

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF AMES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

AMES, IOWA

JUNE 18, 2025

The Regular Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on June 18, 2025 in the Council Chambers at 515 Clark Avenue. Commission Members present were Julie Winter, Mike Clayton, Mike Sullivan, Mike LaPietra, Matthew Voss, and Jim Blickensdorf.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Winter, seconded by Voss, to approve the Agenda for the meeting of June 18, 2025. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 21, 2025 MEETING

Moved by Clayton, seconded by Voss, to approve the Minutes of May 21, 2025. 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.

REZONE FOR 57258 200TH STREET FROM AGRICULTURAL (A) TO GENERAL INDUSTRIAL (GI)

Planning Director Kelly Diekmann presented the staff report and stated the General Industrial (GI) area that surrounds the site has been in the City for a couple of years and the owner purchased the property in question, removed the existing home, and wants to have the property annexed so it can be merged into the larger GI site. When Council initiated the annexation process, they also initiated a rezone to simplify the process and have it be GI upon annexation. The site will ultimately be incorporated into the existing Masterplan.

No one was present to offer public comments.

Moved by LaPietra, seconded by Clayton, to recommend that City Council approve the request to rezone 57258 220th Street from Agricultural (A) to General Industrial (GI) upon its annexation to the City. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

ANNEXATION PROPOSAL OF TWO PROPERTIES LOCATED AT 4140 S 530TH AVENUE

Planner Amelia Schoeneman presented the staff report and stated the annexation request is by the Iowa State University Research Park. The annexation includes one nonconsenting property owner, which encompasses 9% of the total territory proposed, and is being included for more uniform boundaries. Ames Plan 2040 identifies the property as an Employment area which aligns with the idea of future development of the Research Park. Water and sewer infrastructure exists to the north. Ms. Schoeneman said with this development, a

Masterplan will be done with the rezoning to determine future infrastructure extensions, traffic improvements, and storm water management.

Ms. Schoeneman noted the Washington Township Trustees submitted a letter opposing the annexation of the nonconsenting property. Mr. Voss questioned why the nonconsenting property is included in the annexation. Ms. Schoeneman explained that a property owner can only submit an annexation application for themselves, and when the annexation was initiated by Council they determined the inclusion of the nonconsenting property for uniform boundaries.

Mr. LaPietra asked if the annexed properties would benefit from city services, such as emergency services, water and sewer. Ms. Schoeneman said the City will provide emergency services upon annexation and the Research Park will be extending utilities, so the owners would have the option to connect.

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

Moved by Clayton, seconded by Winter, to recommend that the City Council approve the 80/20 annexation of two parcels and abutting rights-of-way, totaling 40.04 acres, for the properties located south of the Iowa State Research Park adjacent to 4140 S 530th Avenue, by finding that the proposed annexation is consistent with Ames Plan 2040 Comprehensive Plan and that the proposed annexation territory creates more uniform boundaries.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT MODIFYING DRIVEWAY WIDTH AND SPACING STANDARDS

Director Diekmann explained the text amendment request is from the Ames Homebuilders Association (AHBA) who is interested in widening the existing driveway allowances which were updated two years ago for new home construction and rebuilds of existing driveways. Mr. Diekmann presented a diagram explaining the different areas of a driveway and explained one of the key elements of the Zoning Ordinance is the transition area from the sidewalk to the driveway where the width of the driveway is allowed to widen out to match the width of the garage, however, the width at the sidewalk controls how one can access the garage. The AHBA presented their concerns to Council expressing that the width limitations create awkward and unpleasing home designs and they would prefer a wider width to start with so there are less angles and tapers to deal with on site.

Mr. Diekmann explained an issue for staff is for wider homes with three individual garage doors with spacing between them, it can become a very wide garage frontage stretching much greater in width than the 24-foot allowance in place now. When homes push the garage face to the minimum setback and then have wider garages, it can create harsh angles for the approaches.

Mr. Diekmann said the second part of the request is to reconsider a second or looped driveway option. The current standard has a minimum frontage distance of 150 feet and the

AHBA is proposing to reduce it to 100 feet. Staff has determined if a looped driveway is permitted, it would be restricted to the minimum driveway width and be separated by 35 feet to allow space for access for the vision triangle for each driveway and leave room for one car to be parked between the driveway spaces. Staff is also concerned about managing on street parking options by making sure right-of-way is not being used up inefficiently.

Mr. Diekmann continued saying another key element of the proposal would ultimately change how staff measures driveways. The proposal by the AHBA is not to increase the width to 34 feet at the transition area, rather it would be at the curb line. For a three-car garage, the increase would only be four additional feet than the maximum allowed at the curb, whereas a two car garage could gain quite a bit of additional width.

Director Diekmann discussed a letter to the Commission from a property owner requesting the Commission consider a separate driveway issue of whether a long driveway would need to be paved. The letter specified a unique situation of a 1000+ foot driveway to a new home construction and asked if the Commission would support considering a waiver to allow for a rock driveway with a paved access approach to the street to reduce cost and use of concrete.

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

Mr. Voss asked if staff had thoughts about the long driveway paving request. Mr. Diekmann said it is a rare occurrence in Ames, and the City has one uniform standard that all driveways must be paved regardless of length or purpose. Gravel driveways are not required to be paved unless they are rental properties or if improvements are made to the garage or additional parking is created, then the paving requirement is triggered.

Moved by Voss, seconded by LaPietra, to recommend the City Council approve the AHBA proposed Zoning Ordinance changes to Driveway Dimensions to allow for wider driveways with a maximum width of 34 feet at the curb line, second driveways for lots with at least 100 feet of frontage and spacing of 34 feet between driveways with maximum 15 foot widths for each leg of a driveway along the same frontage. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

Moved by Winter, seconded by Voss, to recommend the City Council consider not requiring paved driveways for any driveways that are greater than 300 feet in length as long as the approach from the roadway is paved at least 50 feet.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT MODIFYING REAR YARD SETBACK ENCROACHMENTS FOR ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADU) AND CHANGES TO OTHER STANDARDS TO COMPLY WITH STATE LAW, SUCH AS MINIMUM SIZE, PARKING, HEIGHT LIMITS, SETBACKS, AND OCCUPANCY

Planner Benjamin Campbell summarized the staff report explaining the new State Legislation regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and the proposed City changes.

Mr. Sullivan asked if there are any proposed changes that are not directly related to the

State mandate. Mr. Diekmann clarified that an additional change has been made to how gross floor area is measured, and the rear setback exception is in response to the State changes.

Director Diekmann added the occupancy limits for rental properties in the near campus neighborhood are not changing. There can be an ADU on a rental property, but the total occupancy will not increase.

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

Moved by LaPietra, seconded by Voss, to recommend that City Council amend the regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units based upon the proposed changes as shown in Attachment A. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT ESTABLISHING NEW AREA, DIMENSION, AND NUMERICAL STANDARDS VARIANCES TO COMPLY WITH STATE LAW

Director Diekmann explained the proposed amendment is following what the State law now requires, and by adding it to the Ames Municipal Code, it is more convenient for people to find. It also applies the City's notice requirements which are greater than the State minimum. The amendment would change how applications are submitted, but would not change that applications have to go to the Zoning Board of Adjustment and be approved there. Mr. Diekmann said financial issues are not part of the equation anymore for non-use variances; it will have to be a numeric standard. A use variance would still have to use the old criteria explaining a financial hardship.

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

Moved by Voss, seconded by Clayton, to recommend City Council approve a text amendment to incorporate the new Practical Difficulties Variance standards into Chapter 29 and Chapter 21 as applicable. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion Passed.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

None

STAFF COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Clayton to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Mike Sullivan, Chairperson

Eileen Carter, Recording Secretary