

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF AMES PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 5, 2025

The Regular Meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on November 5, 2025 in the Council Chambers at 515 Clark Avenue. Commission Members present were Julie Winter, Cheryl Moss, Mike Clayton, Mike Sullivan, Matthew Voss, and Jim Blickensdorf.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved by Clayton, seconded by Winter, to approve the Agenda for the meeting of November 5, 2025. Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 15, 2025 MEETING

Moved by Voss, seconded by Moss, to approve the Minutes of October 15, 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 220-400 FREEL DRIVE FROM GENERAL INDUSTRIAL (GI) TO GOVERNMENT/AIRPORT DISTRICT (S-GA)

Chairperson Mike Sullivan recused himself from the item due to a conflict of interest.

Director Kelly Diekmann stated the City of Ames is the applicant for the rezone request. Planner Parker Walsh presented the staff report stating the proposal is for five properties encompassing 9.5 acres. The City intends to consolidate the lots and construct a Resource Recovery and Recycling Campus, also referred to as a transfer station, to accept municipal solid waste, recyclable materials and yard waste from residents and commercial haulers. The materials would then be transferred and disposed of off site. The new development would trigger some improvements, such as paving on Freel Drive. The site is in the flood plain, which will be reviewed by staff.

Cheryl Moss inquired about the requirements for the site being in the flood plain and potential fallout with waste if there is a flood. Mr. Walsh said staff will evaluate the site plan and, if needed, the site will bring up grade in some areas or add some level of flood protection. Director Diekmann stated the City will comply with its own flood protection standards; there is no exemption from the Flood Plain Management Ordinance by rezoning to S-GA. Mr. Diekmann explained the Flood Plain Ordinance is to protect a facility from inundation up to a 100-year flood, and the City's standards go above and beyond the minimum requirements with a three foot protection standard above the base flood elevation level.

Julie Winter asked if the proposed land use is compatible with the neighboring parcels. Mr. Walsh said the surrounding area is mostly industrial services and the use would be

compatible with them.

Vice-Chairperson Voss opened public comments.

Mark Cummings of 118 Freel Drive stated he had several concerns with the proposal including traffic, flood, and odor, but most importantly, the affect on the value of the residential property at 118 Freel Drive. Mr. Cummings asked if the continuation of the project was contingent on the proposed zoning change and stated he is opposed to the project.

Public comments were closed when no one else came forward to speak.

Director Diekmann explained the current zoning would permit waste processing and transfer as a Special Use within the GI zone, but rezoning to S-GA is typical for city properties and City Council would approve the plans and specifications before it could get bid as a project.

Cheryl Moss asked about increased traffic and noise at the site.

Justin Clausen, Public Works Director, said the facility will receive 35-45 packer trucks per day, between 5:30-11:00 a.m., and 5-6 trucks per day will be leaving the facility. There will be some increase in truck traffic along Freel Drive with roughly 40-50 trucks per day in and out of the site. Improvements are planned for Freel Drive that will address the increase and there it is not anticipated to have a queue of trucks on the streets. Mr. Clausen addressed the noise concern by stating the facility will be doing minor processing and shredding of solid waste rather than what happens now at the Resource Recovery Plant, and it will only occur during normal weekday business hours.

Matthew Voss stated he is sympathetic to Mr. Cumming's concerns, however, the proposed use does fit well with the surrounding industrial area.

Moved by Winter, seconded by Blickensdorf, to recommend that the city Council approve the request to rezone the properties located at 220, 306, 312, 316 and 400 Freel Drive from "GI" General Industrial to "S-GA" (Government/Airport) District.

Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion passed.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT FOR SINGLE FAMILY DESIGN STANDARDS WITHIN THE SOUTH LINCOLN MIXED USE DISTRICT

Planner Benjamin Campbell presented the staff report explaining the text amendment was directed to staff by City Council at the request of Jim Gregory, owner of 129 Washington Avenue, a resident of the South Lincoln Sub-Area Mixed Use District (S-SMD). Mr. Gregory's home is located on the corner of South 2nd Street and his intent is to demolish the existing home and build a new one, however, his proposed design does not comply with the existing standards in the S-SMD zone. Mr. Campbell said staff is proposing a number of changes that would allow Mr. Gregory to build his intended design and he summarized the changes that are detailed in the staff report.

The applicant, Jim Gregory of 129 Washington Avenue, explained his current house is a two-bedroom home built in 1920 and is not senior friendly. His intention is to demolish the house and build a new three-bedroom home for himself, his wife, and his mother-in-law. The current zoning does not relate well to his single-family corner lot situation. He supported maintaining the gable requirement for a primary façade.

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

Moved by Clayton, seconded by Voss, to recommend that City Council amend the regulations for Sec.29.402(4), setbacks on through lots and corner lots, and the development requirements in Table 29.1003(3) for the South Lincoln Sub Area Mixed-Use District (S-SMD), **with changes to the roofs only applied to the secondary facades**, based upon the proposed changes as shown in Attachment A.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

PRELIMINARY PLAT WITH AMENDMENT FOR 3300 UNIVERSITY BLVD

Planner Benjamin Campbell explained the two-acre property at 3300 University Blvd is currently under development with two 8-unit apartment buildings and three sets of townhomes that back up to the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor. The intent now is to subdivide the property with individual lots; one lot for each of the townhome units and the two apartment buildings, and an Outlot containing shared common space, drainage, parking spaces, and the garage building. No other changes to the site are proposed. Mr. Campbell summarized deviations that are being approved with subdividing the lots; the deviations are detailed in the staff report.

The applicant, Justin Dodge with Hunziker Companies, explained the proposal to separate the lots is so the lots can be sold. They initially thought there would be one owner for the entire site, but the situation is different now with multiple owners, and it allows for owner-occupied opportunities for the townhomes.

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

Moved by Voss, seconded by Clayton, to recommend that the City Council approve the Preliminary Plat for Discovery Place, 1st Addition.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion passed.

ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT TO ALLOW ROCK MULCH IN LANDSCAPE PLANTERS

Director Kelly Diekmann presented the staff report explaining the amendment was requested through the referral process by the Iowa State University Research Park (ISURP). The Research Park recently completed a project with the use of a rock mulch product in a required planter. The text amendment would apply citywide, not just at the Research Park and would apply to every commercial and residential project going forward, as well as the alteration of existing required landscape planters. In 2017 when the City redid the landscape standards, they continued the requirement of the use of organic mulch material for areas

below plantings of shrubs, decorative or ornamental grasses, or trees. Mulch cannot be used as the primary landscape material; it is only to be used in place of groundcover below other planting materials.

Mr. Diekmann presented photos from projects in another town showing a landscaped corner using the same plant materials, but first using mulch and then using rock. He also showed a photo of a landscape planter in a parking lot.

Mr. Diekmann said in 2017, organic mulch was viewed as the best environment for the vitality of plants, but today we see that plants grow in rock mulched beds as well. There is a minimum organic content requirement for soil in landscape planters; organic soil is more valuable than the mulch product on top. Mr. Diekman said one concern of staff in allowing rock mulch is it will be incumbent upon staff to implement the intent of the landscape regulations; the expansive use of rock will not be considered a substitute for the actual landscaping requirements. Staff will need to be more precise in enforcing the expectation that mulch rock is to be used under other landscape materials.

Julie Winter expressed concern about weeds growing in rock mulch, aesthetics, and heat from the rock. There was discussion of the parking lot planter example of rock and lack of planter material.

Discussion was held about compliance on complaint basis regarding landscaping.

Cheryl Moss asked if the depth, type and color of the rock would be regulated. Mr. Diekmann said there is not a depth requirement for organic mulch and there would not be one for rock mulch, nor a specific requirement for rock type or color.

Ms. Winter asked if the proposed change was being driven by cost. Mr. Diekmann said the request came forward from an incorrect application in the Research Park, however, outside of the Research Park there have been repeated requests from different developers who would prefer to do rock even though the upfront cost is more.

Matthew Sullivan asked if the term "rock mulch" will be defined or if it is an industry term, and if "within planters immediately around shrubs and trees" needs further definition. Mr. Diekmann said rock mulch is a term that people use in the development review process, and the location of the rock mulch will be worked through with each applicant.

The applicant, ISURP, was not present at the meeting.

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

Ms. Winter said she is not in favor of the proposed amendment as there are no safeguards in place after vegetation dies out and no specific requirements for the type of rock.

Ms. Moss agreed with Ms. Winter and added she is not in favor of the aesthetics and of not having specific requirements for the depth or type of rock.

Matthew Voss stated he usually tends toward allowing flexibility, but since cost is not the factor, and aesthetics are more important, he is leaning toward opposing the request.

Jim Blickensdorf stated he had concern for a different reason. He explained that two of the items on the agenda seemed to address a very specific case which they then could apply in a much broader way without the consequences fully understood. So, for that reason and the other reasons mentioned, he said would not support this one.

Discussion was held about mulch depth, plants, and soil.

Moved by Winter, seconded by Blickensdorf, to recommend the City Council deny the requested Zoning Ordinance changes to allow rock mulch.

Vote on Motion: 5-1. Sullivan voted Nay. Motion passed.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Discussion was held about the new Fire Station.

STAFF COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Clayton to adjourn at 8:03 p.m.

Michael Sullivan, Chairperson

Eileen Carter, Recording Secretary