

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 17, 2009

The Ames City Council met in Special Session at 7:00 p.m. on the 17th day of November, 2009, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue, pursuant to law with Mayor Ann Campbell presiding and the following Council members present: Doll, Goodman, Larson, Mahayni, Popken, and Rice. *Ex officio* Member Keppy was also present.

WPC DISINFECTION WORKSHOP: Water & Pollution Control Director John Dunn described the recently completed Wastewater Disinfection Technologies Study by Stanley Consultants of Muscatine, Iowa. Mr. Dunn said this is the initial phase of the WPC Plant Disinfection Project that is included in the current-year Capital Improvements Plan.

Mr. Dunn introduced the staff working on the project, and Jay Brady of Stanley Consultants. Mr. Brady said the objective of the study was to evaluate wastewater disinfection technologies and select the most appropriate technology to disinfect the effluent from the City of Ames Water Pollution Control Plant. Mr. Brady said the evaluation of disinfection technologies was based on life-cycle costs, non-monetary factors, such as effectiveness and safety, and several other considerations.

The disinfection technologies researched were: sodium hypochlorite (liquid chlorine), chlorine gas, chlorine dioxide, peracetic acid, UV light, ozone, and wetlands. Mr. Brady described the criteria developed by City staff. After these technologies were evaluated, the highest scoring alternatives were sodium hypochlorite, UV light, and peracetic acid. Mr. Brady reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of these technologies.

It was explained that, at Council's direction, an evaluation of wetlands was also included in the study. Scott Wallace, a sub-consultant on the project and wetlands specialist, reviewed two wetlands options for the project. He said wetlands reduce pathogens, but would also be a source for pathogens due to waterfowl and wildlife use. Mr. Wallace explained that wetlands cannot be regarded as an appropriate sole disinfection technology for the City of Ames since the required E. Coli standard could not consistently be met.

Council Member Goodman asked if there is currently a nitrogen and phosphorous removal requirement. Mr. Dunn said that a regulatory standard will be coming in the future, and the wetlands option would provide some removal of these nutrients, but not sufficient for the future requirements.

Discussion ensued regarding the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus.

Mr. Brady discussed the cost analysis of UV disinfection, sodium hypochlorite disinfection, peracetic acid disinfection, and UV/peracetic acid disinfection. Mr. Brady reviewed the advantages of these technologies.

Assistant Water and Pollution Control Director Christina Murphy told the Council about the project open house on November 9, 2009, where the majority of attendees indicated support for the project, and for UV disinfection as the preferred alternative.

Mr. Dunn said staff is awaiting the outcome of an application submitted through the state's

IJOBS stimulus program. He said a portion of these funds are specifically designated for water quality improvements, and that awardees are eligible for a maximum of \$3 million. Decisions regarding these funds will be made in December. Mr. Dunn also explained that if this application is unsuccessful in whole or in part, funding through the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund will be pursued.

Mr. Dunn said if Council anticipates moving forward with the recommendation, staff would anticipate negotiating an engineering contract early in 2010 for Council's approval. He said engineering design will take six to nine months, and the project will be ready for bidding in the fall of 2010. Mr. Dunn said the anticipated timeline is somewhat soft because a construction permit will be needed from the Department of Natural Resources.

Moved by Mahayni, seconded by Larson, to pursue the UV disinfection method as recommended by Stanley Consultants and to include it in the Capital Improvements Plan.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

IMPERVIOUS SURFACE STORMWATER FEES: Civil Engineer Corey Mellies explained that City Council had asked staff to explore utility billing based on impervious/pervious areas and introduced the Impervious Surface Stormwater Fees Staff Report. This type of billing system would recognize the correlation between hard, impervious surfaces and greater amounts of stormwater run-off.

Mr. Mellies said that research was conducted in Iowa and other areas on how cities bill for impervious/pervious surfaces, and staff found that the Estimated Residential Unit (ERU) process is becoming very common. Mr. Mellies said staff used data from the City's Geographical Information System (GIS) to determine that an average residential parcel in Ames has 3,050 square feet of impervious area and that an assumption was made for the purpose of this study that one ERU should equal 4,000 square feet.

Mr. Mellies said that four alternatives were looked at by staff:

- Alternative 1: Leave existing flat fee in place (\$3.00 per utility account).
- Alternative 2: Billing per parcel ERUs.
- Alternative 3: Billing residential at 1 ERU per utility account and all others on ERUs.
- Alternative 4: Billing a minimum of 1 ERU per utility account on all parcels. Only use ERUs for properties with more ERUs than utility accounts.

Differences in revenue for the alternatives were discussed.

Discussion ensued regarding the current charges and the potential charges that could be seen by utility customers.

Council Member Larson discussed retention ponds and other methods that are used to aid in containing some water, and he wondered how that could be accounted for.

Council Member Goodman said he agreed that retention ponds should be accounted for and taken into consideration.

The possible change of the billing amount was discussed.

Municipal Engineer Tracy Warner said that expenses also need to be looked at, and that the stormwater requirement is a state requirement and is required on any type of development.

Council Member Popken asked about administrative costs. Mr. Mellies said that with a change to an ERU system, more time would be required by the City's Customer Service staff.

Council Member Larson said he is concerned that a billing method be reasonable, and not based on a calculation that could be questioned.

City Manager Steve Schainker told the Council that if a shift is made, some will not be happy. He said the change could be justified, but complaints would still be made. Mr. Schainker said this will impact many budgets, and would need to be announced early, as the shift would be radical.

Council Member Larson said ERU ranges could be used instead of exact ERUs.

Council Member Rice asked how other cities compare. Mr. Schainker said many cities collect this fee through property taxes.

Council Member Larson discussed an educational component, and said it would take time and be difficult to educate customers on the ERU process.

Council Member Popken said he prefers Alternative 2, which does not separate residential property from commercial.

Discussion ensued regarding possible ways billing could be set up using standard fees and/or the ERU process.

Moved by Goodman, seconded by Popken, to direct staff to look at two billing alternatives with one having a minimum around \$1.00 and billed by parcel ERU, and one based on ERUs alone with four categories.

Moved by Doll, seconded by Goodman, to amend the motion by striking the \$1.00 requirement and give staff the authority to set a minimum.

Vote on Amendment: 5-1. Voting aye: Popken, Rice, Mahayni, Goodman, Doll. Voting nay: Larson. Motion declared carried.

Moved by Rice, seconded by Goodman, to amend the motion by striking the number four from the motion, making the motion for staff to look at two alternatives with one having a minimum fee and billed by parcel ERU, and one based on ERUs alone with categories.

Vote on Amendment: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Vote on Motion as Amended: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

COMMENTS: There were no comments by the Council.

ADJOURNMENT: The Special Meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary