Ash Tree Removal and Replacement Plan Continues throughout Ames

In anticipation of losing thousands of trees to the Emerald Ash Borer, the City of Ames continues its proactive tree removal and replanting program. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an invasive beetle that kills ash trees. It has been confirmed in Story County. The City has joined forces with the Ames Foundation to replant trees in the public right-of-way with the goal of diversifying our community’s public tree inventory and reducing the visual impact of future ash tree removals.

Selected tree species are being planted to help create variety in the overall urban canopy within Ames. This will help protect against potential future pests or disease. There are more than 2,300 ash trees in the public right-of-way, maintained park areas (including along paved trails), and at City-owned facilities. Although EAB will have a major detrimental impact on our community over the next several years, this challenge also presents Ames with an unexpected opportunity to bring greater diversity to public trees. Ash trees represent 16% of all public trees in Ames, which is higher than the 10% recommended for optimum diversity. The City has established a 20-year tree removal and replacement strategy in response to concerns with ash trees. Through the one-to-one replacement program, a variety of trees is being planted at a size of 1-1/2 inch caliper, which is optimal for new tree survival.

Past collaborative tree plantings have enlisted volunteers working with City employees to plant, backfill, and mulch the new trees in the public right-of-way adjacent to residential and commercial properties. Owners of adjacent properties are asked to water new trees or help neighbors who may be unable to water. Watering for the first two years is essential to establishing a healthy tree. Future tree planting locations are being identified in neighborhoods with mature tree canopies.

City Council Meetings
The following meetings will be held in the Council Chambers, 515 Clark Ave.:

6 p.m. June 13
6 p.m. June 27

A Council workshop will be held at 6 p.m. June 20. For the most current information, go to: www.CityOfAmes.org.

Summer Activities @Your Library
Watch for the sign-up to participate in Ames Public Library’s summer reading programs for adults, teens, children, and babies beginning on June 1. This year’s theme is “Build a Better World.” There will be plenty of opportunities to do that this summer at Ames Public Library! Visit www.AmesPublicLibrary.org for details.

Water Quality Report Is Available!
The Consumer Confidence Report, the City’s annual water quality report, is now available. This report contains important information about the quality of your drinking water.

At one time, the Consumer Confidence Report was included in your utility bill, but now the report is available to read online. This method of distribution helps promote our sustainability efforts and reduce costs. However, printed copies of the Consumer Confidence Report are still available.

Pick up a copy of the report at City Hall, 515 Clark Ave., Ames Public Library, 515 Douglas Ave., or the Ames Water Plant, 300 E. Fifth St. If you would prefer to have a paper copy of the Consumer Confidence Report mailed to your home, call the Ames Water Plant at 515.239.5150. The water quality report can be viewed online at www.CityOfAmes.org/waterreport.

Ribbon Cutting for New Hangar

Many organizations were represented at the Ames Municipal Airport Hangar ribbon-cutting ceremony held in April.

A large group of participants gathered recently for a ribbon-cutting event celebrating the new Ames Municipal Airport Hangar. The funding and construction of the hangar was a private-public partnership that included investments by the City of Ames, Iowa State University, the Ames business community, and the Ames Economic Development Commission, which spearheaded the fundraising.

The hangar provides 11,400 square feet of aircraft protection for visiting aircraft during inclement weather as well as rental hangar space for private aircraft. The building was turned over to the City of Ames as part of the airport modernization project. The celebration included a welcome for Central Iowa Air Service, the new Fixed Base Operator (FBO).

The new Ames Municipal Airport terminal is under construction and anticipated to open mid summer.
**Community Solar Project Continues to Build Momentum**

Progress continues on the Community Solar Project. This initiative will produce sustainable energy and will allow Ames Electric Services customers the opportunity to invest in solar energy without adding equipment to their own home or business. An aggressive schedule has been established to create a solar array capable of generating 1.5 MW (megawatts) that would be designed, constructed, and placed into service by the end of 2017 or early 2018.

Ames Electric Services has hired Millennium Energy, LLC, to help move the project forward. The utility is seeking a developer to construct and maintain the solar array. All the solar electricity produced would be purchased by Ames Electric Services for customer use.

One of the first challenges with this project is finding an appropriate site for the array. There are two sites under consideration. The primary site is a field on Airport Road, just north of the Ames Municipal Airport. This site must be evaluated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for construction due to its proximity to the airport. The secondary site is on a piece of land between the Ames Animal Shelter and Billy Sunday Road, just south of U.S. 30. The land would require clearing and some fairly significant moving and leveling of earth.

Once the final site has been determined selected, Ames Electric Services will release specific information regarding the sign-up process and estimated investment costs. For updates, visit www.CityOfAmes.org/solar, call Steve “The Energy Guy” Wilson at 515.239.5177, or email swilson@city.ames.ia.us.

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**Prime Time Power!**

**Get Set for Summer with $20 in Electric Credit**

Prime Time Power is a Smart Energy program for air conditioner load management. Signing up for Prime Time Power helps maintain a reliable electric system, keeps our rates low, and has a positive impact on the environment.

So, when can you sign up? Although summer is when Prime Time Power becomes important for Ames, you can sign up anytime. In return for allowing City of Ames Electric Services to cycle your air conditioner off for 7½ minutes out of every half hour a few times each summer, you will receive a $5 credit on your July, August, September, and October bills! If you have signed up in the past, there’s no need to sign up again. You’re all set.

For an application or for more information, go to www.CityOfAmes.org/SmartEnergy and look for Prime Time Power, or call 515.239.5177. A Prime Time Power application is also available at the Utility Customer Service, City Hall, 515 Clark Ave.
Ask the Energy Guy

Q: I’ve heard there is an upcoming rate increase? Why is this necessary, and what can I do to lower my bill?

A: Municipal utilities don’t operate like investor-owned utilities (IOU). The rate a municipal customer pays does not generate profits for investors. Instead, rates are structured to cover operating costs. As a result, they tend to be lower than with the IOU. However, like other utilities, our costs will go up over time. Ames Electric Services works hard to keep rates low. In past years, our customers have experienced small rate increases with the most recent increase in 2009. In July, customers will experience a 4% rate increase.

These increases are necessary to cover the cost of converting the Power Plant from coal to cleaner natural gas (which lowers our greenhouse gas emissions by 40%), as well as to provide ongoing maintenance and upkeep on an aging distribution system. This increase helps maintain an acceptable level of reliability and ensures we can provide enough electricity to a growing Ames. In spite of the increase, the residential electric rate in Ames is still lower than neighboring utilities.

No one likes to have their energy costs go up, so what can you do? A reasonable approach is to reduce your electric energy consumption to offset the impact of the rate increase. Do what you can to conserve energy. I strongly recommend taking advantage of the City’s Smart Energy programs such as the free energy audit or participating in the air conditioner load control program, Prime Time Power.

Also, it’s important to be vigilant about energy conservation year round. Know how much energy you use, and where you use it. In the average American home, heating and cooling account for 45% of the energy used, lighting 7%, water heating 11%, clothes washing and drying 10%, refrigeration 6%, TVs and computers 2%, and “other” 19%. The “other” category continues to grow as we add more stuff to our homes, so think carefully about the long-term costs before making that next purchase!

Call 811 Before You Dig!

Planting season is here and that means we’ll be outdoors digging up our yards to plant gardens, shrubs, flowers, and trees. At Ames Electric Services, we want you to be safe.

Remember there are dangers lurking underground. Please be careful and call Iowa One Call at 811 or 1.800.292.8989 before you dig. Iowa One Call will arrange to have your yard marked free of charge.

Renewable Energy

For March 2017

14.7% of electricity used this month was generated from wind.

3.3% of electricity this month was generated by refuse derived fuel (RDF) from the Resource Recovery Plant.

135 Ames customers have invested in solar voltaic systems.

118 LED street lights were installed for a total of 856.

Degree Day information available at www.CityOfAmes.org/Electric

City Side is a publication of the City of Ames, Iowa

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