

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

APRIL 2, 2019

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 2<sup>ND</sup> day of April, 2019, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, David Martin, and Chris Nelson were present. *Ex officio* Member Allie Hoskins was also present.

**AMES PLAN 2040 UPDATE:** Mayor John Haila introduced Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann. Director Diekmann said staff and RDG are preparing to move into phase 2 of the project. He told Council that the team wants to share information and public feedback received so far, and allow Council to ask questions. Mr. Diekmann said the April 23, 2019 Council meeting will be the next meeting for Council to give direction.

Director Diekmann said Community Engagement was Phase 1, and continues throughout the process, and that Phase 2, Ames Today, is about to begin. He introduced RDG representatives: Justin Platts, Amy Haase, Marty Shukert, and Cory Scott. Mayor Haila asked what direction staff will be looking for on April 23. Mr. Diekmann said land use decisions will be evaluated and more information on projections will be given ahead of the meeting in order for Council to determine preferences on how the scenarios will be evaluated.

Mr. Scott said more than 400 people have participated in the public input process. He said there is so much content that they are documenting the process, and the public engagement report is available. Mr. Scott described some of the events that have taken place including the kickoff on February 5, 2019 where about 200 people participated by sharing their visions for Ames and discussing quality of life. Mr. Scott said challenges and ideas were shared during focus groups, which helped determine patterns. He said all feedback is included in the report and will be translated into the different components of the process. Mr. Scott said school districts will be engaged in September. He said they have had conversations with Ames Citizen Institute, Ames Citizens Academy, and Neighborhoods. Council Member Gartin asked if 400 was a good number of responses for a city this size. Mr. Shukert said 1% of the population is a successful survey, so they are in good shape with the responses. Member Gartin asked if the survey distinguishes where the person lives. Mr. Diekmann said the survey asks if the responder lives in Ames.

Mr. Scott said the Request for Proposals (RFP) topics for a Comprehensive Plan are: 1) Expansion of the City, 2) Opportunities for Infill Development, 3) Future Demand for Housing and Commercial Use, 4) Sustaining Neighborhoods, 5) Support of Social and Cultural Connections, 6) Transportation Choices, 7) Sustainability, 8) Well-being and Healthy Living, 9) Subarea Planning, and 10) Urban Fringe Management. He said they used those elements to structure public engagement to relate with people. He said RDG then condensed the public feedback to six “big picture” thoughts that start to shape ideas for the next phases of the project: 1) A City with Variety, 2) Transportation Equality, 3) Vibrant and Balanced Market, 4) Embrace the Environment, 5) Be Bold and Unique, and 6) Character at All Scales.

The ten topics were discussed. Mayor Haila asked what was considered under Expansion of the City,

Growth Strategies. Mr. Scott said if boundaries are extended, the City must serve those residents and the costs of City service resources were considered. Member Betcher said on page 7 of the report, there was a real interest in infill development among survey respondents. Mr. Scott said they heard a lot about infill development. Ms. Betcher asked if that encompassed redevelopment of downtown, campustown, Somerset, or North Grand Mall. Mr. Scott said he doesn't remember as many comments on redevelopment. Mr. Shukert said it's interesting to contrast that input and the input from stakeholder groups. He said developers are not necessarily saying the same thing, rather a lack of developable land, and a need for more partnerships on infrastructure development. He said it is common to hear more about infill development and land utilization from members of the public and more interest in green field development and geographic growth from developers. He said more will be explored on infill vs. new development. Ms. Betcher asked if developers were commenting on Iowa State University (ISU) land. Mr. Shukert said university land establishes growth boundaries. He said developable, open land is a precious commodity. Mr. Shukert said an evaluation of existing conditions is needed to see how much of the city's projected growth can be accommodated by infill and redevelopment.

Mayor Haila asked how the consultants balance the understanding of what is available with what people want. Mr. Scott said the scenarios need to be developed based on informed methodology. He said they can also bring forward what other communities have done. Mr. Shukert said they will look at a level of reality for what is actually possible, and a preferred scenario is most likely going to be a combination of development.

Ms. Haase said residents were noting variety. Mr. Scott said they heard many comments on options in housing. Mayor Haila asked what "different types of housing" means. Ms. Haase said it means available housing for different stages of life. She said the empty nester product styles are desired in many communities. Mr. Gartin asked about the risk of gentrification and possibly losing certain price points. He noted there are many complications with infill, and appreciates the option of a combination so people are not priced out of the market. Ms. Haase said policies may need to be in place to help guide the discussion of economic variety.

Member Betcher asked if there was any input about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU). Mr. Martin said that was mentioned within the longer report available online. Ms. Haase said the ADU conversation is growing nationally. Mr. Scott said housing trends will be discussed. He said there is a perceived thriving rental market and also a perceived struggling rental market so that will be looked at in more detail. He said there are few local builders, and they are doing higher end development upwards of \$400,000. Mr. Scott said they will also be revisiting how to reinforce complementary land uses so commercial development thrives. The Market Study by Gruen Gruen & Associates was referenced and it was noted the report is also on the City website under Planning and then under Comprehensive Plan 2040.

Feedback regarding neighborhoods was discussed, and Mr. Scott said responses included the need for momentum and balance within neighborhoods. He said sustainability on a City level was discussed. Ms. Betcher said global sustainability issues were mentioned, and asked if there was concern on a regional basis such as watersheds. Mr. Platts said decisions made locally that affect

other communities was a concern. Mr. Scott thanked those that have participated in the meetings, and encouraged reading the document, as it will become a rubric to check the process.

Ms. Haase said there has been a healthy trajectory of growth over the last many years. She discussed the projected growth by looking at options, and concluded that the projected population growth rate is 1.5 - 2% per year. She said if a community is growing at 1%, it's growing at a pretty healthy rate. She also said universities are looking to stay flat or decrease a bit in the near future. It was noted the vacancy rate is less than 5% for Ames right now. Ms. Haase said that number tells about the options available to someone moving to Ames, and if the variety isn't there, they will look somewhere else and become established in that place. She said for that reason, somewhat of a vacancy rate is nice. Member Gartin said those people also pay local option sales tax in the community they choose to establish themselves.

Housing demand options were discussed and Ms. Haase said the demand will be increasing about 1.5-2% per year. She said in working with small and large university cities, a common trend shows student-oriented development is flattening out or slowing down, and since the recession, renter-occupied units have increased nationally. She said the renter-occupied units would include units for young professionals and others, not necessarily large multi-family structures. Ms. Haase said the next step in the process is to fine tune the projections and take those into the different scenarios for types of housing and densities.

Ms. Betcher asked about ADU's as a variety of housing, specifically in terms of college towns. Ms. Haase said there is a perception surrounding ADU's because of students living in neighborhoods that they will need to be sensitive to. Mayor Haila asked about ISU attendance projections. Mr. Diekmann said projections are fairly stable. He said for the plan in 1997 no growth at ISU was assumed, and they are intentionally assuming the same this time, but will provide ways to adapt to fluctuations. International student decreases and generational decreases were noted. It was discussed that enrollment changes need to be discussed and considered by Council. Ms. Haase said most of the students are pulled out of the projections and within the models they are being conservative. Mayor Haila asked if steady student enrollment projections are being assumed over the next 20 years. Ms. Haase concurred. Mr. Shukert said ISU is not expanding dormitories, and is depending on the private sector to meet the gap. He said they can reasonably suppose if enrollment dropped, occupancies in private buildings would drop and those places would enter the permanent housing stock. Mayor Haila noted the importance of considering decreasing enrollment when preparing scenarios for the Council to consider. Mr. Shukert told the Council in Fayetteville, Arkansas the university is not building housing, and the private sector is building student cottages with the intent that they could be student housing, and could meet a different housing need in the future. Mayor Haila said flexibility and adaptability is going to be very important going forward.

Ms. Haase said senior living conversations based on the generational population changes are also very interesting. Mr. Shukert said parking garages are even being built so they can be converted to housing at some time. Mayor Haila said there is not much land left for high density development, and wants to be sure to take permanent residents into consideration.

Mr. Scott discussed the Gruen Market Study, and said there was growth in all market areas, except construction, which was a minor decrease. He said this report will be blended with the RDG report to look at jobs and housing balance. On April 23, 2019 RDG will have some land use projections for office, industrial, and retail space to share with Council. Competitive advantages and constraints of the community were discussed. Mr. Nelson asked if the Gruen Market Study is available. Mr. Diekmann said the report, and everything pertaining to the Ames Plan 2040 is available on the web page under Planning and then under Comprehensive Plan - 2040.

A map of vacant land inventory was shown. Mr. Diekmann said the flood plain overlay land is included on the map even though it will not be developed. Mr. Scott said the housing projections and population projections will go into the demands for recreation, residential, commercial, industry, and employment projections. He said they are looking at projections through a planning perspective, and an economic perspective.

Mr. Platts said development trends, challenges, and opportunities are being looked at according to regions of Ames. Mayor Haila asked about the types of challenges that could exist. Mr. Platts said challenges could be financial, political, infrastructure, or access challenges. Mayor Haila said it would be nice to know if those challenges can be overcome when considering the different scenarios. Mr. Platts said that can be added at the next level. He discussed the regions. Ms. Betcher asked about water and sewer challenges in the SW region. Mr. Diekmann said that is a challenge. Mr. Platts said the immediate SW is not as challenging as farther southwest. It was noted that sewer, water, and water quality would be moved to “challenges” for the SW area.

Director Diekmann said there are constraints in most directions for major development, except for the industrial development to the east because of the City’s prior action. He said RDG will be looking into topography and opportunity in all directions. Mayor Haila asked at what point a city doesn’t feel like a city, going beyond major boundaries like an interstate, rivers, highway, etc. It was noted that on April 23, the team will share some methodology on how to approach this question. Mr. Scott said from now until June, the team will be evaluating the different scenarios with that in mind. Mr. Shukert said if a certain sector meets many criteria for growth but would be isolated, a question of how to make it part of the community can be asked. Mr. Gartin said rural subdivisions are being built in some areas, and it would be helpful to see them on the map.

City Manager Steve Schainker said if a growth scenario is chosen, Council will need to know if overcoming the obstacles is worth it to obtain a certain number of units in a particular area. Mr. Diekmann said the effect of land use and financial viability will get evaluated at a higher level. Mr. Schainker asked how RDG will prepare Council for the needed action. Mr. Scott said what has been done in different places will be helpful to the process. Mr. Shukert said the variables will need identified, and then it will be decided which variables are the most important. He said data still needs gathered regarding which parts of the City are open and available and served by urban infrastructure. Mr. Shukert said they would like Council to consider which variables are the most important in terms of constructing the alternative concepts for evaluation. Mr. Gartin said a prior Council determined not to grow north and now it’s very hard to access the north, so transportation must be considered. Mayor Haila asked if Council will be receiving a list of things to think about

including factors and parameters, and questions to consider before the dialogue at the April 23 meeting. He said he doesn't want Council to ask RDG to develop scenarios that won't work. He said it would be helpful to be informed about land availability, costs to develop areas, etc. to more effectively make decisions and provide direction. Mr. Shukert said there are certain parameters that are clear already, including a general community preference for compact growth, sustainability, and taking advantage of land and infrastructure already available. He said some guidance is already there, and RDG desires to select scenarios that are attainable realities.

Mr. Scott said at the April 23 meeting, philosophical models and how something can be created tailored for Ames will be discussed, and then when the philosophical approach is understood, the team will work on scenarios to be presented to Council in June. Mayor Haila said a general knowledge of costs for the areas and other general guidance would be helpful. Mr. Schainker said first there is an overriding philosophical approach to selecting scenarios, which will then lead to selecting scenarios.

Mayor Haila said he appreciates knowing what RDG is hearing and wants to respect the work of the public. Mr. Gartin said the housing projections are very valuable and asked if they have heard from growing businesses about housing challenges. He said Council is hearing that the lack of housing is a challenge from an economic growth perspective, and because Ames lacks housing, it could be a downward pressure point for economic development. Ms. Hasse said housing is economic development because a city cannot grow economically without the housing. She said reframing those conversations is needed. Mr. Gartin said Council is also concerned about affordable housing, and asked if there is a way to reach out to individuals facing those housing challenges. Mr. Diekmann said Ms. Baker-Latimer is doing some targeted outreach for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Consolidated Plan, and they are hoping that information is informative to this process. Ms. Haase said having conversations with social service providers is also very important. Mr. Shukert discussed "resort communities" where there are lower wage jobs but those employees cannot live in the community because of lack of housing. Mr. Gartin expressed concern.

Mayor Haila asked how much guidance can be received prior to the April 23 meeting to assist Council in being efficient. Mr. Diekmann said a Council Action Form will be written and it will consist of guided direction. An early start time was discussed. Member Martin asked for a couple examples of philosophies to be discussed.

City Council recessed at 8:00 p.m. and reconvened at 8:07 p.m.

Mayor Haila said public input will be received at a future time. Mr. Diekmann said the online survey will be open until April 23. Mayor Haila said emailing thoughts and input to him and City Council members is also an option. Director Diekmann said RDG can give visual representation from other cities early next week, and toward April 23, a Council Action Form with specific requests for direction will be provided.

Member Martin asked about meeting with the school districts. It was noted that students and staff will be asked for feedback. Member Betcher said the definite constraints such as ISU land, federal

land, and others would be helpful to understand visually. She also said she is interested in Ames Citizens Academy feedback. Mr. Diekmann said an updated public input report will be available before the April 23 meeting that will include that input. Ms. Betcher asked what impact the tax discussions in the legislature affect the information being considered. Mr. Diekmann said at this point the process will not be impacted, but those discussions could affect implementation.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

Mr. Gartin said Stash the Trash is happening on Saturday, April 6.

Ms. Hoskins said a spring safety walk in the Campustown area will occur on April 17 at 8:00 p.m.

**DISPOSITION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:**

Mayor Haila acknowledged the letter received from the Story County Board of Supervisors dated March 26, 2019 regarding the Ames Urban Fringe Plan.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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John A. Haila, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary