

Staff Report

Ames City Council and Parks and Recreation Commission

September 11, 2012

BACKGROUND:

Dr. Geitel Winakor was a long time resident of Ames and an accomplished professor in the Department of Textiles and Clothing at Iowa State University. She retired as Professor Emerita in 1992, and passed away on August 15, 2011.

In 2001, Dr. Winakor contacted staff inquiring if she could contribute approximately \$25,000 to \$35,000 to a project within the park system. To determine the specific project, staff toured the park system with Dr. Winakor. Her anonymous contributions continued for several years and the sum total of these gifts was approximately \$160,000. Projects she selected over the years allowed for shelter houses to be built and large play structures to be purchased for Moore Memorial and Inis Grove Parks. A \$40,000 gift was also directed toward the development of the Dog Park.

In 2011, the City of Ames was informed that her estate included an **unrestricted gift of approximately \$1.7 million to the Department of Parks and Recreation**. Therefore, the City has total discretion for how these funds are utilized.

It is the Parks and Recreation Commission's understanding that Dr. Winakor was a land preservationist and environmental enthusiast. She loved, valued, and respected the environment and wildlife. The motivation that drove her donations to the City was her desire to enhance the quality of life of Ames residents.

Based upon this understanding, the Commission established the following two **overriding criteria** for determining how best to utilize this most generous gift:

- 1) Enhance the quality of life for both current and future generations
- 2) Ensure an impressive, long-lasting investment in the community

Additionally, the Commission developed a **Decision-Making Matrix Criteria** (DMMC, Attachment A) to assist in the determination of a recommendation to Council. Public input was also encouraged and received by the Commission with multiple ideas being submitted. These suggestions are listed on the DMMC and were evaluated based on the established criteria.

As detailed in Attachment A, the following seven projects met the first criteria of **"being included in a current or previously adopted City plan"**:

- Construct an indoor warm water recreational pool and gymnasiums which were included in the Rec Plex bond issue and voted on in 2005.
- Develop the parking lot east of City Hall into a Civic Plaza which is included in the existing Capital Improvement Plan.
- Pursue land for four community parks with the goal of accommodating future residential growth (anticipated between the years of 2005 to 2015 and 2015 to 2030) as included in the Park Master Plan.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

Recently, land owners in west Ames informed staff that they would be willing to sell a tract of land of approximately 80-acres to the City for the sole purpose of developing it into a passive/natural park. The owners have emphasized that they have no interest in selling off pieces or parts of this total acreage. This acreage coincides with the Park Master Plan, which calls for a park to be developed in this part of the community between the years of 2005 and 2015.

The members of the Parks and Recreation Commission toured this parcel and were impressed with its natural beauty and park-like feel due to a creek that runs through the parcel, established prairie, and rolling pasture land.

In considering this opportunity, the Commission took the following factors into consideration in making their recommendation:

- Two overriding criteria and the Decision-Making Matrix Criteria
- The Park Master Plan includes a park in west Ames by 2015
- The existing residential base supports the need for a community park in west Ames
- Existing property owners have offered to sell an 80-acre tract of land to the City for the sole purpose of developing a passive / natural park

After considering the many suggestions received from the public, measuring those against these factors, and with appreciation for the generosity of Geitel Winakor's gift, **the Commission recommends that on October 9th the City Council approve a resolution to utilize the funds received from this bequest to proceed with the purchase and subsequent development of an approximate 80-acre parcel of park land in west Ames.**

At the October 9th meeting, City staff will outline the necessary steps to accomplish this purchase and will present a conceptual park master plan, which will include an estimated project budget.

SITE TOUR

Prior to Council making a decision on this bequest on October 9th, Commissioners have offered to host a site tour for the Mayor and City Council members.

DECISION-MAKING MATRIX CRITERION SPREADSHEET

Projects	Criteria						Staff Comments
	1) Included in an existing or previously adopted City plan	2) Estimated One Time Capital Cost	3) Additional funding required?	4) Annual O&M cost estimate	5) Do we have a willing partner? Can we obtain the land?	6) Diversity of anticipated users (low/medium/high)	
Indoor Warm Water Rec Pool (Rec Plex)	For 8 years	\$4 million	Pass a Bond Issue (ACSD)	\$125,000	Yes (ACSD)	Medium (people who swim, exercise/play in water)	
Gymnasiums (Rec Plex)	For 8 years	TBD (ACSD)	TBD (ACSD)	\$25,000	Yes (ACSD)	Medium (people who play sports/participate in fitness)	5 Regulation size gyms between 2014 & 2018 - ACSD
Community Gathering Venue (CIP)	For 3 years	\$1 million	TBD	\$20,000	TBD	High (downtown attraction, water, pavilion, open space)	
Park in West Ames (Park Master Plan 2005-2015)	For 15 years	\$1.7m estimate (Master Plan needed)	TBD (Master Plan needed)	TBD \$20,000 (Master Plan needed)	Yes	High (passive, trails, prairie)	
Park in Northwest Ames (Park Master Plan 2015-2030)	For 15 years	TBD	TBD	TBD	No	High	
Park in Southwest Ames (Park Master Plan 2015-2030)	For 15 years	TBD	TBD	TBD	No	High	
Park in Southeast Ames (Park Master Plan 2015-2030)	For 15 years	TBD	TBD	TBD	City property (Between Animal Control and Dog Park)	High	
Construct an Indoor Sport Facility	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Medium	
Paved path to Heart of Iowa Trail System	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Medium	Refer to Public Works/Story County
Enhance Trail Connections throughout the community	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	City of Ames	Medium	Refer to Public Works
Network Trails in Ames	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	City of Ames	Medium	Refer to Public Works
Expand Trails (without crossing traffic/stopped by lights) from AHHP to Airport Road, etc	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	City of Ames	Medium	Refer to Public Works
Trail to Connect Intermodal Facility to ISU Arboretum	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	Medium	Refer to Public Works
Greener Ames: Increase Trails Overpass on Duff Avenue	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	High	Refer to Public Works

Horse Trails / Horse Barn	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	No	Low	
Water Features in Parks	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	Parks & Recreation	Medium	
Install Soft Surface	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	Parks & Recreation	Low	
Construct a Children's Museum	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	No	Medium	
Expand the Parking at Aquatic Center	No	\$150,000	No	Minimal	Parks & Recreation	Medium	
Roosevelt School Keep greenspace - playground	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	Yes - ACSD	Medium	Potential Gift of Open Space
Purchase and Develop Roosevelt and Adjacent Greenspace	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	Yes - ACSD	Medium	Potential Gift of Open Space "Clean and Green"
Portion of Funds Used to Cover P&R fees for Seniors	No	TBD	TBD	TBD	Parks & Recreation	Low	
Portion of Funds Used to Purchase Sound System & Create a Guarantee Fund	No	\$150,000 Sound System	No	\$100,000 Guarantee Fund	N/A	Low	
Park with Bocce Ball, lawn bowling, croquet course	No	Minimal	No	Minimal	Parks & Recreation	Medium	
Put into a trust - use interest to maintain parks/facilities	No	TBD	No	None	N/A	High (Maintain parks/facilities)	
Endowed Wellness Internship	No	\$200,000 to \$300,000	TBD	TBD	TBD	High (Community Health/Well-Being)	
Purchase Oaks Golf Course	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	N/A	
Plant Tulips / Iris in Parks	No	N/A	No	TBD	Parks & Recreation	N/A	

Attachment A

Decision-Making Criteria

Criteria 1:

Included in an Existing or Previously Adopted City Plan

For a capital improvement to be included in a City planning document (Capital Improvement Plan, the Park Master Plan, Land Use Policy Plan, etc) a comprehensive public input process is included and the Commission recommends / adopts and City Council takes action on the project. This process is utilized to assure that broad public support exists prior to funding being authorized or the proposal placed before residents in the form of a bond issue vote.

Examples of this process include:

- 1) Conducting over 20 public meetings and multiple focus groups prior to placing the Rec Plex bond issue on the ballot in 2005
- 2) The City retained a consultant to update to Land Use Policy Plan in the mid-1990's. This process included many public meetings. The Park Master Plan was then updated and adopted by the Commission to span the years of 1997 to 2030. Updates occur to the Park Master Plan as the City's Land Use Policy Plan is periodically revised by City Council.

Criteria 2:

One Time Capital Cost

It is important to understand the magnitude of the capital outlay that will be required to accomplish the project.

Criteria 3:

Additional Funding Required?

It must be determined if the bequest will fund the desired project in its entirety or if additional private / public funding, or a successful bond issue would be required.

Criteria 4:

Annual Operational and Maintenance Costs

All capital improvement projects require ongoing operational and maintenance funding. Within the Department of Parks and Recreation this source of funding is derived through property taxes.

Criteria 5:

Do we have a Willing Partner?

The City has a rich history of partnering with other governmental entities reaching back to Municipal Pool in the mid-1960 and continuing to this day. More recent examples include residents voicing appreciation and support of the City and ISU partnering in building and operating the Ames/ISU Ice Arena. In 2005 it was determined to package the construction of the Rec Plex with the recently constructed Middle School. Ultimately, residents did not support the proposal due to the magnitude of the capital outlay of \$24 million. However, they continued to voice support for the City to partner with other entities and to phase-in the construction of the components of the Rec Plex over time.

Therefore, it seems important to continue to seek-out additional partnership opportunities related to recreation facility development.

Can we Obtain the Land?

The City can not enact eminent domain on private property owners to obtain parkland or trails. Therefore, the development of the park system (as detailed in the Park Master Plan) is at the mercy of having a willing seller. As an example, for over 15 years the City pursued two land

owners between Munn Woods and Emma McCarthy Lee Park. As you know, recently both residents agreed to sell the City a portion of their land so this greenbelt connection could become a reality.

Criteria 6:

Diversity of Users (age, range of activities) and Number of Users

With limited capital improvement funding, staff believes it is important to consider how many different people will be positively affected by this investment. As an example, all ages will use a swimming pool or gymnasium but the diversity of the user is limited to those that swim or play a sport. Therefore, the project may be rated as “medium”. In assessing the usage / diversity of a downtown Community Gathering Venue or Community Park all ages would utilize either facility and partake in a wide range of activities. Therefore, it might rate as “high”.

**PROJECT OVERVIEW
SUMMARY**

Based on Criteria 1 the following projects have been included for the following reasons:

REC PLEX BOND ISSUE

Between 1995 and 2005 the City determined that recreation facilities were lacking in Ames. A comprehensive approach to deal with this issue was put before the residents in 2005 in the form of a \$24 million bond issue for a “Rec Plex”. The bond issue received 40% support versus the required 60%.

The major features of the Rec Plex included:

- Outdoor Aquatic Center (accommodate 1,400 users)
- Indoor Warm Water Recreational Pool (accommodate 250 users)
- Three regulation size gymnasiums with hardwood maple floors

Once the bond issue failed, it was determined to redirect efforts and phase these major facility improvements over several years. Emphasis was to be placed on partnering with other entities as deemed appropriate. The following is a summation of efforts to enhance major recreation facility development since the failed Rec Plex bond issue.

Outdoor Aquatic Center: Accomplished

Indoor Warm Water Recreational Pool:

The District shared with City staff they anticipate constructing an “Aquatic Facility at Ames High” sometime between the years of 2015 to 2018. It could be located at the corner of 16th and Ridgewood. The District will build a competitive / cold water basin to accommodate boys and girls athletic teams. In anticipation of the City’s needs for a warm water basin, the facility would allow for a second basin to be added on to the District’s pool. Locker room facilities would serve to divide the two basins and be shared.

In light of the recently passed Library and School District bond issues and a new City Water Plant being constructed (\$65 million that will impact utility rates) staff does not recommend pursuing a bond issue to enhance recreation facility development should until 2015 or beyond. Therefore, the City and District could enter into a 28E Agreement (comparable to the existing 28E Agreement that governs Municipal Pool). This would assure that the community could utilize the District’s cold water pool until the community supports the passage of a bond issue to build a warm water recreational facility.

Gymnasiums:

With the passage of the School District bond issue in April 2012 staff envisions working with the District since they plan on building “regulation size gyms” at each of their five elementary schools

(between 2014 and 2018). City funding may be required to assure each gymnasium includes competition level basketball goals and volleyball standards. A 28E Agreement would need to be approved detailing usage, cost sharing, etc.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)

Community Gathering Venue:

In 2009 and 2010, conversations were held between City staff and members of the Ames Foundation and Main Street Cultural District regarding the development of a “civic plaza” to be located in the parking lot east of City Hall.

It is proposed that the City would provide the land and that private funding would finance the development estimated at \$1 million. The conceptual plan for this space includes open space, a pavilion (where special events could be held) and a small water feature.

PARK MASTER PLAN

Community Parks in West, Southwest, Southeast, and Northwest Ames:

To accommodate future residential growth it was determined in approximately 1997 that additional “community parks” (50 to 100+ acre tracts of land) would be needed between the years **2005 to 2015 and 2015 to 2030.**

Recently a land owner in west Ames informed staff they would be willing to sell an approximate 80 acre tract of land to the City. This acreage coincides with the Park Master Plan calling for a park in west Ames to be acquired / developed between the years of 2005 and 2015. Residential growth in west Ames supports this need in 2012.

Residential growth in southwest, southeast, and northwest Ames does not dictate community parks until the years **2015 to 2030.**