

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REQUEST FROM THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TO SCHEDULE THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS FOR MULTIPLE DATES

BACKGROUND:

Since opening in 1990, the Ames City Hall meeting rooms have been used extensively by the public. Since demand for these spaces sometimes exceeds availability during certain times and days, the staff created the attached policy, hopefully, to provide a fair process for determining use of the City Hall rooms.

You will note from the attached policy that it limits scheduling for outside organizations to only one meeting at a time. This was done to prevent one group who comes in first to reserving all of the preferred times or dates in the year. One exception that has been made to the policy was for the reservation of the Council Chambers for the League of Women Voters for Candidate Forums and Legislative Wake-Ups. This group has been allowed to schedule these events for the year.

With the lack of public meeting rooms, the competition for low-cost space is intense. As a result of this situation, representatives from other community groups have questioned the staff-created policy that grants preference to the League functions. Therefore, the City staff is seeking direction on how to handle the scheduling of the League's Candidate Forums and Legislative Wake-Ups.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can pass a motion supporting the staff policy that limits scheduling of only one meeting at a time per group, with the exception of the League of Women Voters who are allowed to schedule their Candidate Forums and Legislative Wake-Ups at one time each year.
2. The City Council can pass a motion supporting the staff policy that limits scheduling of only one meeting at a time per group. This alternative would not provide an exception for the League of Women Voters.
3. The City Council can direct the staff to modify the City Hall Room Scheduling Policy and ask that it be brought back for Council approval.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It can be argued that the League of Women Voters is different than the other groups who seek to use the City Hall rooms. The mission of this organization is to serve the

total community through its civic education. In order to effectively reach the community, access to the Council Chambers with its cable television capabilities is critical. Finally, in order to best serve all of our citizens, advanced notification of the dates and locations for the Candidate Forums and Legislative Wake-Ups is very important. Therefore, the commitments for their room space must be made well in advance of the events so that can be advertised.

For all of the above reasons, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve Alternative #1. This action will provide formal City Council support for the staff-created policy regarding the scheduling of rooms in the City Hall and allow the League of Voters to scheduling their Candidate Forums and Legislative Wake-Ups at one time each year.



June 16, 2014

Dear Mayor Campbell and Ames City Council Members,

As you may be aware, there have been discussions recently about how the City's scheduling policy for rooms in City Hall applies to events hosted by the League of Women Voters of Ames. The specific issue is the provision that a non-profit agency may have only one meeting scheduled at a time.

The mission of the League of Women Voters is to inform and educate voters. For as long as most of us can recall, the City has allowed the League to use City Council Chambers to hold candidate forums for all local elections, informational events such as the annual State of the Community address and presentations by Legislators during the session (Legislative Wake-ups). These events are open to the public and provide opportunities for citizens to ask questions face-to-face of candidates and public officials. The Council Chambers is an ideal location for these events. The City's ability to televise and stream these events adds to their value as it makes them accessible to citizens for whom travel is difficult.

Each July we schedule these events for the following year, in order to notify candidates and officials so they can reserve the dates, to reserve rooms in which to hold them and to submit these events to the Ames Bulletin Board, which publishes quarterly. For many years the League has been allowed to reserve the Council Chambers for all of our events for the upcoming year. If we can make only one reservation at a time, and must wait until that event is over before scheduling another, we might often have to change the date of an already-publicized event or find a new location in a short amount of time. We would also have to reach all of our audiences as best we could with the new date or location, and hope the candidates or officials could still attend. All of this would add much complexity to the activities of our all-volunteer organization, and create confusion for our citizens.

The City's assistance over the years has made it possible for us to reach a large number of citizens of Ames and Story County and has been very much appreciated. In light of the public service the League of Women Voters provides through these events, and our need to set and publicize dates and locations well in advance, we are asking that the City allow the League to reserve the Council Chambers, if available, for the dates of the known events for the upcoming year. We also hope the City will continue to make our events accessible through broadcast and streaming as staffing allows.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like more information about this issue or about the League of Women Voters.

Sincerely,

Linda Murken, President

ameslww@gmail.com

515-460-5080

AMES CITY HALL ROOM SCHEDULING POLICY

Conference Room 135--1st floor; capacity 24 ❖ Conference Room 235--2nd floor; capacity 24
 Conference Room 233--2nd floor, capacity 18 ❖ Council Chambers--2nd floor, capacity 88

The City Manager's office (239-5101) manages the use of three Conference Rooms and the Council Chambers. Although intended for City meetings, the City is happy to accommodate other groups needing a meeting space, following the scheduling policy and notes listed below:

PRIORITY OF USE	SCHEDULING SEQUENCE	WHO CAN SCHEDULE
(1) City Council/Boards/Commissions	As Needed/Throughout The Year	Dept. Secretary/Board or Commission Chair
(2) City Departments/Divisions	As Needed/Throughout The Year	Dept. Secretary
(3) City-Funded Non-Profit Agencies	First Come/First Served (1x)*	Manager's Office Only
(4) Other Governmental Agencies	First Come/First Served (1x)*	Manager's Office Only
(5) Other Non-Profit Agencies (Ames only)	First Come/First Served (1x)*	Manager's Office Only
(6) City-Sponsored Open Forum, Non-Partisan Events	First Come/First Served (1x)*	Manager's Office Only
(7) Non-Profit Organizations Organizational Meetings – non-repetitive events, limited to 2 events per year	First Come/First Served (1x)*	Manager's Office Only
***Per Doug Marek, no campaign events for particular candidates allowed in conference rooms (9/20/11)		

* (1x = *Can Schedule Only One Meeting at a Time*)

NOTES:

- (1) No "for-profit" use (i.e., insurance companies, product sellers, attorneys taking depositions, etc.).
- (2) City conference rooms are for City use first; then public use, as available. The Library also provides public space.
- (3) Four-hour MAXIMUM time for non-City users (except on weekends).
- (4) There is NO charge for use of rooms. We provide NO conference services.
- (5) Rooms may be scheduled only 90 days ahead without express permission from the City Manager.
- (6) It is the responsibility of the group using the conference room to pick up a key from the City Manager's office during our office hours (M-F, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.). Groups will be denied access without a key (Police will not open doors).
- (7) The conference room door is to be locked following each meeting. In addition, the front door of City Hall is to be locked by the last group to leave City Hall.
- (8) Keys are to be dropped in the Utility Drop Box located outside the east entrance of City Hall.
- (9) In the event a meeting is cancelled and the space is no longer needed, please call the Manager's office (239-5101) to release the room.
- (10) The Auditorium is scheduled through Mike King (239-5365). Use policy differs from that of City Hall conference rooms. Fees vary.
- (11) The Gymnasium is scheduled through Parks & Rec (239-5350). Use policy differs from that of City Hall conference rooms. Fees vary.

(12) Per Steve on 2/13/06: It is acceptable for groups to use the rooms on holidays, but the heat and/or a/c may not be working.