

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

AMES, IOWA

DECEMBER 4, 2019

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of December, 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 Devyn Leeson was also present.

### AMES PLAN 2040 UPDATE

**Review Progress:** Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann told the Council that RDG will be providing an update on the Comprehensive Plan (Ames Plan 2040), and then on December 19, 2019 Council will give direction on the preferred land use concepts. He advised that work on the scenarios was delayed because data for traffic, water, and sewer were collected as accurately as possible.

Mayor Haila asked who RDG has interacted with since September. Director Diekmann told the group they have been in contact with three of four school districts, Xenia Water, and Central Iowa Water. He said the entities cannot give concrete responses until there is specific information to report. It was noted that Story County and Boone County have also been contacted related to possible directional growth. Mayor Haila asked about school enrollment. Mr. Diekmann said school districts cannot react right now concerning a 20-year plan, but do want to know when decisions are made so the information can be considered for capacity planning.

RDG Principal Consultant Marty Shukert said the goal of the meeting is to interact, provide vision and principles for land use, and discuss guiding ideas. He advised the next step is creating policies and action to implement the ideas. Mayor Haila asked about the desired time line. Mr. Shukert said ideas and revisions can be made in advance of the December 19, 2019 meeting, and written feedback can be accepted until January 10, 2020.

**Discuss Land Use Vision and Principles:** Six guiding principles were discussed as Sustainable Growth; Concentric Development; Infill Development that Enhances the Urban Fabric; Incremental, Contiguous Greenfield Development; Urban Experience; and Process.

The principles of the land use vision were reviewed as Appropriate Location, Flexibility with Compatibility, Convenient Services, Vital Mixed Uses, Places for Employment, and Diverse Housing Options. Council Member Gartin asked if RDG envisions rezoning any current spaces to make room for the projected increase of 15,000 residents. Mr. Shukert answered in the affirmative, and said standards will be needed to show where that would be acceptable.

Mr. Shukert discussed integrated areas instead of traditional, separate uses. Mr. Diekmann said some of the uses are similar to what is included in the current Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP), but there are other ways of planning being explored. Mayor Haila said some of the principles and descriptions are hard to understand as stated, but the examples given by the consultants make more sense. He suggested making the principles clearer so the general public can understand them without the examples and definitions.

Council Member Nelson asked for clarification on the land use vision principle Appropriate Location. Mr. Shukert said in greenfield areas there are tiered levels of required infrastructure. Council Member Betcher said the terms included within the principles need better defined to more clearly measure and define the principles. She wondered about the potential for form-based zoning. Mr. Diekmann described form-based zoning as more concerned with how a building looks compared to how it is being used.

Director Diekmann advised that the Complete Streets policy and manual were recently adopted and those concepts will be brought forward. Mr. Diekmann said level of service is a traffic engineering term regarding the efficiency of moving vehicles through an intersection, or overall street capacity. He said instead of being mostly concerned with the highest number of vehicles throughput, the City could change its grading from a “C” to “D” to accept more delays in an area because of other priorities like sidewalks, fire lanes, or bike lanes. Director Diekmann said parking should not be a driver of major land use decisions, which is different from the priorities of the 1990's.

Sustainability efforts were discussed. Mayor Haila asked about the variety of planning documents including Parks Master Plan, Transportation Plan, and more that are considered during Comprehensive Plan work. Director Diekmann said the Comprehensive Plan is a reference document in general, but if the Climate Action Plan conflicts with the Comprehensive Plan regarding land use, changes will need to be made so there's not a conflict.

Consultant Shukert discussed the guiding principle of Concentric Development. Mr. Shukert told the Council that projected growth areas include sites both within the current city and on its edges in multiple directions. Using existing infrastructure, relatively low-cost extensions to infrastructure, and significant infrastructure extensions and new facilities were discussed as options. Council Member Gartin said an advantage of going in one direction would be the opportunity to make a sizable investment on infrastructure. He asked for an explanation on incremental growth and infrastructure. Mr. Shukert said the City could go in one direction or divide growth in all directions to utilize existing infrastructure or make relatively low-cost incremental extensions. Mr. Diekmann said they are planning beyond 2040 by nature of the task given because infrastructure for full build-out of the areas must be estimated, and then Council will make decisions on infrastructure needs. Council Member Betcher asked how feasibility is being defined. Mr. Shukert said cost is the main factor. Council Member Gartin asked about low-cost extensions. Consultant Shukert said the question is if the City should over-size a sewer now for an area that may not develop until after 2040. Council Member Martin asked how to incorporate these considerations with sustainable growth. Mr. Diekmann said quantitative information will be given to Council regarding population served and vehicle miles traveled, but energy consumption will not be calculated since that's a universal figure. He said they are basing decisions on cost and level of service. Mr. Shukert said multi-directional growth will be a smaller travel area than if the City expands in only one direction.

Infill development and greenfield development were discussed. The development tiers were explained, and Mr. Shukert showed a map that further demonstrated tier one as areas where infrastructure is immediately available or achievable with short, incremental extensions. Tier two involves areas where infrastructure is available with extensions of existing lines under ½ mile. Tier

three was explained as areas within the urban services area but requires significant pioneer infrastructure, and tier four would involve ultimate, very long-term development outside of the current urban services area.

Consultant Shukert discussed the priority Urban Experience as involving public spaces and positive interaction; increasing the level of enjoyment and engagement of citizens; community character; and a safe, secure environment. Director Diekmann said they are including more than just the gateways to Ames, as there are many highly visible and prominent areas of Ames that contribute to experience.

Mr. Shukert discussed the last guiding principle, Process, as working with stakeholders to develop specific plans and obtaining public input.

**Introduce Infill Evaluation:** Director Diekmann said the guideline set by Council to plan for population growth of about 15,000 residents was used for the growth scenarios. He said Council's interest in infill was also a priority, so RDG came up with some ideas for infill to generate more thought. He said the infill ideas are not designed to change the scenario populations, but would be additive. If all infill situations presented are considered, Mr. Diekmann advised that would make the projected growth about 18,000 residents. Consultant Scott said there is not a significant amount of public input on these areas yet, but RDG has found in some communities that a sub-area plan becomes necessary after a Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

Mr. Shukert showed a map of existing areas where infill could take place. Council Member Gartin said if commercial property is displaced, he wants to make sure there is room elsewhere in the community. Mayor Haila wondered, as the Council is rethinking development and parking, if that is applicable to redevelopment or infill. Director Diekmann said he believes it is applicable for redevelopment because space is limited. He said depending on what needs to be accomplished, the benefits of filling a gap in a neighborhood could outweigh the benefits of parking yield or convenience.

Mayor Haila asked if commercial opportunities will be looked at as well as residential opportunities. City Manager Steve Schinker wondered about the area south of Lincoln Way from Kellogg Avenue to Duff Avenue. Mr. Shukert said that area has not been explored yet. Director Diekmann said commercial space was not explored as part of the exercise. He said Lincoln Center is a great redevelopment site, but is a valuable commercial site as it is currently. Mr. Shukert said the area east of the Lincoln Center area is an opportunity. Director Diekmann commented that it shouldn't be assumed every commercial site can be named mixed-use. He suggested being selective since commercial uses are hard to replace. He also noted the adopted South Lincoln Mixed-Use Plan concerning the area south of Lincoln Way near Third Street, noting those goals have not been realized in 15 years. Ms. Beatty-Hansen asked why that plan didn't work. Director Diekmann explained market reality and resident opinion don't always work together as planned.

Council Member Beatty-Hansen asked how much infill could be achieved if accessory dwellings were allowed where lots are large enough. Director Diekmann said housing policy will be discussed

later on in the process. He said the Corridor Plan includes information on areas that could support that idea without disrupting a neighborhood. He noted that adding accessory dwellings is a small way of adding some housing to the community, but wouldn't change the supply. Mr. Diekmann said when the structure of a plan from Council is narrowed down on multiple topics then there will be neighborhood outreach to receive input. Mayor Haila said he is interested in feedback from developers and the public and asked when public input will be received. Mr. Diekmann said once a map is labeled, it will be easier to receive public input. Mr. Scott said a steering committee setting provides an opportunity to get reactions. Council Member Betcher said she doesn't think putting Ames Plan 2040 on a Council agenda gets a broad spectrum of response, and she would like a broader reach for public input. Mayor Haila said he would like this plan to be well-received and something that the City can utilize. Mr. Diekmann said the public could be very involved in reviewing the first draft. Mayor Haila said workshop settings work well for inviting people to give input.

Council Member Gartin said he appreciates minimal gentrification. He asked to what degree the consultants are being intentional about affordable housing as infill projects are being considered. Mr. Shukert said affordable housing is an enormous issue nation-wide. Consultant Shukert emphasized the importance of developing a structure of mandates to increase incentives to increase affordability. It was agreed that affordable housing is fundamental to the housing discussion.

**Other:** Mayor Haila told the group that inclusionary zoning has caused many problems around the nation, so Council must do its research if that is being considered.

Council Member Gartin said he is interested in seeing suggestions on innovative ways to build sustainability into projects. Mr. Gartin expressed desire to accomplish goals and also make the projects fun.

Mr. Leeson said making a meaningful supply of affordable housing is important. He noted new, high-rise apartment buildings do not work for everyone. Mayor Haila said incentivizing projects is a policy issue. Ms. Betcher noted two success stories of inclusionary zoning were shared in a session she attended at the National League of Cities Conference. She said she has requested more information on those cities.

Mayor Haila expressed interest in learning what RDG knows about affordable housing. Mr. Shukert said creating more affordable housing doesn't work when it's simply a mandate, but is successful when money is put aside to help by offering incentives, risk abatement, subsidies, or specific owner participation. It was noted affordable housing is a national issue.

Ms. Betcher said she's not sure if Council's outreach is reaching the under-represented members of the community. She said Council should be thinking creatively about how to get input. Mr. Scott thanked Council and staff for the work involved. Director Diekmann said a memo will be sent to Council to guide thinking on the scenarios that will be coming.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary

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John A. Haila, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary