

# MINUTES OF THE CITY OF AMES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

**AMES, IOWA**

**JUNE 21, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order by Chairperson Mike Sullivan at 7:00 p.m. on June 21, 2023 in the Council Chambers at 515 Clark Avenue. Commission Members present were Julie Winter, Mike Clayton, Mike Sullivan, Jon Emery, Mike LaPietra, and Matthew Voss.

## **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Moved by Emery, seconded by LaPietra, to approve the Agenda for the meeting of June 21, 2023. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

## **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 7, 2023 MEETING**

Moved by LaPietra, seconded by Voss, to approve the Minutes of the June 7, 2023 meeting. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

## **PUBLIC FORUM**

Chairperson Sullivan opened the public forum and closed it when no one came forward to speak.

## **PUBLIC HEARING ON THE REZONE OF 314 BORNE AVENUE FROM GI (GENERAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE) TO S-GA (GOVERNMENT/AIRPORT DISTRICT)**

Planning Director Kelly Diekmann presented the staff report. He stated the City of Ames Electric Services Department is the applicant and they would like to add another storage facility on the site. The current General Industrial zoning allows for the addition of a building, but the conditions of the site are not optimal for how Electric Services would like to situate the building. Changing the zoning to Government/Airport District would allow them to locate the building in a better position for how the site is utilized and would provide more flexibility on site improvements related to storage areas, including setbacks.

Mr. Diekmann explained Ames Plan 2040 designates the property as General Commercial usage and the area was broadly looked at as an area for light industrial and commercial uses. Government zoning is not its own land use designation within Plan 2040 and a lot of government property was designated as such to reflect that it is a city or state facility. Mr. Diekmann concluded saying taking the existing uses and conditions into consideration, staff supports rezoning to S-GA with the continued designation of General Commercial.

Chairperson Sullivan opened public comments and closed it when no one came forward to speak.

Moved by LaPietra, seconded by Clayton, to recommend that the City Council approve the request to rezone 1.68 acres of the property at 314 Borne Avenue from "GI" (General Industrial) to "S-GA" (Government/Airport) District. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

## **ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT ON RETAIL PARKING RATES**

City Planner Benjamin Campbell presented the staff report. He stated Overflow Thrift Store met with staff to discuss a proposed new building just east of their existing store location. Staff informed Overflow that their proposed parking was insufficient for their use as the retail parking rate is 1 space per 300 square feet and Overflow had proposed roughly 1 space per 470 square feet. A representative from Overflow contacted City Council requesting a text amendment and Council reviewed options that were presented by staff. The two main options were to modify the standards for minimum off-street parking requirements for all retail sales and services-general, or to modify the standards for minimum off-street parking requirements just for thrift stores. Council selected the first option which would change the minimum parking requirement to 1 space per 500 square feet or 2 spaces per 1000 square feet. The proposed amendment would also clean up retail related uses including printing and financial institutions.

Julie Winter said 1 space per 500 square feet makes good business sense and allows for flexibility, but she questioned why office space was remaining at 1 space per 300 square feet. Ms. Winter pointed out that occasionally office spaces and retail spaces flip uses and she asked how the parking would be affected. Mr. Campbell said any existing shopping center would not be affected, but for new developments, the developer would have to plan for parking in advance. Ms. Winter asked if staff considered changing the office space requirement as well. Mr. Campbell said it was not considered as the request came about from a retail use and they were not directed by Council to have a wider discussion about parking rates.

Director Diekmann added there have been many text amendments related to parking over the last few months, but there has not been a comprehensive look at parking overall. He said the rate of 2 per 1000 made sense because it is comparable to other rates and would allow for some interchangeable uses, however, it will be incumbent on developers to pick their choices when they design a site.

Mike Sullivan stated he is in favor of moving in this direction for parking and asked if there was interest in looking at parking comprehensively. Mr. Diekmann said the main remaining category to look at would be industrial, as staff receives the most comments on industrial, but there is no reason at this point to change the other categories.

Mr. Sullivan asked how many thrift stores are in Ames. Mr. Diekmann said staff did not write a definition to explore it, but second-hand goods are not always thrift stores, and staff is not sure where consignment and antique stores would fall into the equation. Jon Emery stated staff would have to write a definition if the Commission approved Alternative 2. Mr. Diekmann agreed and said staff would have to create brackets for it that are definable and distinguishable from something else and it would pivot around the second-hand goods concept. Mr. Diekmann added pawn shops would not be classified as thrift stores as they are licensed facilities that have many other things besides second-hand goods.

Ms. Winter stated 1 space per 500 square feet is a good idea and that comparing the parking rates to other Iowa cities was helpful and she appreciated that the information was provided.

She said the change could create a better business climate to be more flexible to new commercial builds, and in some ways Ames is overbuilt on parking, so it would be good to reverse that.

Matthew Voss agreed and said his only concern was about the rate for office space which was addressed earlier.

Ms. Winter asked about parking requirements in downtown. Mr. Diekmann said the DSC (Downtown Service Center) has a separate column in the parking code and no restaurant, bar, office or retail use requires parking.

Discussion was held about commercial areas in the city.

Mr. Emery stated he is concerned about pushing parking into neighborhoods. Mr. Diekmann said staff considered that issue and found in looking at the commercial zoning and the major corridors in Ames, there is very little opportunity to infiltrate back into neighborhoods; most commercial areas are inconvenient for people to park on neighborhood streets.

Chairperson Sullivan opened public comments and closed it when no one came forward to speak.

Moved by Clayton, seconded by Winter, to recommend that City Council amend the Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements in Table 29.406(2) as presented in Attachment C to reduce the parking for Retail Sales and Services-General to 2 spaces per 1000 square feet. Vote on Motion: 5-1. Motion passed.

### **COMMISSION COMMENTS**

Mr. Clayton stated he received an email from someone concerned that Council was considering making new residential developments have zero emissions and no gas appliances. Mr. Diekmann said he would come back to Mr. Clayton's comment in his staff comments.

### **STAFF COMMENTS**

Director Diekmann discussed items that were addressed at recent City Council Workshops:

1. Climate Action Plan Approved by City Council. Director Diekmann described the Plan as having an aspirational target for emission reductions by 2050. Council will set a work plan for individual implementation measures on an annual basis to work towards the goal. A big push will be to move towards renewable energy sources and efficiency measures, but natural gas will not be "banned". Some of the action measures related to buildings and development could impact zoning standards which would be part of the P&Z role for recommendations on zoning ordinance changes.

2. Property Maintenance Code. City Council is considering an ordinance that centralizes many property maintenance standards and creates additional standards for property maintenance for all properties in the City. Some of the changes may require adjustments in the zoning ordinance if they conflict or overlap with restrictions in the zoning ordinance. The Commission would review any proposed zoning ordinance changes and make

recommendation to Council.

3. Affordable Housing Strategies workshop was held on June 20<sup>th</sup>. Council reviewed housing affordability background information and strategies related to increasing housing supply. No final direction was given from the workshop.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Emery to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.



Michael Sullivan, Chairperson



Eileen Carter, Recording Secretary