

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 18, 2014

The Ames City Council met in special session at 7:00 p.m. on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2014, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue, pursuant to law with Mayor Ann Campbell presiding and the following Council Members present: Gloria Betcher, Tim Gartin, Matthew Goodman, Chris Nelson, and Peter Orazem. Council Member Amber Corrieri and *Ex officio* Member Lissa Villa were absent.

**DISCUSSION OF PROPOSED CAMPUSTOWN FAÇADE PROGRAM:** Mayor Campbell asked permission to reverse the order of the agenda to discuss the proposed campustown façade program first. She introduced Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann and Planner Jeff Benson. Mr. Benson stated the Council goal of strengthening campustown, and explained starting a façade grant program would enhance campustown appearance and activity. He reviewed the process so far.

Mr. Benson said Haila Architecture Structure Planning Ltd. was retained for the project, and that Art Baumgartner and Sam Stagg have been working on the project. Mr. Stagg said they have enjoyed helping Campustown Action Association (CAA) and City staff arrive at some principles and guidelines. He said with the diversity of campustown and the different styles and uniqueness, they wanted a different approach, so they focused on some guidelines based on good ideas for urban development. Mr. Stagg said an idea book was created with some general concepts and guidelines for users, featuring real projects that have been used in the United States to show application of the concepts. Mr. Baumgartner told the group that the work has boiled down to five design concepts: Transparent Campustown, Social Campustown, Diverse Campustown, Identifiable Campustown, and Historic Campustown. He reviewed details of each concept. Mr. Baumgartner said ten successful projects are listed in the idea book, and are included because each one is very successful in at least one of the design concepts.

Mr. Benson said the CAA Board of Directors unanimously recommended these principles be the foundation for pilot project applications coming to the City for the façade grant program. He said staff believes these will encourage the creativity needed and provide a manageable façade grant program. Mr. Benson explained that the proposed area for soliciting these pilot projects will be the area known as the Campustown Service Area Center. Mr. Benson told the Council that at next week's meeting it would be asked to take action to direct staff to use this idea book as a guide and solicit pilot projects. Then, Planning would work with the grantees to implement the projects in the spring, and come back to Council with a report and evaluation on the projects and design principles of the pilot projects. Mr. Gartin asked if input has been received from Iowa State University (ISU). Mr. Benson said there are ISU staff members on CAA and committees that have been involved. Mayor Campbell noted the ISU representatives present. Mr. Gartin said he wants to make sure meaningful input is received from ISU on issues such as parking. Mr. Diekmann said he met with the ISU Planning Department and they had no initial concerns. Mr. Orazem asked if an evaluation was done on the physical state of the buildings. He said it wouldn't make sense to put a new façade on a building that doesn't have much life left. Mr. Benson said an evaluation was not done, but the façade grant program process for

downtown involves steps that include having the Building Official look at the buildings from the exterior, and if it appears there could be structural issues, an inspection of the inside would take place. If structural issues are seen, then a structural engineer is involved and any issues that would affect the façade would become part of the program. Mr. Orazem asked if there will be a preference for any specific building types. Mr. Benson said when Council determines it would like to move forward with the grant program, then those things would be built into the guidelines.

Mr. Diekmann said the idea book and its concepts will be used for the pilot project, and then a program has been developed that could administer something long term. He also said that Haila Architecture Structure Planning Ltd. will be the City's advisor during pilot projects and the assessment afterwards. Mr. Orazem said there may be a need to look at how the middle parking area will fit into the rest of what is happening in campustown. Mr. Diekmann said the parking lot is not part of this project. Ms. Betcher said she is excited about this and said she has a concern that the City might be subsidizing facades that may not remain attractive for many years. She also said many tenants are renting the space, and said she is concerned about the facades when there is turnover. Mr. Benson said it will be between the tenant and owner to decide what they want to do. Mr. Diekmann showed some examples, and said that this program is not as formulaic as downtown, so there will be a balance between uniqueness and elements that can be reused when new businesses come in. Mr. Stagg said there is a certain level of subjectivity to be weighed when applications are reviewed and that there is a foundation provided for valid ideas while still allowing for creativity.

Mr. Goodman asked if the Council will have a role in sign ordinances, or what businesses are able to put in the windows. Mr. Benson said agreements could be made with those awarded grants. Mr. Gartin asked if energy efficiency will be part of the application. Mr. Benson said sustainability is an overarching standard. Mr. Baumgartner said if a project is large enough, it will be subject to the International Energy Code as well as other building codes. Mr. Stagg said good architecture is inherently sustainable and uses durable materials. Mr. Diekmann told the Council that the action items on the agenda for next week include moving forward with the pilot program, as well as agreement on geographic boundaries for the pilot program. Mr. Gartin said West Street should be included.

**HOUSING DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION:** Mr. Diekmann said at the City Council meeting on September 23, 2014 Council asked for a future agenda item to discuss housing development, specifically focusing on high density. He said some numbers and maps have been gathered to show what has happened over the last few years. Mr. Diekmann reviewed the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) goals. He said ISU's current enrollment is at 34,000 and staff doesn't see a present need for more student housing, but that doesn't mean there won't be any interest in building. Mr. Gartin said there are other commercial interests bringing people to Ames that want to rent and cannot find appropriate rental housing. Discussion ensued. Mr. Diekmann reviewed the projected new development map that shows currently approved projects.

Mr. Diekmann showed the current Residential High Density (RH) Development map and the requested RH areas. Single family development was also discussed. Mr. Gartin wondered about comparing Ames to other comparable cities in Iowa instead of the state of Iowa. Mr. Orazem

said Ames has been adding single family homes faster than Iowa City. Mr. Diekmann reviewed some estimates on the next wave of single family development, noting that those would occur to the north. Housing statistics and LUPP assumptions were reviewed. Mr. Diekmann reviewed the Council goal to address housing needs and the three objectives of the goal: explore ways to encourage availability of all types of housing, investigate ways to increase availability of affordable housing, and reevaluate building and zoning codes to determine if changes should be made to improve the existing housing stock at a lower cost.

Discussion ensued regarding demand for housing. Mr. Diekmann said LUPP amendments should have an RH component. Council Member Goodman said discussions will be needed concerning existing RH, achieving neighborhood, and transit. Member Nelson said the principles for guiding goals include those things. He also said the benefit will be had when the LUPP is updated. Mayor Campbell said it would be pretty overwhelming to update the LUPP all at once. Mr. Diekmann said there are elements that can be looked at one by one. City Manager Steve Schainker said the key question is if Council wants to be able to step back and look at a higher level before proceeding on the requests received, or if Council wants to continue receiving requests on a case by case basis.

Council Member Orazem asked about commercial and industrial demands. Mr. Diekmann said that is a more difficult issue to discuss since it hasn't been visited for many years. Mr. Schainker said Council can continue to review these requests case by case reactively, or put them all off for a year while the LUPP can be updated comprehensively, which doesn't meet immediate needs. He asked if Planning could quickly put together some decision making criteria so Council would be making decisions based on the priorities it has established. Mr. Goodman said he wants to see an RH category created that is based on LUPP goals. He said a conversation needs to be had on other elements such as impact on commercial, transit, and any other elements RH would have encompassed if it were in the Plan. Mr. Schainker asked if this is something that can be done quickly. Mr. Diekmann said yes.

Mr. Gartin confirmed the vacancy rate, which Mr. Diekmann said is about 3%. Mr. Gartin said that must have a big impact on the affordability of units for rent. Mr. Gartin asked if another 1400 units are added, if that would just meet the anticipated need or if it would relieve some pressure and create more affordability. Mr. Diekmann said 1400 units is 10% of the current multifamily stock in the city, which is a huge jump and would have to affect availability and occupancy levels, assuming ISU enrollment stays steady. Mr. Diekmann said he will create an assessment tool capturing the elements heard tonight including elements of RH that would be encompassed in the LUPP if it were included. Mr. Goodman said he would like to have a conversation outside of the projects that is based on goals and values in context of the LUPP, then apply that process to the projects. Mr. Diekmann said Planning can create the tool, then Council can decide what schedule it wants to apply to the requests. Mr. Schainker summarized that an evaluation of the criteria utilizing elements from the Plan will be used to create an assessment tool for RH using elements of the Plan for new uses of RH .

Mr. Goodman said some communities require a certain percentage of housing be affordable. Ms. Betcher said it is called inclusionary zoning. Mr. Goodman said he would like to see more information on the idea. Mr. Gartin said it can be made a priority even if it looks different than

that. Mr. Orazem said a high vacancy rate due to lower rents is not how it works. He said some housing that was subsidized is no longer subsidized, and said tax abatements could be used. Discussion ensued. Ms. Betcher said she wonders how the new projects will address the needs.

Moved by Goodman and seconded by Betcher to ask staff to return to Council as soon as is reasonable with a pilot tool (created by using LUPP goals and presented to Planning & Zoning Commission for feedback) to evaluate RH (Residential High Density) projects.  
Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Goodman asked when this could come back. Mr. Diekmann said he is hopeful for January.

**CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS:** Council Member Betcher discussed the email received regarding the transportation task force discussions not being open meetings. Moved by Betcher and seconded by Gartin to refer the email to staff and to place this item on the next City Council agenda for staff to explain the task force structure.

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

Moved by Gartin and seconded by Goodman to ask staff to accept the email request from Dickson Jensen dated November 14, 2014, deferring any action until Council has received an acceptable RH evaluation tool from the Planning Department.  
Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion carried unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary