

## COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: WELCOME BACK STUDENTS EVENTS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

During the recent budget presentations, the City Council engaged in discussion on participation levels at City-hosted events including the annual “Welcome Back ISU Students” held in August at Fire Station No. 2 on Welch Avenue. **It was noted that last year’s event had fewer students, and that attendance the last few years had been decreasingly slightly. It was also noted that to promote our own event, the City of Ames has been participating in Iowa State University’s “WelcomeFest,” a very well-attended open house for organizations and businesses held at the Memorial Union.**

While “WelcomeFest” has traditionally been held on the first Wednesday after fall semester begins, “Welcome Back” has traditionally followed on the first Friday. In reviewing the schedule for this fall, it was discovered that ISU will have a later start: Monday, Aug. 26. Additionally, Labor Day is early this year: Monday, Sept. 2.

**“WelcomeFest” has tentatively been scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 28. That would put “Welcome Back” on the Friday of Labor Day weekend. This date is problematic for attracting students, as many students leave Ames over Labor Day weekend. It will also make it difficult to find City staff and interns available to work. Therefore, it appears this would be a good year to experiment with making some changes.**

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. The City Council can approve an expanding the City’s presence at Iowa State University’s “WelcomeFest” this year and forgoing a “Welcome Back” this fall at the fire station.
2. The City Council can approve permanently eliminating “Welcome Back” and directing City staff to only participate in “WelcomeFest” at the Memorial Union each year.
3. The City Council can approve participating in both “WelcomeFest” and “Welcome Back” for this fall.

**MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

While our "Welcome Back" event has been successful in the past, we are now experiencing some declines in participation that call into question the cost-effectiveness of this event. With any event, it's important to evaluate if we are fulfilling our goals and if we are reaching our target audience. There is some concern those goals will be difficult to achieve this fall.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby directing staff to expand its presence and participate only in WelcomeFest for 2013. This option could include an additional booth and scheduling Council member shifts at the event.