

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

FEBRUARY 15, 2011

The Ames City Council met in special session at 7:00 p.m. on the 15th day of February, 2011, 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: Goodman, Larson, Mahayni, Orazem, and Wacha. *Ex officio* Member England was also present. Council Member Davis arrived at 8:58 p.m.

REQUEST FROM AMES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR AMES REPRESENTATIVE(S) TO ATTEND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE VISIT SCHEDULED MARCH 30 - APRIL 1, 2011:

Ames Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Dan Culhane addressed the Ames City Council concerning the annual Chamber legislative visit to Washington, DC scheduled March 30 - April 1, 2011. Mr. Culhane said that the annual trips to meet with elected officials and key agencies that may be able to help with projects in Ames are very important. City Manager Steve Schainker said the National League of Cities (NLC) conference will be two weeks previous to this trip, and said that sometimes it works out that these trips coincide, but not always. Council Member Larson suggested that a couple Council members go on the Chamber trip, which is a more focused trip than the NLC trip.

Moved by Goodman, seconded by Wacha, to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 11-054 approving that the City send Steve Schainker and up to two Council members on the annual Chamber of Commerce trip to Washington, DC.

Roll Call Vote: 5-0. Resolution declared adopted unanimously, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these Minutes.

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIE HARPER FROM BRAND ENDEAVOR: Mayor Campbell introduced Christie Harper of Brand Endeavor. Ms. Harper shared some background on visioning and the process that is currently underway. She described a brand as a promise which must be delivered upon consistently with every interaction. Ms. Harper said a brand must include emotion, differentiation, and relevance, and is something that is created and managed, not a naturally occurring phenomenon.

Ms. Harper described the phases of this endeavor and the steps involved with each phase. Mayor Campbell described how Brand Endeavor was selected as a consultant to work with Ames in accordance with the Council's goal of creating and promoting a community vision.

NEIGHBORHOOD SUMMIT: Mayor Campbell welcomed the attendees to the Neighborhood Summit, gave an overview of the Summit agenda, and introduced Public Relations Officer Susan Gwiasda. Ms. Gwiasda gave an update on ways the City communicates with neighbors. She said participation of neighbors and residents is very important to the City. Ms. Gwiasda discussed *City Side*, the publication issued with City utility bills, and its use to promote public events and helpful information to residents and neighborhoods. She also discussed *Neighborhood News*, a quarterly publication directed towards neighborhoods and neighborhood associations, which reaches 2,400 members of active neighborhood associations. An email list is also active, which is used to distribute *Neighborhood News*.

Ms. Gwiasda told the group that the City is in the process of developing a new website that will have new avenues for the dissemination of information to residents and neighbors, including options for e-notifications on different topics, of which each resident will be able to choose depending on what is relevant or interesting to them. She said the City's Facebook page is very active, and that Twitter is being used for immediate updates.

Catherine Scott, 1510 Roosevelt Avenue, Ames, asked if the names on current email lists will still receive information once the new web is launched. Ms. Gwiasda said the names will be moved over and continue to receive information.

Ken Kruempel, 2519 Timberland Road, Ames, said he prefers to get information by email, so he can forward the information to relevant neighbors.

Dylis Morris, 535 Forest Glen Street, Ames, suggested an option on the new web to select “no paper correspondence.”

Mayor Campbell introduced Planner Jeff Benson and Neighborhood Intern Barbara Kloth. Mr. Benson showed the City website with the *In Your Neighborhood* menu item selected, and the links to neighborhood programs and information. Mr. Benson introduced Barbara Kloth, who reviewed the Neighborhood Association Annual Report. Ms. Kloth said that out of the 40 associations, 37 replies were received. She told the Council that out of the 37 replies, 22 of the associations were active, and 15 were inactive to varying degrees. Ms. Kloth described an active Neighborhood Association as one that has social events and meetings, as well as communication and organization by listservs or neighborhood newsletters.

Ms. Kloth reviewed recommendations by City staff, which include the continued support by the City Council of active associations, working with somewhat inactive associations to encourage participation and two-way communication, and removing completely inactive associations from the list since one or two neighbors in an association cannot speak for an entire neighborhood.

Ms. Kloth discussed the Ames Repair & Care Volunteer Program currently in operation, which is a partnership between the City of Ames and the Volunteer Center of Story County. She said the purpose of the program is to provide assistance to those who would not otherwise be able to maintain their residences due to age, disability, or lack of financial resources. Ms. Kloth said volunteers currently consist of individuals, families, clubs, neighbors, and a business. Mr. Benson said that currently, 8 residents are receiving help with snow removal.

Mr. Benson said different aspects of the program will be emphasized in the future, and that staff is available to assist neighborhoods with coordinating projects.

