New Online Portal Extends Access to Inspection Services

The City of Ames Inspection Division has launched a new permitting portal, Citizen Self Service (CSS), through the City’s website. The CSS gives users 24-hour access to several Inspections functions, including applying for permits, requesting inspections, and paying for services. The new system can be accessed at www.CityOfAmes.org/Permits.

“We are excited for the benefits the new portal will give our customers,” said Building Official Sara Van Meeteren. “We are transitioning from a paper system to a digital option, and customers are no longer limited to our office hours. While we know the new system will take some adjusting, we are here to help with any questions.”

Customers can access these Inspections options from a computer, tablet or smart phone. CSS allows customers to create an account, submit building and trade permits, request inspections and view inspection results, make payments, print permits and invoices. Details explaining CSS and the new payment process are available on the City’s website. Guides and videos show users how to navigate the new system. Questions? Call 515.239.5153.

Fee Increases Identified

With the completion of the 2019-2020 fiscal budget, the City has identified some necessary fee increases.

Water rates will increase 7 percent on July 1 after an analysis of ongoing expenses and future projects indicated the need for additional funding. Residents can mitigate that increase by looking for ways to conserve water. For outdoors, consider a rain barrel to water landscaping. Indoors, check your home for leaks and drips. To learn more water conservation ideas, go to www.CityOfAmes.org/SmartWater.

Beginning July 1, the fees to adopt from the Ames Animal Shelter will increase to $40 for rabbits, $60 for cats, and $80 for dogs. However, these fees now include FeLV/FIV tests (cats), heartworm tests (dogs), microchips, and additional vaccinations. Spay/neutering services continue to be included in the adoption fee costs.

Finally, Parks and Recreation has increased program fees now for the upcoming season. Greens fees at Homewood Golf Course, admissions at Furman Aquatic Center, and various recreational program fees have increased to cover increased costs.
Calendar

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

- 6 p.m. May 14
- 6 p.m. May 28

A Council workshop will be held at 6 p.m. May 21. For the most current information, go to: www.CityOfAmes.org.

Traffic Crews Begin Painting Soon
To counter the wear and tear of winter, City of Ames traffic crews will begin re-striping streets; painting curbs, crosswalks, stop bars, and symbols; and refreshing parking lot lines on Monday, May 6. This work typically begins when the weather warms and takes until the end of September to complete. Street and curb painting can have a temporary impact on traffic flow by requiring brief lane closures. Drivers can help by being cautious and proceeding slowly when traveling in areas where crews are working.

Mayor and Council Bike Ride; Bike Breakfast Planned in May
Ames Mayor John Haila and members of the Ames City Council invite the community to participate in a family friendly bike ride starting at Ames City Hall, 515 Clark Ave. The ride will begin at 9 a.m. Saturday, May 18, and bikers should gather in the west parking lot. Bicyclists of all ages and experience levels are welcome to join the ride. There is no pre-registration necessary or cost to participate. Bike helmets are strongly encouraged. Watch the City of Ames website (www.CityOfAmes.org) for more information, route details, and how to get involved.

“With May being National Bike Month, it’s a great fit to offer this fun, spring event,” said Mayor Haila. “Enjoying a community bike ride is a terrific way to celebrate the many benefits of bicycling as well as enjoying the sights of our city. We really hope to get a big group of biking enthusiasts out for this ride.”

Once again, Ames City Hall will serve as the kick-off location for the Bike To Work Week breakfast as part of National Bike Month. Join the Ames City Council and City staff members for a free light breakfast from 7 to 9 a.m. on Monday, May 13. Start your day with a bike ride and join the fun!

Program Offers Assistance to First-Time Home Buyers
Are you a first-time home buyer in the market to purchase a house in Ames? As part of the City’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs, the City’s Planning and Housing Department is accepting preliminary applications for its Home Buyer Assistance Program.

The program will provide down payment and closing cost assistance to eligible first-time home buyers. Preliminary applications will be used to generate a waiting list to determine the level of interest and the number of potential qualified applicants who could be assisted through the program.

The City of Ames is seeking to provide households with the opportunity to purchase newly constructed single-family and/or existing housing primarily at the 321 State Avenue development site, but also throughout the West Ames Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA). Preliminary applications are available on the City’s website at www.CityOfAmes.org/housing.
A big congratulations to our platinum level Smart Business Challenge award recipients who were honored recently at the Smart Business Challenge Recognition Luncheon. These local businesses have made significant commitments to efficiency in operations and community sustainability. Smart Businesses that received awards from Mayor John Haila include Mary Greeley Medical Center, Wild Water Car Wash and Pet Wash, and Morning Bell Coffee Roasters. This annual recognition provides an opportunity to encourage businesses who are committed to a greener environment.

The Smart Business Challenge is a free program offered by Ames Electric Services that helps businesses explore energy and water conservation, transportation, waste reduction, indoor and outdoor environmental quality, carbon footprint, and community engagement. Businesses can participate in rebate programs and implement a business energy plan that saves money while helping the environment. The program allows businesses to move at their own pace through a series of levels beginning with “participant” and ending at “platinum” level.

Be a part of creating a sustainable Ames by involving your business in the Smart Business Challenge. Joining the Smart Business Challenge is easy. It reduces energy use, and it saves money.


From the top, the Platinum Smart Businesses that received awards from Mayor John Haila (on the right) include Nadav Mer, Morning Bell Coffee Roasters; Ryan X, Wild Waters Car Wash; and Amber Deardorff, Mary Greeley Medical Center.

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Smart Business Challenge Recognizes Participants Achieving Platinum

Power Off? Start Here!

- Check if the power is off in the whole house or just part of it.
- Check your main electric panel to see if a breaker has tripped or fuse has blown.
- If the problem is not in your panel, check to see if neighbors have been affected.
- Call your outage reporting number at 515.239.5240. You will be asked to provide your name, address of the outage, and phone number at the outage address.

Iowa One Call

As the weather turns warmer, always remember to call before you dig. The Iowa One Call number is easy to remember. Just dial 811!
Smart Energy Appliance Rebates Provide an Incentive to Conserve

Appliances can be an expensive investment, and buyers want to purchase quality items that stand the test of time. One consideration when purchasing appliances is the amount of energy they will consume. To ensure appliances are energy efficient, look for the Energy Star label. Energy Star has done all the testing necessary to determine which appliances exceed federal standards for efficiency. Most Energy Star certified appliances are 30 to 50 percent more efficient than standard appliances. This is an important consideration for figuring out the true cost to own and operate the appliance.

In addition to Energy Star, buyers should look for the bright yellow and black Energy Guide label. This handy at-a-glance information shows the estimated annual energy consumption and operating cost for each appliance. The Energy Guide label is required to be placed on all appliances by the manufacturers. The label includes a variety of helpful information including:

1. Manufacturer, model number, and size of the appliance.
2. Estimated yearly operating cost (based on the national average cost of electricity), and the range of operating costs for similar models.
3. Estimated yearly electricity consumption.
4. Key features of the appliance and the similar models that make up the cost comparison range.
5. If the Energy Star logo is present, this indicates the model meets strict criteria for energy efficiency.

Remember that the Energy Guide doesn’t mean the appliance is efficient. Only those with the Energy Star label in the lower right-hand corner are identified as exceeding federal standards for efficiency. Buying energy-efficient products is a good investment, and Ames Electric Services provides a Smart Energy rebate for certain appliances that are labeled Energy Star. Learn more at www.CityOfAmes.org/SmartEnergy.

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Numbers to Know

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power out</td>
<td>515.239.5240</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street light out</td>
<td>515.239.5500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility bills</td>
<td>515.239.5120</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy questions</td>
<td>515.239.5177</td>
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<td>Tree growing too close to an</td>
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<td>Going to be digging?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iowa One Call</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storm Water Storm Water Concern</td>
<td>515.239.5160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Renewable Energy

For February 2019

16.93% of electricity used this month was generated from wind.

2.66% of electricity this month was generated by refuse derived fuel (RDF) from the Resource Recovery Plant.

LED street lights installed: total of 3,309.

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

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Prime Time Power

The Prime Time Power program is available to all homeowners and small businesses with central air conditioners. You do not need to reapply for Prime Time Power if you’ve signed up before.

The $5 credit during each of the four summer months is automatically applied to your account. To sign up or receive additional information about the program, call Utility Customer Service at 515.239.5120 or Ames Electric Services at 515.239.5170.

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

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Questions?
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