

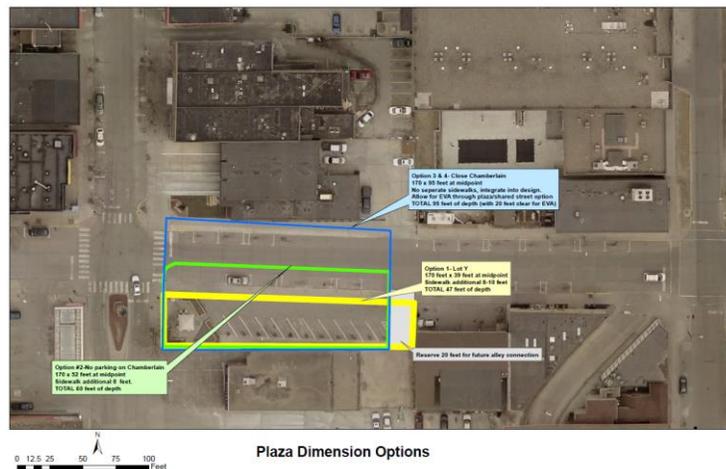


## March 2019 Project Highlights

### Planning and Housing:

#### Planning

- On March 27<sup>th</sup> the City will host a public meeting to review Campustown plaza options and potential changes to public parking at Collegiate United Methodist Church. City Council discussed options for locating a Plaza at the corner of Chamberlain and Welch at its December 11<sup>th</sup> meeting and directed staff to seek public input on the various options.



- In March staff will send a letter to property owners alerting them to the proposed flood plain map changes proposed by DNR and FEMA. City staff will be available to answer questions and assist property owners in identifying changes to the flood plain dimensions. More information is available online at the Planning Division's website.

## **Housing & Community Development**

- Staff has started collecting data to update the City's 2019-2023 Five-Year Consolidated Plan, and the 2019 Fair Housing Impediments Study. A request to complete online surveys is being sent to general renters, homeowners, and on campus students. Paper surveys will be sent low-income, elderly and disabled households as well.

## **Electric:**

- Work continues on the modifications to the Top-O-Hollow electrical substation. Work should be completed by the end of March 2019.
- Staff is currently evaluating bids to replace the Unit #7 boiler tubes.

## **Water & Pollution Control:**

### **Administration**

- Staff has been closely monitoring a number of pieces of legislation that have been brought forward this session that would have a major impact on our services. Some of the items we are watching include:
  - HSB 2 that would allow public entities to utilize a “design-build” delivery process for construction projects. For some types of projects, this could speed up the construction process.
  - HSB 80 that would allow contractors and developers to pay a fee to the IDNR in lieu of providing wetland mitigation. While some groups are characterizing this as a “pay to pollute” type of bill, it actually makes sense, as the IDNR could aggregate the funds and undertake larger mitigation projects in the most critical watersheds.
  - HSB 81 that would change the administrative appeal period for a number of IDNR programs to 60 days. Currently, every permit and program has a different length of time for appeals to be filed.
  - HF 154 that would allow customers to opt out of having a “smart meter” installed. This would undo the effort over the past four years (and planned for the next four years) to transition to an automated meter reading program.
  - HF 187 that would prohibit the introduction of any substance containing fluoride to drinking water. This is really a “home rule” issue that individual communities should be allowed to decide for themselves.

- HF 239 that would undo a court ruling that prevents railroads from charging exorbitant fees for pipeline crossings.
- Staff will bring Council an ordinance this month to enact the planned 7% water rate increase, which is proposed to be effective July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### **Water Plant**

- With Council's approval of a settlement agreement in late February, the new Water Plant construction project is now complete. Warranty claims can still be pursued by the City through the end of this calendar year.
- Offers are being extended for two new student operators at the Water Plant to replace current staff who will be graduating this spring. This has been a tremendously successful program, and we look forward to having the new operators join our team.
- Work on the Low Head Dam has been hampered all winter by higher than normal stream flows and the sustained snow pack. The contractor is progressing where they can, but it is likely that they will need to wait until later in the spring when the weather is more cooperative.
- Staff anticipates that a Notice to Bidders can be issued in March to start construction on the new North River Valley Well Field. This work will be brought to Council as soon as the necessary IDNR permits are received.

### **Water Pollution Control Facility**

- The final report of the Nutrient Reduction Feasibility Study will be submitted to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources this month. This will commit the City to undertake a three-phase, 20-year project to convert the treatment technology at the facility from the current trickling filter / solids contact scheme to some variation of an activated sludge process configured for biological nutrient reduction. The phased approach allows the expense to be spread out over time, mitigating the impact on sewer rate payers. Additionally, it allows multiple opportunities over the next 20 years to increase the capacity at the treatment plant as the community grows.
- The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is moving forward with implementation of the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Exchange. This program will allow municipal utilities to register land practices that include a nutrient reduction component and, in effect, "bank" that reduction against any future restrictions in the nutrient limits imposed on point sources. W&PC and Public Works are working closely together on this initiative to

ensure that the City is able to claim a nutrient reduction credit for as many projects as possible.

### **Human Resources, Legal Department and City Manager's Office**

- Union negotiations are nearly completed with the Fire, Power Plant and Blue Collar groups of employees. Although State law required many sections to be removed from the Blue Collar and Power Plant contracts, in keeping with our *ETP* values management made it clear that there will be no decrease in employee benefits.
- Work continues on revisions to the City's Personnel Policies and Procedures. This document has not had a major review in over 15 years, and the revisions will include best practices from other jurisdictions. The anticipated time frame for this project involves wrapping up revisions with the outside law firm in March, sharing proposed changes with the departments in early April, and presenting the changes to Council for adoption in late April or early May. Extensive educational efforts will then be held for employees and supervisors, with the updated policies to take effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

An important improvement will be to have the updated Personnel Policies, a new Employee Handbook, the updated Civil Service Policies and Procedures, and other relevant policies available to all employees as part of a web-based document library.

### **Fire:**

- Crews have been busy digging out fire hydrants alongside Public Works crews. Citizens are encouraged to help do their part by keeping a 3' clear radius around hydrants on their property.
- Ames Firefighters recently participated as instructors and students in the 95<sup>th</sup> Annual Iowa Winter Fire School here in Ames. This event, which is one of the longest running fire schools in the country, brought in nearly 600 firefighters from across Iowa to train and learn from each other. Ames has been the host community for all 95 years and hopes to continue the tradition.
- On Monday, February 25, the Inspections Division went live with the Citizen Self Service portal. This new customer service tool allows customers to submit building permits, plans, request inspections, view inspection results, make payments, and print permits and invoices from their tablet, computer or smart phone all from the comfort of their home or office.
- Ames Fire crews teamed up with ISU Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), to plan and conduct a short exercise to test ISU EH&S employees' response to a chemical spill affecting their building, as well as to work through their notification procedures through dispatch to

their upper level management team. We assisted with scenario planning and response to help with realism and to work through how information will be shared from their employees to our arriving fire crews. The scenario involved a 55 gallon drum of used Xylene falling from a pallet and pinning a simulated worker underneath. The scenario included a leak from the drum setting off explosive limit alarms throughout the building. Ames Fire crews responded and rescued the individual trapped wearing turnout gear and Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). Ames Fire and ISU members then met with the entire group involved to debrief and discuss ways to better address any possible future incidents.