Council Member Wacha asked if an inactive neighborhood association could become active at any point. Mr. Benson said yes, the neighborhood could resume activities at any time.

Dylis Morris, 535 Forest Glen Street, Ames, said there is a home in her neighborhood that is getting worse every year because the owner has moved. Mr. Benson said if the neighborhood wanted to help, and the owner was willing, an effort could be organized to clean up the property.

Craig Riecken, 1006 Stafford Avenue, Ames, of the Willson-Beardshear Neighborhood Association, asked what business was part of Ames Repair & Care. Ms. Kloth said it was Iowa Home Consulting. Mr. Riecken asked if the determination of an active association was based only on returned surveys. Ms. Kloth said there was a large effort to contact people by phone as well.

Mayor Campbell introduced Neighborhood Inspector, Natalie Herrington. Ms. Herrington described her position, which was added to the Inspections Division three years ago by the City Council to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods. She said she coordinates efforts with the Community Resource Officer and Safe Neighborhoods Team. Ms. Herrington showed statistics from 2010, with

a total of 394 cases processed and only one citation issued. Ms. Herrington said most citizens are willing to work with the City, and appreciate the type of community Ames is.

Ms. Herrington showed pictures of properties that were improved as a result of working with property owners. The issues that were discussed included garbage, outdoor storage, noxious weeds, dangerous buildings, furniture and appliances, junk vehicles, tall grass, parking issues, illegal structures, and signs. Ms. Herrington described the issues, and how she worked with property managers and owners to improve the situations. She said graffiti and abandoned properties will be focused on in the future.

Dylis Morris, 535 Forest Glen Street, Ames, said there is a property in her neighborhood where the owner has moved, and cannot sell the property for the listed price. Ms. Morris said the owner is not investing any money into the property to keep it up. Ms. Herrington said there is a gap between dangerous buildings and situations such as this. Council Member Orazem asked about property taxes. Ms. Herrington said property taxes are usually paid in these instances. Ms. Betcher asked how long neighbors should wait before contacting Inspections with issues. Ms. Herrington said to call her right away so that the Department can be on top of these situations. With repeat offenders, it is especially helpful.

Mayor Campbell introduced Police Chief Chuck Cychosz. Chief Cychosz said building relationships with Neighborhood Associations and neighbors is very important to the Police Department. He asked for information and priorities, so that the Police Department can help solve problems. Chief Cychosz said that members of the Police Department can meet with neighbors to review citations, crimes, and calls made within a neighborhood.

Commander Geoff Huff discussed the Safe Neighborhoods Team. He said the program has two officers committed to it, and two more will be assigned to it very soon. He told the group that Sergeant Howard Snider is also part of the team, and that the team is devoted to problem solving and building relationships. Commander Huff described a recent cluster of burglaries that involved unlocked apartments, and how the Police Department worked with residents to get the message out, and educate them on how not to become a victim.

Lieutenant Tom Shelton discussed the Crime Free Housing program that the Police Department administers. Lieutenant Shelton said the program consists of education on how to screen applicants, an overview by an attorney, a security walkthrough, and a social time for tenants and managers to discuss the program. He said the Department has certified about 80 property owners in Ames, representing about 40 complexes.

Community Resource Officer Brad Baker said he is a contact for community outreach and neighborhood complaints, and can provide data to neighbors.

Debbie Lee, 214 S. Maple Avenue, Ames, said her neighborhood has been meeting with the Police Department for seven years, and has found it to be very positive and helpful. She thanked them for their patience. Ms. Lee described a rash of burglaries in her neighborhood in June, and said that the Police Department was very responsive. She said the acts of only one or two people can really affect the feeling of an entire neighborhood.

A representative of the Willson Beardshear Neighborhood Association asked if there are currently any block watch programs. Chief Cychosz said the Department has not launched one yet, but one could be started in a neighborhood if there is interest.

Gloria Betcher, 531 Hayward Avenue, Ames, asked if the Safe Neighborhoods Team replaced the Party Response Team. Chief Cychosz said that the Safe Neighborhoods Team is a much-enhanced Party Response Team that also responds to additional neighborhood concerns.

Pat Brown, 3229 West Street, Ames, thanked all staff for the work that is being done. She said it is her hope that the community can stabilize diversity in neighborhoods, not create two communities. Ms. Brown said Sustainable Neighborhoods is working on a report to be presented.

Joanne Olson, 3817 Columbine Avenue, Ames, said that residents in the Bloomington Heights neighborhood are very concerned that traffic to the new Rose Prairie development will be running up Hyde Avenue. Ms. Olson said she hopes that speed bumps and stop signs will be added. She expressed concern that there is no north-south street that goes all the way through, and asked that the City plan in advance for future growth and related traffic. Ms. Olson submitted a Bloomington Heights Neighborhood Report to Council members.

A representative of Hayes Avenue, Ames, said he was concerned about the amount of traffic on Hayes Avenue.

Gloria Betcher, 531 Hayward Avenue, Ames, asked the Council to keep their eyes on what is happening in the South Campus Area Neighborhood (SCAN) neighborhood.

Dylis Morris, 535 Forest Glen Street, Ames, wondered about the funds for repairing the roads. Mr. Schainker said the major portion of funds comes from property taxes, and is leveraged by federal funds when possible. He described the long range plan in place to evaluate the deterioration of streets. Mr. Schainker said that Grand Avenue would be repaired by the state, and said that some roads are institutional roads. He said that road use tax dollars are distributed based on the census, and with the growing population, Ames will receive more funds.

A Willson Beardshear Neighborhood Association representative asked if the City would ever designate street parking for residents only. Mr. Schainker said some cities do that, but it has administrative costs and fees associated with it. He said when that option was reviewed in the past, the negatives outweighed the positives. Mr. Schainker said that time of day regulations could be added. Council Member Davis arrived at 8:58 p.m.

A representative of the Kate Mitchell neighborhood said that the school is what brings her neighborhood together. She said that the school is essentially their neighborhood association and their gathering place. She said neighborhood schools are very important, and wondered if more funds could be used to keep neighborhood schools.

Council Member Wacha said that much time was spent on the Rental Housing Code last year and wondered if any neighborhood representatives had any comments regarding the Rental Housing Code.

Gloria Betcher, 531 Hayward Avenue, Ames said she was thrilled with the outcome of recent code changes. Another neighborhood representative appreciated the Council's work on the Rental Housing Code, and thanked staff for the many neighborhood improvement programs and publications that are in place, which have been very helpful to his association.

A representative of the Kate Mitchell neighborhood asked about having historical buildings as gathering places in neighborhoods. Gloria Betcher, Chair of the Historical Preservation Commission (HPC) said that the HPC cannot declare any school building a local landmark, which is a means of

using a local building as a community center. If neighborhoods would like to nominate their schools, they must make an impression on the school board that the residents see the school as a value to the neighborhood. Then, the group would work with the Planning department.

The meeting recessed at 9:10 p.m. and reconvened at 9:16 p.m.

REPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STUDENT BODY REGARDING LANDLORD/TENANT WEB SERVICE: Mayor Campbell introduced *ex officio* Council Member and GSB Cabinet Member Matt England. Mr. England told the Council that a landlord/tenant mediation service is a priority of the Government of the Student Body (GSB). Mr. England said that Student Legal Services is not able to take this on as GSB wants it to exist. He explained that GSB desires this service to be something that is staffed by a person, which was figured to cost around \$130,000 per year. He said that, since GSB is unable to fund such a position, a website option is now being considered.

Mr. England introduced GSB Treasurer Kathryn Benton. Ms. Benton said GSB is very excited about the possible website, which would include information for students including landlord obligations and tenant responsibilities, contact information for signing up for utilities, and other helpful links. She showed the Council a mock website, and the search ability it would have. She showed how it would compare apartments in a side-by-side format and show the property on a map in relation to the ISU campus. Mr. England said a website like this must be mutually beneficial to students and landlords. He said the Iowa State Daily has a similar website, but it does not contain very much information. Ms. Benton said a partnership with the Iowa State Daily is being pursued as an option to making this website happen.

Mr. Schainker asked if there would be a place on the website for renters to post comments. Ms. Benton said that a star system would be used so tenants could rate properties and landlords.

Discussion ensued regarding the funding and cost of such a website. Council Member Wacha said that a website like this could be a great equalizer of all property owners.

Council Member Orazem said buy-in from the Student Affairs Office at ISU would be very worthwhile. He also said that rating landlords would be useful.

Mr. Schainker asked about making some of the educational tools such as a tenant tutorial required before advancing through the site. Council Member Goodman said the education piece is what would attract the customer.

Council Member Orazem said the original concept was too focused on the legal aspect, but that the website could provide information for the vast majority.

Council Member Mahayni suggested some energy toward international students. Mr. England said he had discussed this site with a member of the International Student Council, who showed much support.

COMMENTS: Moved by Larson and seconded by Goodman to refer to staff the letter from Jody McCaskey regarding the Safly Estate acreage site and farmland split in Boone County.
Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion carried unanimously.

Moved by Orazem and seconded by Mahayni to refer to staff the letter from Steve and Barb O'Rourke requesting the Council waive the application of its subdivision standards for a proposed subdivision.

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

Council Member Davis said he attended the ISU Sports Complex forum earlier in the evening, and that residents were well-represented. He told the group that another forum will be scheduled in the future.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary