

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

AUGUST 19, 2014

The Ames City Council met in Special Session at 7:00 p.m. on the 19th day of August, 2014, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue, pursuant to law with Mayor Pro Tem Matthew Goodman presiding and the following Council Members present: Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Chris Nelson, and Peter Orazem. Mayor Ann Campbell and ex officio Member Lissandra Villa were not present.

5-DAY SPECIAL CLASS C LIQUOR LICENSE FOR OLDE MAIN BREWING COMPANY

AT DEERY BROTHERS: Moved by Nelson, seconded by Corrieri, to approve a 5-day (August 20-August 24, 2014) Special Class C Liquor License for Olde Main Brewing Company at Deery Brothers, 1700 Southeast 16th Street.

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

SELECTION OF CONSULTANT/DEVELOPER FOR CDBG DISASTER APPLICATION FOR PROPERTIES IN 500 BLOCK OF 6TH STREET:

Housing Coordinator Vanessa Baker-Latimer explained to the Council that the City was recently notified that the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) announced a new funding opportunity as part of the distribution of Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) activities. This is a state-wide competitive grant program for CDBG entitlement communities for the purpose of creating new affordable multi-family rental housing units. She advised that the applications are due to the IEDA by September 2, 2014.

Ms. Baker-Latimer reported that as part of the 2014-15 CDBG Annual Action Plan, staff has recently secured three parcels of land (formerly the Ames Community Pre-school property) within the 500 block of 6th Street. This unexpected grant program opportunity offers a unique chance to support the redevelopment of this land into multi-family affordable housing. Although time is very short to pursue this opportunity, staff felt it was worth requesting a Statement of Qualifications (SQ) to determine if a suitable partner could be identified to assist City staff in preparing and submitting a grant application for development of an affordable housing project on the 6th Street properties.

Ms. Baker-Latimer stated that responses to this request for SQ's were due on August 15, 2014, and that two SQs were received: Benjamin Design Collaborative (BD)/Story County Community Housing Corporation and Hatch Development Group (HDG). Staff reviewed the proposals and found that both have experience designing multi-family developments. However, the HDG SQ is distinguished with its experience in grant writing and direct funding through the CDBG-DR grant program. Furthermore, HDG has experience with "Iowa Green Streets" standards, which is a requirement of this grant. She advised that this item will come back to Council on August 26 once the actual grant application has been prepared.

Upon questioning by Council Member Orazem, Ms. Baker-Latimer responded that Ames will be competing with other entitlement communities for \$30 million in funding. The money will go strictly towards the development of the affordable housing project—it is not a tax credit application.

Council Member Corrieri asked about criteria used in the scoring process. Ms. Baker-Latimer indicated that there is a large list of criteria, and that some of the program requirements have a heavy emphasis on being “shovel ready” with features known as “Green Street Design.” Council Member Corrieri explained that, as she looks at the two firms and their qualifications, she is inclined to support the local business of Benjamin Design; she did not see anything glaring that put HDG ahead of Benjamin Design’s SQ. Housing Coordinator Baker-Latimer stated that while BD did have the design qualifications, most of the applications written by that firm were for downtown facade grants, whereas HDG had much more experience in this type of process in a short order of time. Ms. Baker-Latimer said that the level of detail in the application is what will come back to the Council on August 26.

Upon questioning, Housing Coordinator Baker-Latimer reported that there will be no up-front investment to pay the consultant if the City is not successful in obtaining grant funds. City Manager Steve Schainker advised that the City is under a short time frame to complete the application; however, the City doesn’t have to apply for this funding if the Council is not comfortable with it.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Orazem, to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 14-455 approving Hatch Development Group as the consultant/developer in connection with the Community Development Block Grant Disaster application for City-owned properties in the 500 block of 6th Street.

Council Member Gartin advised that he would like to work with a local developer, when possible. Council Member Corrieri stated that she would support the selection of Benjamin Design Collaborative/Story County Community Housing Corporation as the preferred consultant. She reiterated that she did not see a lot of difference in background between the two firms.

Council Member Betcher stated that normally she would support local involvement; however, she would rather go with the firm that, she feels, could turn the application around quickly and maximize the City’s potential in obtaining the funding. If there was more time, she might weigh things more heavily towards a local developer.

Mayor Pro Tem Goodman said that he gives a lot of credit to staff in this case, because of the details involved. Staff has had those conversations that led it to believe that HDG was the preferred choice.

Roll Call Vote: 4-2. Voting Aye: Betcher, Goodman, Nelson, Orazem. Voting Nay: Corrieri, Gartin. Resolution declared adopted, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these minutes.

POTENTIAL TRAFFIC SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS TO SOUTH DUFF AVENUE: Several property/business owners were present for the Round Table discussion and introductions were made as follows: Mike Flummerfelt, 6717 George Washington Carver owner of Enterprise Rental Car; Jeff Mosiman of Wendy’s at 528 South Duff; Jeff Bundy, 505 South Duff; Rick Thompson, 414 South Duff; Harry Wolf and Courtney Schultz of Buyers Realty, Inc., of Des Moines, representing the owners at 806 South Duff (Verizon building); Christopher Stafford of NAI Optimum representing numerous owners of property up and down South Duff; Lin Bundy, 3012 Briggs Circle; Ted Sage of LOF-Xpress Oil Change at 520 South Duff; Gary Denner of

Professional Property Management at 201 South 5th Street; Jim Howe of Howe's Welding at 811 South Duff; Bob Cummings, 716 South Duff; Chuck Winkleblack of Hunziker & Associates, owner of property in the 700 block of South Duff; Ken Howe, 811 South Duff; and, Rich Johannsen, 112 South Duff Avenue.

City Traffic Engineer Damion Pregitzer presented background on the area in question, which encompasses South 5th Street south to the Squaw Creek Bridge. He recapped this project from when it first came before the Council to where the issue currently stands. Mr. Pregitzer showed an aerial view of the South Duff Corridor beginning at the intersection of South 5th Street south to Squaw Creek.

Traffic Engineer Pregitzer reviewed the project timeline starting back in June 2013. A letter from Chuck Winkleblack was received by the Council regarding access management on South Duff Avenue from South 5th Street to Squaw Creek. That letter requested that the City Council direct staff to conduct a study of the Corridor and to evaluate the consolidation of several access drives along both the east and west sides of the street into a single signalized intersection. Staff then held several meetings with numerous property and business owners along the affected portion of South Duff. The report on those meetings was presented to the City Council in December 2013. Mr. Pregitzer summarized the findings of that report.

During the June 10, 2014, Council meeting, at which time staff presented its third report to Council, staff was directed to move forward with the project and attempt to secure easements along the west side of South Duff (which included the Hunziker, Flummerfelt, and Bundy properties), along with creating a new signalized intersection between South 5th Street and the Squaw Creek Bridge with a raised median. Mr. Pregitzer pointed out that in meetings with the Iowa DOT, it had indicated that it will not authorize the installation of a new traffic signal without a raised median so as to address safety concerns. Overheads were presented as follows: the existing signalization; the potential traffic signal and mandated median location; and, an aerial view showing the areas for potential cross-access easements through the rear of the properties on both sides of South Duff Avenue.

Traffic Engineer Pregitzer described how signalized intersections are evaluated based upon their "Level of Service" (LOS) and how average delay times were assigned to each grade (Grades A - F with an A rating being the best grade). He reported that, based on 2013 counts, the existing LOS at the 5th Street and South Duff intersection is rated as "D" (which equates to an average delay of 45.9 seconds). Furthermore, the existing approaches at this intersection are rated as follows: eastbound is LOS D (44.7 seconds); westbound is LOS F (84.5 seconds); northbound equates to LOS D (45.2 seconds); and, southbound equates to LOS D (44.9 seconds). Mr. Pregitzer stated that when transportation planning is determined, a LOS C is what is designed.

Mr. Pregitzer presented animated traffic models (with the 2013 counts) during peak hours which shows the traffic signalization with the current roadway configuration and that with the proposed traffic signal configuration. He described peak times occurring at approximately 7:40 a.m. - 8:20 a.m. and then again at 5:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. With the new signal, the LOS is rated at a C with a delay of 21 seconds. This model assumes access from the frontage roads on both sides of South Duff. He reported that the reason why this model works is because as the side street traffic is released onto Duff, it matches up with the through coordination movements north and south. It groups vehicles together in a very efficient way, which is called "platooning traffic."

Discussion ensued regarding the median placement and whether the Iowa DOT would be willing to “relax” on its placement. Further discussion was held regarding the current stoplight’s timing. Mr. Pregitzer stated that some “tweaks” could be made to the current situation, but the LOS C rating would not be obtained.

Ted Sage indicated that if the median component could be eliminated, the level of dissatisfaction amongst the property/business owners would be greatly diminished. He emphasized that ease of access is a key element. It was again noted that the signal would not be allowed without the installation of a raised median.

At this time, Traffic Engineer Pregitzer showed the projected intersection LOS occurring over the next 25 years. If nothing is done, the LOS D goes to an F rating (range for failure) in 25 years, whereas if a LOS C is obtained within a five-year span, the LOS C would decrease to a D in 25 years.

Council Member Nelson pointed out that some traffic congestion would be relieved when the Grand Avenue extension has been completed.

Mr. Pregitzer explained that the purpose of the South Duff Avenue improvements is to serve the businesses/customers. Transportation improvements like the Grand Avenue extension will add an impact over time.

In reference to the existing LOS on South Duff, Council Member Betcher noted a difference in the increase in delay between Year 5 and Year 10. She further pointed out that in between Year 10 and Year 15, there is a significant difference—which results in a LOS E (which is on the edge of failure).

Council Member Nelson indicated that while there is a risk of doing nothing now, the opportunity in 10-15 years may not even exist.

According to Mr. Pregitzer, this all came about because of the new development in the area. As the sites develop, there is the potential to interconnect the parking lots. He emphasized that the longer-term success of this project will involve an internal site circulation plan among properties to guide the design/layout of future development within the South Duff Corridor. The project is an opportunity to make a significant traffic improvement in the Corridor that will have mutual benefit for both the adjacent businesses and the greater Ames community.

At this time, Mr. Pregitzer reviewed the crash history along this road segment (statistics shown between 2004-2013). The crash rates along the Corridor (South 5th Street to the Squaw Creek Bridge) are 148% (all crash types) and 155% (just injury crashes) as compared to similar arterials in Iowa. He said the meaning is that if a person has an accident in that segment of the roadway, he/she is 1.5 times more likely to be injured than on other similar roadways in the state. Because of those statistics, there does appear that there is a significant safety concern; the appropriate mitigation technique to reduce the crash rate was found to be a raised median.

Bob Cummings stated that the Grand Avenue extension would alleviate some of the congestion, and access easements may be hard to obtain. There is a lot of uncertainty, and many sides to this situation are unknown. He felt that a long-term solution needs to be achieved instead of coming up with a “quick fix.”

Mike Flummerfelt indicated that it would be good to have easements in place so that businesses can connect. Traffic flow meandering through parking lots without a designated lane and sign guides would be of concern.

Valerie Stallbaumer, 431 South Duff, Suite B, questioned how the City is going to guarantee that traffic will turn at the new stop light instead of the one that's already in place. She wondered how a stop light will diminish traffic on 5th Street. Her place of business is located just north of 5th Street and her only access to her business is through the Car-X driveway. Ms. Stallbaumer said there needs to be more discussion about the whole big picture.

Upon questioning by Mayor Pro Tem Goodman about the impact of an F Level of Service, Mr. Pregitzer responded that, at peak levels, most people would choose another time of day to travel the South Duff Corridor, which is called "peak spreading." From a driver's perspective, a LOS E could mean that you miss the light and wait for another cycle. LOS F means a person could wait through two or three cycles. After two-three cycles, there would be a complete traffic gridlock.

Chuck Winkleblack stated that traffic on South Duff is a disaster right now. Every day, businesses can count the illegal entries into the Wal-Mart parking lot. The commercial space that Hunziker Development is proposing is going to make traffic that much worse. Mr. Winkleblack explained that he doesn't care about the median, and that it was never his idea, but the DOT's. He reported that most of businesses up and down the Corridor, other than Howe's Welding and U-Haul, have new buildings. He did not understand how the business owners could not see the benefit of reducing the intersection delay from 46 seconds down to 21. The area has turned over and traffic has gotten progressively worse.

Jeff Mosiman stated that there is a five-year window before anything needs to be done. He indicated that this issue doesn't have to be solved this evening. He wondered if a traffic study could be performed from South 16th Street to the bridge and incorporate it into the study that has already been completed.

Mayor Pro Tem Goodman advised that there was a letter that was sent to the Council asking that it address the traffic concerns in that area. This came with the prospect of obtaining easements along with signalization and some cost-sharing possibilities. Those opportunities, as redevelopment occurs, become less likely.

Mr. Winkleblack reported that he actually addressed this issue with the Council three years ago prior to the Texas Roadhouse locating on South Duff. It has become harder and harder to find ways to get access and make those connections.

Council Member Gartin brought up the subject of bike traffic along the Corridor and that it is the most dangerous (in terms of bike traffic) in Ames. Although vehicle traffic has been the focus, there is more and more bicycle traffic, and he wants to make sure that safety issues for cyclists are considered as well. He wants the Council to think about the whole picture for safety in this Corridor.

Dan DeGeest, 4212 Phoenix Street, referred to the aerial view of the South Duff Corridor. He explained that another way to reduce traffic in that area is to reduce the number of cars, and to increase the number of bicyclists and pedestrians in the area. Currently, this is one of the most

dangerous and hardest places to bike in Ames. When you come into the South Duff area, a person has to come onto a multi-use path which gets you to South 16th Street. Then a person has to cross the street to get onto the multi-use path on the other side, which stops. He pointed out another small section of path, which also stops. There is no bicycle access for the entire area from any other place. He wanted to note that if road/access improvements are going to be made, we need to look at making “complete street improvements,” which addresses all modes of transportation. When questioned by Council Member Gartin, Mr. DeGeest explained that if the old rail trail—all the way to the ISU Research Park, which goes under Highway 30—were made into a dedicated bike trail, it would seem the most logical and safest way to address this mode of transportation. He further explained that he was unaware of the proposed access easements; therefore, he gave more thought to the old rail trail. However, if those side roads came into existence, it would open up other possibilities for bicyclists. He emphasized that the mode of transportation for bicyclists needs to be part of the planning.

Council Member Orazem indicated that whatever scenario is being discussed, he questioned whether there is any other option but to have the cross easements in place. Regardless of what happens with the extension of Grand Avenue, he feels that the easements will be needed to “shunt” traffic off of Duff Avenue. People are going to need to access businesses without access points onto Duff.

Mr. Pregitzer advised that, in general, if the easement scenario is not included in the modeling, very little difference will be seen in traffic improvements along the Corridor.

Chuck Winkleblack asked if U-STEP funding through the Iowa DOT could be used for the access easements. Mr. Pregitzer responded that as long as the DOT agrees to the design, that U-STEP funding would be available. He noted that the estimated project cost of \$325,000 is for a new traffic signal and raised median along South Duff, and did not include the access easements.

Marjorie Howe, 811 South Duff Avenue, questioned what a person would do when exiting the Texas Roadhouse and wants to turn left. A person would be forced to turn south when that’s not the direction he/she wants to go. Mr. Pregitzer reiterated that the cross access easements would need to be in tandem with the signal and median.

Mayor Pro Tem Goodman stated that he understands that the median creates access concerns. But, the issue is increasing the operable carrying capacity of the Corridor, thereby creating the overall capacity of customers to the businesses. In thinking ahead, more people can be placed near each property. However, overall as the community changes, when people choose where to go, they will choose on the basis of carrying capacity and operability of the roads. Mr. Goodman explained that maybe some of the property owners are thinking too “near term” and not in the long term. He said that this discussion is about an investment and a cooperative effort to bring more people to the businesses on South Duff Avenue. In the long term, if nothing is done, the LOS will be an F in 25 years even with the Grand Avenue extension. With the improvements, the operable function of this road will grow with this investment. He reiterated that what the City is trying to accomplish is to increase the businesses’ cars per day, which will benefit property owners. The carrying capacity with this investment will create revenue for every business on South Duff Avenue.

Mr. Pregitzer described the sequence of several traffic improvements projects throughout the community and their effects over the next 25 years. Each of these improvements—Grand/South 5th, Grand/South 16th Street, the widening of South 16th Street over to the University, and the cross section of Lincoln Way from Grand to Duff—will all have substantial benefits.

Mr. Winkleblack said that this fix may be a “band-aid,” but what Hunziker Development, Wal-Mart, and the Iowa DOT are being asked to pay, and is willing to pay, is almost nothing. The alternative is to do nothing, which is only going to exacerbate the problem for all of the businesses along the South Duff Corridor.

Council Member Betcher indicated her main concern is that the accesses to some of the businesses will be cut off unless easement agreements are in place. She is hesitant about moving forward to approve any concept without knowing how that access is going to occur. However, it is compelling that money from other sources is out there for the improvements to occur.

Council Member Corrieri advised that at the last meeting when this issue was discussed, Council directed staff to move forward with the project creating a new signalized intersection with a raised median with the caveat that staff negotiate with Hunziker for access to the Enterprise property.

City Manager Steve Schainker advised that the Council is not approving this project tonight, but that there is a need for direction on how to move forward.

Much discussion was held regarding the potential location of the access easements along with traffic and business signage.

Moved by Orazem, seconded by Gartin, directing staff to proceed with a traffic plan that includes: access easements on the east and west sides of South Duff Avenue between South 5th Street and the Squaw Creek Bridge; a traffic signal and raised median, taking into account the interests of the businesses on both sides of the Corridor so that each would have credible access; and, an accounting of cost shares for the City, the Iowa DOT, and affected property owners.

Mayor Pro Tem Goodman clarified that the goal is to converse with the property owners in the meantime while the City is working on this plan. There will be a robust effort in obtaining the easements to create credible access for all businesses in this area, with functionality improvements that would come from the signal/median and access easements.

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

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Moved by Orazem, seconded by Corrieri, to refer to staff the letter from U-Haul.

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

Moved by Orazem, seconded by Corrieri, to refer to staff the letter from Wandling Engineering.
Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT: Corrieri moved to adjourn at 9:40 p.m.

Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

Ann H. Campbell, Mayor

Jill L. Ripperger, Recording Secretary