

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

MAY 19, 2020

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 19th day of May, 2020. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin were present. *Ex officio* Member Nicole Whitlock was also present.

Mayor Haila announced that it is impractical to hold an in-person Council meeting due to the Governor of Iowa declaring a public health emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, limits have been placed on public gatherings, and this meeting is being held as an electronic meeting as allowed by Section 21.8 of the *Iowa Code*. The Mayor then provided how the public could participate in the meeting via internet or by phone.

RESOLUTION CORRECTING NAME OF SUBDIVISION APPROVED BY RESOLUTION NO. 20-245 ON MAY 12, 2020, FROM KINGSBURY'S SUBDIVISION, THIRD ADDITION, TO KINGSBURY'S SUBDIVISION, FOURTH ADDITION. Moved by Betcher, seconded by Martin, to approve the correction for the Final Plat for Kingsbury's Third Addition to Kingsbury's Fourth Addition.

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

AMES PLAN 2040 WORKSHOP REGARDING PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PRINCIPLES AND ENVIRONMENT PRINCIPLES: Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann told Council that one set of principles will be used to discuss parks, trails, and open spaces; and another set of principles will be used to discuss environment. RDG Consultant Cory Scott said there are sub-elements of the Ames Plan 2040 (Plan) coming out of the public engagement opportunities. He stated the Vision of parks, trails, and open spaces: Open space and recreation facilities support the physical and social well-being of the community. Mr. Scott said the existing Park Master Plan was intended to supplement the Land Use Policy Plan (LUPP) and seeks to accomplish a set of goals. Mr. Scott reviewed survey responses received during the public input process.

Mr. Scott reviewed the eight principles developed after meeting with the public and considering current parks, trails, and open spaces:

1. Reflect community values with public space for social and physical well-being that private open space alone cannot accomplish
2. Accessible and desirable open space opportunities
3. Concurrent growth of park land with development
4. Maintain and expand the system of park types to meet varied needs of the community overall
5. Plan a system of interconnected green ways.
6. Stewardship and variety of open space
7. Fiscally responsible
8. Support partnerships

Council Member Betcher asked about the relationship between public space, private space, and university space. Mr. Diekmann said they did not inventory Iowa State University (ISU) land in this process, and the City is not relying on ISU land to meet the park requirements.

Mr. Martin asked if Council should imagine the principles will be flushed out even further in the Plan. Mr. Scott said this is the level the principles would appear in the Plan, as keeping principles broad allows for interpretation. Mayor Haila asked about expanding parks within the existing park system. Mr. Diekmann said larger parks like Brookside Park are called community parks. Ms. Beatty-Hansen asked how neighborhood parks compare to community parks. Mr. Diekmann said the PDF document showing all parks and their size is included in the Parks and Recreation program and facility guide. Parks and Recreation Director Keith Abraham said an interactive map of the park system is currently being worked on with the City of Ames geographic information system (GIS) staff members.

Mr. Diekmann said larger community parks will be needed in addition to neighborhood parks, and it was not their intent to suggest enlarging existing parks. Mayor Haila said the principles should be clear and consistent with what's being adopted. Mr. Diekmann reviewed what is included in the LUPP and said the team desires to be consistent in expectations. Mayor Haila asked if park types will be defined in the new document. Mr. Diekmann said they are defined in the LUPP as regional, community, neighborhood, woodlands/open space, and specialty. He said those definitions will be brought forward to the new Plan.

The Actions drafted for parks, trails, and open spaces were discussed:

1. Maintain a high quality and ample park system and recreation facilities as the city grows.
2. Plan for park dedication as part of the development process with parkland dedication based upon neighborhood park needs.
3. Provide a park system that supports a variety of user needs.
4. Support the user experience.
5. Support parks and open space environmental opportunities.
6. Apply conservation standards in growth areas.
7. Identify partnerships for meeting service needs.

Ms. Beatty-Hansen said she wondered how water trails could be utilized and emphasized for recreation and transportation. She said challenges would be weather and access. Mayor Haila asked about the term "environmentally sensitive areas," and if any of them need preserved to be consistent with principles five and six. He asked if people purchasing property will understand the City's view on those areas to be preserved and protected. Mr. Diekmann said in the current LUPP, resources can be found on currently identified habitats and sensitive areas that someone hoping to annex land could find. He said they are trying to continue that, and as long as the policies are there expectations will be developed.

Council Member Betcher asked about the details of principle six referencing "passive area experiences." Mr. Scott said that would not involve programming or active recreation. Ada Hayden

Heritage Park was given as an example. Mayor Haila asked about “reestablishment of habitat.” Mr. Diekmann said Ada Hayden is also a good example of that where the oak savannah natural habitat has been restored. Mayor Haila said he appreciates the eighth principle where quality of life can be broadened beyond the city.

Mr. Diekmann said Ames will need more than one additional community park if growing in multiple directions. He said accessibility is important and planning will need to take place for parks in the areas of growth. He said they are proposing to bring the guideline forward from the LUPP of ten acres of parks/open space per 1,000 people. He said the city should aspire to have an overall open space ratio similar to the current reality of approximately 18 acres per 1,000 people. He said because of Ada Hayden the ratio is higher. Mayor Haila asked what happens when developers buy a larger parcel of land. Mr. Diekmann said there is not a park land dedication ordinance, so it’s up to the City to determine a process. He said an ordinance would prevent a park from getting put on the last developer in an area. Mr. Gartin said when developers are asked to dedicate land to the City for a park, they are paying for that land and that cost is shifted to the remaining lots. He said the community should pay for that land. Mr. Diekmann said community parks are broader service areas. He said if an ordinance was in place then developers could pay for the land knowing they will be required to contribute park land. He said the ordinance would have to have a solid structure to be effective.

Director Diekmann said an environmentally sensitive overlay requirement has been in place and development cannot be done in that area without a biological survey. Council Member Gartin asked if environmental overlays are working. He said the north side of Ada Hayden is an experiment and it’s not known if neighborhoods will be compliant in protecting the watershed. Mr. Diekmann said there is not a city-wide requirement so property owners are being relied on to abide by the recommendations. Mr. Gartin said he’d like to know if the protections on sensitive areas are working.

Mr. Gartin said outdoor fitness equipment could be added to centrally-located parks. Mayor Haila asked if that would be a Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) project instead of a comprehensive plan item. Mr. Abraham said it’s more of a budgetary concept that could be considered in the five-year CIP plan. Ms. Corrieri said she would be hesitant to put specifics into the document since it’s a long-range planning document and it is unknown what will “come and go.” She said outdoor fitness equipment was not used in the Miracle Park because research is showing those features are not being utilized very much. Mr. Abraham said the Miracle Park wasn’t included in the Plan, rather when the opportunity presented itself they were flexible and moved forward. Ms. Betcher said there are a variety of user needs and wondered where users can make suggestions on what is important to them. Mr. Abraham said the Miracle Park began as a discussion, the canoe and kayak access at Ada Hayden started with someone providing an idea and being willing to help, and Roosevelt Park came together because the neighborhood didn’t want the school to sell the property. Ms. Betcher said there may be constituents that have feedback and aren’t sharing it because they don’t think the City will listen. She said she would like to intentionally receive feedback. Mr. Diekmann said staff can consider how that can happen.

Mr. Martin asked about night sky protection. He said he wants to be sure the City is aware of light pollution. Mr. Diekmann said that would belong in the environmental section of the Plan. Mr. Gartin said the Tedesco Environmental Learning Corridor is off to a great start. He asked if arts organizations could incorporate an indoor park system. He said Council Bluffs has an indoor park that incorporates children's books.

Mr. Scott stated the environment Vision: Ames will practice environmental stewardship to support a high quality natural environment. He said they are using GIS and other mapping resources to get the most current data. Mr. Diekmann said the layers of mapping available makes details very clear. He said it will replace much of the documentation done in the 1990's.

The principles of environment were discussed:

1. Design for environmental priorities
2. Preserve a network of green spaces
3. Improve water quality
4. Apply climate change conscience policies

A growth principle of Ensure Sustainable Growth and a parks principle of Stewardship and Variety of Open Space were included.

Mr. Diekmann said the wording of the principles may get refined. Mr. Gartin asked about "high quality" in the Vision statement. Mr. Scott said that means well cared for. Mayor Haila said it may be beneficial to be more explicit for future councils. Mr. Diekmann said a vision statement shouldn't be used for administration. He said a simple statement preceding Action one may be helpful. Mr. Martin said another option is to say "Ames will practice thoughtful environmental stewardship." He said high level is better.

Council Member Betcher said she doesn't see how Ames' role within the watersheds or working with the County is included. It was noted watersheds are part of the action items. Ms. Beatty-Hansen wondered about including growing food, soil quality, and air quality in the action items. Mr. Diekmann said air quality is part of an action item but wasn't considered a priority in the draft. Ms. Beatty-Hansen said soil quality can be degraded from compaction or development and asked if the city has any responsibility to rectify soil. Mr. Diekmann said the way that's addressed in the Code is through the stormwater development ordinance rather than a broader policy. Mr. Martin said the details of principle four on climate change could be stronger. He suggested changing "that may reduce" to "to reduce". Mayor Haila asked if this is consistent with the motion that Council adopted. Mr. Martin said he likes how it recognizes further changes to the plan may be necessary.

Ms. Beatty-Hansen asked if any of the principles list the value of unmodified areas. She asked if the night sky would be included in the principles. Mr. Scott said it could be included in the details of Action one.

The Actions drafted for environment were discussed:

1. Assess environmental conditions of all types.

2. Use planning documents and models to assist in managing environmental quality.
3. Adopt policies and implement strategies identified in prepared plans.
4. Support for alternative energy systems.
5. Economic development goals shall consider resource availability and intensity of use.

A parks Action of Apply Conservation Standards in Growth Areas was included.

Ms. Betcher asked if partnering could be added as an Action. Mr. Scott said that can be added. Mr. Diekmann said it could become part of Action three.

Director Diekmann said flood plain protection is included with a strong set of regulations for the 100-year floodway fringe.

Council Member Betcher said the negative has been emphasized and wondered if the positives can also be emphasized. Mr. Diekmann said supporting environmental and sustainable priorities can be included.

Mayor Haila asked if economic development has been discussed. Mr. Scott said input from stakeholders may be needed. Mr. Diekmann said the Plan will show a proactive approach of supporting growth.

Ms. Whitlock asked about the way parks are cared for and asked about environmentally friendly practices. Mr. Abraham said that is not included in the Park Master Plan. Mr. Scott said it could be part of the parks principle added under environment. Ms. Betcher asked about buffer strips. City Manager Steve Schainker said care of buffer strips is addressed in the leases with farmers. Mr. Schainker asked if those practices would need to be included for private developments. Mr. Martin said it could be communicated as a community value.

Mr. Diekmann said if Council is comfortable with the information shared the team will move into writing the chapter.

Mr. Martin said an email was received from Jim Popken, who pointed out some history behind the previous LUPP map and an overlay for state-owned land to describe an alternate intent for the land should it be sold. He asked if something should be done by Council. Mr. Scott said it came to their attention that for the foreseeable future ISU land would not be changed. Mr. Schainker said the school district has sold land, the Department of Transportation could sell land, and even the City could. He said something could be set up so anyone purchasing land would know what to expect from the City. He said it would avoid issues among neighbors. Ms. Betcher said in the case of development areas identified it makes sense, especially since the State nursery has already been identified as a possible development area. Mr. Martin asked how to move forward. Mr. Schainker said staff can talk about the next steps. Mr. Diekmann said university land shouldn't be relied upon for development, which can be shown in the final draft. Mr. Schainker said he recommends addressing more than just the university areas. He said it could be a policy outside of the Plan for

all governmental lands. Mayor Haila said staff can bring ideas to address governmental lands back to Council.

DISPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL: None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Council Member Gartin said the Parks and Recreation system is outstanding. He said he appreciates Friends groups developing around many parks.

Council Member Betcher said that one of her constituents is very concerned that the Council meetings be as accessible as possible. She said the phone number provided is not toll-free.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to request staff to look into ways for callers to access City Council meetings for free and place Zoom instructions on the website.

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

Mayor Haila said it's disappointing the Memorial Day celebration has been canceled. He recognized those who have served the country and those who have spent months planning the celebration. It is hoped the program can live-streamed.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor

Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary