Council Member Martin asked about the land use map and what happens with lands designated ISU if ISU sells the land. Mr. Diekmann said he plans to address the University question and share that information with Council. He said there will be core areas still shown as university land.

Mr. Diekmann said Council will receive a draft plan in late August. He also said a public outreach plan will be created for Fall and a Council review will happen in the Fall, followed by approval of the Plan. Mr. Shukert said various constituencies like builders and developers look very closely at the document. He said he believes the plan will satisfy those groups, but 30 days would be good for public to review the document after Council has reviewed it. Mayor Haila asked if public comment will be reviewed by staff and RDG and then be given to Council. Director Diekmann said if there are comments staff cannot reconcile, Council would need to review them. Mayor Haila asked if RDG anticipates any issues or disagreement at the community level with the document based on Council's directions. Mr. Shukert said developers may be disappointed that development is not being shown to the north up to 180th Street. He said that was a large infrastructure issue. He said most comments were respected regarding northwest development. Mr. Shukert said he estimates there could be five to seven policy disagreements that the Council will need to collectively discuss during the review process. Mr. Diekmann said the redirection areas where intense change is possible could receive comment. Ms. Betcher said she hopes Council is ready to be somewhat flexible as ISU students return and the possibility of COVID-19 returning. She said there may need to be a contingency plan for outreach.

DISPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL: Ms. Betcher referenced the email received on June 11, 2020 from Elizabeth Erbes, Chair of AMS Design Committee, requesting action from Council regarding Main Street.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, for staff to engage with AMS Design Committee. Mr. Schainker asked if that is related to the request regarding pavers and the wall. Ms. Betcher concurred. Mr. Schainker said the City could take bids on pavers, and that the wall demolition is not part of the project currently.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to amend the motion and request staff report back to Council after connecting with AMS Design Committee regarding its request.

Vote on Amendment: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Vote on Motion, as amended: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Ms. Betcher said she attended a race, equity, and leadership summit with NLC and spoke with many people from around the country about coming back from crises in equitable ways. She said registration for NLC Summer Summit is available. Mayor Haila asked her to resend that email to Council members.

Mayor Haila said the NAACP hosted a conversation called "Taking the Lead" last Thursday evening moderated by Reg Stewart. He said Police Chief Cychosz participated, and the conversation was outstanding and very educational. The second of four sessions will be next

Thursday evening at 6:00 p.m. and details will be on the City of Ames website. He said the City is a proud co-sponsor of the event.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor

Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary