

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

FEBRUARY 18, 2020

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 18TH day of February, 2020, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin were present. Council Member Amber Corrieri and *ex officio* Member Devyn Leeson were absent.

AMES PLAN 2040 UPDATE:

Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann told Council that the draft presentation sent on Friday included details needed to help focus this meeting on housing principles and land use classifications. He said conversation among Council members will assist the Ames Plan 2040 team with next steps.

Housing Principles:

RDG Consultant Marty Shukert reviewed income ranges for households and the correlating affordability ranges for housing. He said a very high percentage of residents earning under \$25,000 per year are students. Mr. Shukert showed Council the affordability ranges compared with the number of units available for each range, noting the shortage of needed housing in some categories. It was noted that any dwelling unit is considered a household. Mr. Shukert said there's a non-household category used by the census for group quarters like dormitories and nursing homes. He said households desire to pay 30% or less for housing.

Mr. Shukert discussed the demand for units by affordability range. He said new construction is estimated to be 55% owner-occupied and 45% renter-occupied. Mr. Shukert stated the largest need is owner-occupied units for those with incomes between \$125,000-\$200,000. Council Member Martin said it makes sense to take the housing needs at the lower-income levels more seriously. Mr. Diekmann said census data shows that the majority of Ames residents don't overextend themselves with house payments. Council Member Beatty-Hansen asked about the availability of homes for those with incomes less than \$125,000. Mr. Shukert said it's being assumed that existing housing meets that need.

City Manager Steve Schainker asked if land needs take into account the vacant land within the City. Mr. Shukert said that land is considered green field and not new land. Council Member Betcher asked about housing price ranges and how they depend on the cost of land. Mr. Shukert said the prices are based on affordability by owners. Mr. Diekmann explained higher-density units have less land costs but higher construction costs. Council Member Gartin suggested real estate agents and loan officers in Ames have knowledge and feedback that could benefit the process. Mr. Diekmann said there was a real estate stakeholder group who assisted in the process. Council Member Gartin said additional feedback could assist Council in making policy decisions. Mr. Diekmann said the numbers provided are based on census data. Mr. Shukert said real estate agents and developers also depend on the census numbers. He said the team would welcome any feedback.

Mr. Diekmann told Council that staff needs policy direction on the presented draft housing policy principles.

Expand housing choice and attainability for people of all income ranges.

Mayor Haila asked about the sub-bullet regarding inclusive housing opportunities within new development. Mr. Diekmann said that means there will be different housing types and different price points. Mr. Shukert said designating redevelopment areas goes beyond a box on the map and implies public participation. Council Member Gartin asked to what degree Ames can develop policy to compete with housing in smaller communities. Mr. Shukert said housing in Ames will not necessarily be in direct competition with smaller towns in the County because of the services Ames can offer, and because there are people who prefer the small town lifestyle. Council Member Gartin said he would like to see housing provided in the East Industrial Area. Council Member Betcher said she would like the focus to be on ensuring the existing affordable housing does not go away. Mr. Shukert said new affordable housing will depend on how much the community is willing to subsidize. Council Member Junck said creating more affordable housing will be difficult, but is still worth investigating further. Council members concurred with the top section of sub-bullets under this proposed housing policy.

Maintain the quality of existing neighborhoods while also encouraging reinvestment and enhancement of existing housing stock.

Council Member Beatty-Hansen said she hopes accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are considered. Council Member Betcher said ADUs are a great idea, but difficult to accomplish in college towns. Mr. Diekmann said standards and design components would need to be considered. Council Member Martin said all members have emphasized infill and he is comfortable looking into ADUs. Mr. Gartin asked why existing neighborhoods are being looked at if there are other infill options. Mr. Shukert said conserving neighborhoods is critical, and that policy should be identified for the situations where housing deteriorates and land uses could change. Mr. Gartin said he doesn't have the political courage to adopt a policy allowing change to existing neighborhoods. He said if accommodating approximately 15,000 additional people within the City can be accomplished through other infill methods, he would like to see those explored before looking at existing neighborhoods. Mr. Shukert said a policy is needed that states where density is acceptable. Ms. Betcher said she's curious about how the discussions Council had regarding near-Campus neighborhoods can be part of the policy. Mayor Haila said he is concerned about neighborhood issues if ADUs are allowed and there's not a design component. He said there's a certain expectation someone has when moving into a neighborhood. Mr. Diekmann said many cities require owners to live in one unit. Mayor Haila said that requirement could be viewed as a property rights issue and not be upheld. Mr. Martin said he is advocating for investigating ADUs further. Ms. Beatty-Hansen said some existing neighborhoods would allow for ADUs. Council members concurred with the sub-bullets under this proposed housing policy, including looking into ADUs as a future issue.

Use of density and/or building types to define development areas.

Mr. Shukert said the village idea in the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) was well-intentioned but is micro-managed. Mr. Shukert said they would like to see broad concepts of what makes the village idea a good thing and something the private market can use. Mr. Diekmann said incentives will need policies, such as for over-sizing streets. He said the current LUPP discusses expectations by geographies instead of uses. Mayor Haila asked if the Council will have control when a buyer of property wants to do something different with the property. Mr. Diekmann said

the City should start with an expectation to be sure the uses desired are being created. Mr. Shukert said a center or node can be built in many ways. Mr. Diekmann said saying “commercial is important” in an area, without stating exactly what is required, implies a long-term view for planning for eventual needs. Mayor Haila said this could potentially give some certainty to developers while details can be determined by staff. Mr. Diekmann concurred, and said hopefully there will be more context for Council when a request comes to change something. He said there’s very little context for amendments in the current LUPP. Council members concurred with the sub-bullets under this proposed housing policy.

Advance identification and redevelopment of redirection areas.

Council members concurred with the sub-bullets under this proposed housing policy.

Land Use Classifications Example:

Mr. Shukert told Council that the team is suggesting some additions to the Complete Streets Plan (CSP) to include some streets that have become more significant in the community. Future Land Use Map categories were reviewed and intensity map categories were discussed. Director Diekmann explained that the proposed category names reflect the context and makeup of a particular area rather than the terminology of low-, medium-, or high-density. He said this way of categorizing would address growth areas and the character of existing neighborhoods. Mr. Diekmann said the team wants to know if the Council likes the proposed contextual descriptions over the traditional low-, medium-, and high-density terms before RDG maps out the City.

Mayor Haila asked if there would be new guidelines for developing within areas. Mr. Diekmann said he thinks this is considered more flexible from a designation perspective and will focus more on the zoning side than the land use side. Council Member Martin said this could result in fewer requests for amendments and has some appeal. Mr. Diekmann said the descriptions of the categories are the most important. Mr. Martin said if the categorizations are a way to group things together, he is fine with that. Mr. Shukert said this is a trial and it will be brought back next to Council next month.

Council Member Gartin asked how these designations would be different than current designations. Mr. Shukert said these classifications are separated from the zoning map and are intended to be more of a holistic policy. Mayor Haila said the alternative names of low-, medium-, and high-density have no real descriptors of what is in the area. He asked if this will streamline decision-making. Mr. Diekmann said it depends on how permissive Council is on making zoning changes. RDG Consultant Cory Scott said the proposed categories add context and character to the density factor, and that this would be a helpful tool for Council. Mr. Diekmann said the designations help guide factors of change.

Council Member Betcher noted the conflict between low- and high-density in some areas such as the near-Campus neighborhoods. Mr. Shukert said he’s not sure of the approach for those areas yet, but will have more details next month. Council members supported the approach of the map shown. Mr. Martin said it’s a concept and may not be exhaustive. Ms. Betcher said she wants to be certain the near-Campus neighborhood designation does not get lost. Mr. Diekmann asked if an additional category is desired to reflect the near-Campus neighborhood parking restrictions. Ms. Betcher concurred. Ms. Beatty-Hansen said, other than the rental capacity and rental cap purpose, she doesn’t see the need for the near-Campus neighborhood definition. Mr. Shukert said the near-Campus neighborhoods can be

addressed with a separate description to be more effective.

Director Diekmann asked if Council wants to move forward with the proposed terminology. Council members concurred on proceeding with further development of the concept. Mr. Diekmann said a city-wide map will be prepared.

Mr. Martin asked about next steps. Mr. Diekmann said mapping out the City with the new land use terminology will be first, and then zoning categories will be looked at. Council decided the next meeting on Ames Plan 2040 will be March 31, 2020.

Other:

None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Ms. Junck said it is National Engineer Week and an event was held at the Research Park to celebrate the work of engineers.

Mayor Haila said ISU Student Government and the City Council will have a joint meeting on March 4, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

DISPOSITION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:

Moved by Gartin, seconded by Junck, to request a memo from staff regarding the letter from Justin Dodge requesting further direction on regional improvements at State Avenue and Zumwalt Station Road.

Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Martin, seconded by Betcher, to refer to staff the request from Clarke Pasley and request a memo regarding how Council could proceed to allow parking on Westbrook Drive.

Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor

Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary