

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

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 20, 2012

The Ames City Council met in special session at 7:00 p.m. on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2012, 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: Davis, Goodman, Larson, Orazem, and Szopinski. Council Member Wacha and *ex officio* member Baker were absent.

**FLOOD WORKSHOP #2:** Mayor Ann Campbell said City staff and the consultants of HDR Engineering (HDR) will update the Council on the Flood Mitigation Study. Water and Pollution Control Director John Dunn concurred, and said that public comment will not be received at this workshop, but if members of the public would like to comment, comments are being accepted by going to the City's website at [www.cityofames.org](http://www.cityofames.org) and clicking on "In the Spotlight."

Mr. Dunn said his observations of the second round of public meetings include more tension than the first round of meetings. He said the discussion moved from more abstract to more specific topics, which became more personal. He also said the meetings were very congenial, but he sensed more frustration. He said comments from individuals up-stream of Ames are saying "don't slow down the flow of water," individuals down-stream are saying "don't speed up the water," and individuals in the middle area are saying "something has to be done." Mr. Dunn introduced Andy McCoy and John Engel of HDR.

Mr. McCoy said at the last workshop the scope of the study, public involvement, and the technical information that is being gathered was discussed. He said the initial screening criteria that will move strategies to a more specific group of detailed evaluations will be discussed at this workshop, as well as specific comments from the last public meetings. Mr. McCoy said detailed analyses will be done in the next few months, then the different levels of protection will be presented, and then feedback from the Council will be needed.

He reminded the Council that this process involves public input, analyzing different strategies, analyzing the impacts, and then presenting the best strategies to Council. He said within the process, there are three points at which the public can join in. He said there have been 866 visits on the website, and about 160 people have attended public meetings. Mr. McCoy reviewed some common themes from the public input sessions.

Mr. Dunn said HDR will be modeling the floodplain as if it was restored to pre-development levels for any given storm, to completely filling in the floodway fringe. There was discussion on the capabilities of the modeling. Mr. McCoy said there have been many questions at the public meetings on terminology. He clarified that the City of Ames does not allow development in the floodway, and that development is allowed in the floodway fringe, but the floor must be three feet above the 1% annual chance flood level.

Mr. McCoy reviewed the 2010 and 1993 floods as reference points. Mr. Orazem asked about the different flood levels at the different sites, and asked what is being measured. Mr. McCoy said the gauges at those locations are measuring river stages. He said the information is all relative to that particular location. He said a more appropriate way to compare would be with water surface elevation, but the numbers would have to be looked up. Mr. Orazem said that is very confusing, and wondered if the numbers could be standardized. Mr. Dunn said the stages are set by the United States Geological Survey (USGS). He said the gauge data could be converted, but then it would

become confusing when sharing with different agencies. Mayor Campbell said when the press releases are sent, they describe the flood levels in detail. Mr. Dunn said that one way to do it is to develop a series of maps as a tool. Mr. McCoy said the Iowa Flood Center is working on products that allow the general public to understand what the numbers mean.

Mr. McCoy said they were tasked with updating the flood frequency analysis, so the last 15 years of information that wasn't considered for the current flood maps is key. Mayor Campbell asked when the current maps were done. Mr. Dunn said that 1995 was the last date they were updated.

Mr. Orazem said it seems as the magnitude of the flood increases, the flow changes at different rates at different parts of Ames. Mr. McCoy described a statistical exercise which then provides a baseline or way to quantify the level of inundation. Mr. Orazem asked about sites that could be acting as dams. Mr. Dunn said in certain public meetings there was concern that bridges are holding up the water, so the modeling will be able to remove the bridges and evaluate the alternatives.

Mr. Larson asked how the numbers are affected by the watershed in the area of an event. There was discussion on the different flood events. Member Goodman asked if the data being used on the modeling is using the last 15 years of data. Mr. McCoy said it is using between 50-80 years of data. Mr. McCoy said the effective Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) discharge was used in a hydraulic model to create the inundation map as shown. He said it's hard to tell what the change would be when looking at the map since the depth of flooding is hard to determine, so he provided a handout with a table listing different storm events with water surface elevations.

Mr. McCoy said it is being asked if larger rainfalls continue to occur, should they be considered in the new flood mitigation alternatives. Mr. McCoy discussed how HDR transposed the real storm events that have happened in Iowa to determine effects if those same storms occurred in Ames. He said it's hard to tell the difference in four of them, but when the storm that occurred in Dubuque in 2011 was applied to the Ames watershed, flood levels would have been seven feet higher than the Ames flood in 2010. He said HDR wants to show what properties would be vulnerable so that the information can be used to create alternatives and cost scenarios for different levels of protection. Mr. Dunn said when looking at the maps, some of the areas don't show a tremendous horizontal shift, but rather much more depth. He said the Dubuque storm would have created seven feet of additional flow, an increase that is staggering. He said the reason these storm events are being looked at is so that these numbers don't seem so "theoretical," but real and credible to the analysis.

Mr. McCoy reviewed the initial public comments from the first sessions, and said they fit into the categories of storage, protection, and non-structural. Mayor Campbell asked if the comments have been filtered by the engineers. Mr. McCoy said the engineers categorized the comments by technical solutions. Mr. Goodman asked if CRP land would be categorized as a conservation measure. Mr. McCoy said cooperators must be found, and that the State of Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship has a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) program that has sites identified on private land. He said that major floods have so much runoff volume that it would take a lot of conservation to slow down the water. Mr. McCoy reviewed other protection methods.

Mr. McCoy reviewed the screening criteria HDR used to narrow the initial alternatives to a list that will be more fully evaluated. Mr. McCoy said HDR will not present a certain number of choices, but rather combinations of alternatives and strategies that will work together to best provide flood protection. He said cost estimates and detailed environmental impacts for the options will be provided. Member Larson asked about qualitative ideas such as political feasibility and local issues and approval processes. He said he know some methods are not thought of as favorably as they used

to be. Mr. McCoy said yes, processes will be discussed and details can be quantified to provide levels of protection. Mr. Larson said the Council will need guidance on what is reasonable. Mr. Engel said HDR can qualify impacts as well as possible paths that could be pursued. He also said public input would be shared along with the public's level of excitement on the different alternatives. Mayor Campbell asked about the impacts on surrounding communities. Mr. Engel said impacts such as property tax revenue and emergency response times can be qualitatively identified. Mr. Larson said that is the type of information he wants to see.

Council Member Szopinski asked how the alternatives are viewed by FEMA. Mr. Engel said funding options can be identified for the alternatives. Council Member Davis asked how specific HDR will be when providing the combinations of alternatives. Mr. Engel said feedback is needed on this, but discussions so far have been that one strategy might be heavier on storage, the next might include more conveyance improvements, and another could include more diversion. Mr. Engel also said floodplain ordinances and conservation measures that provide incremental benefits could be brought forward with the benefits they could provide and the costs associated with them. Mr. Orazem asked if the goal is to lower the peak flood, and how that will be organized. Mr. McCoy said that's exactly what they have talked about for the storage alternatives. Mr. Dunn said there isn't one thing that will solve this problem, but there are multiple different ways to show different combinations that could work to mitigate flooding.

Mr. Goodman said if there are a few complex solutions, it would be nice to have a story on how those strategies have been successful or not successful. He also said he is concerned about people's feelings before being informed. He said he believes the reactions would shift if citizens were more informed. Mr. Goodman asked about the option of flood proofing. Mr. McCoy said flood proofing is something that could not be used as a stand alone strategy because it is site specific and is pretty limited, so it was not carried forward as something that will be looked at. Mr. Goodman said it seemed an interesting option as far as cost. He suggested that a buy out option for certain homes would possibly be more affordable than building a reservoir. Mr. McCoy said property buy outs occurred after the 1993 flood, which resulted in minimal success, and were not embraced by the community. Mr. Dunn said if they go down the route of exploring levies, there may not be a good way to do it unless there is a buy out of a few properties in targeted areas. He also said that buy out is a major strategy by itself as well, but not an option that will work well as its own strategy.

Mr. Schainker said that the Council is concerned that some of these alternatives may be very costly. He asked if HDR does a cost benefit analysis. Mr. McCoy said yes, that is the next step and will be done over the next few months. Mr. Engel said equally valid is the acceptable levels of protection and the incremental cost associated with protecting at higher levels. Mr. Dunn said HDR and staff will come back next time with price tags and options so the Council will have all of the information. Council Member Goodman said the 1997 study presented several options and none were taken. He said that in the case every option is too expensive, he would like to know how much it will cost to protect properties. Mr. Engel said value information for the floodplain parcels can be included.

There was discussion on buy outs that happened after the 1996 flood study. Mr. Kindred said after the 1996 study, the only option that met the FEMA cost ratio was protecting individual properties, but no one took advantage of it. Mr. Kindred said HDR has pushed back this option given the history of this in Ames where no one seemed interested in it. Mr. Goodman said his concern is that City dollars will be used, and in this case even though the funds would be given to specific properties, it would still be saving taxpayers.

Assistant City Manager Bob Kindred told the Council that Management Analyst Brian Phillips is involved with the county in updating the county-wide all hazards mitigation plan, of which this plan will be adopted into. He said if the time comes when federal assistance is being sought for buy outs, that would need to be listed as an alternative in the plan. Mr. Engel said the residual flood damages to City-owned properties and roadways, and removal of properties from the tax base would also need to be considered. Mr. Goodman said the experience and expertise HDR brings to the financial equation is very helpful.

Mr. Larson asked if the original data going back to 1995 and earlier that was combined to come up with sources and flow rates have been kept separate so it can be determined where the flooding is occurring more frequently in recent years. He said it seems that Squaw Creek is the bigger problem in recent years, asked if he is correct in thinking how quickly the water comes from the northwest. Mr. Dunn said he agreed with that in a qualitative sense. Mr. Larson said he wants to make sure some feedback is received to determine where dollars should be spent based on the areas most likely to be impacted.

Mr. Orazem asked if there is data to show if the water could exit Ames without problems if all the rainfall occurred in the Skunk or in the Squaw. Mr. McCoy said ten inches of rain in the Squaw basin is very substantial no matter what is happening on the Skunk River. Discussion continued on the higher levels of rainfall.

Ms. Szopinski said she is looking forward to hearing the alternatives.

Mayor Campbell asked about more public input. Mr. McCoy said that will soon be scheduled, as well as the target end date. Mr. Dunn said the last workshop is targeted for late January or early February to line up with the Capital Improvements Plan.

**COMMENTS:** Mayor Campbell told the Council that she has asked Member Larson and Member Goodman to be part of a preliminary group in the search for a new City Attorney. She said staff will soon be presenting a schedule for the search.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary