

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: AFFORDABLE HOUSING CONFERENCE

BACKGROUND:

At the September 22, 2015, meeting, the City Council referred a correspondence from Council Member Corrieri requesting that the City Council give consideration to 1) co-hosting with the University an Affordable Housing Conference for the Story County area, 2) assigning staff to participate on the committee that is planning this conference, and 3) matching the University's financial support for the conference up to \$5,000.

According to Council Member Corrieri's email, a group of community volunteers from AMOS and other non-profit agencies have been working the past months to plan for a day-long conference that will be targeted to the housing industry, community leaders, and non-profit agencies that provide housing. **It appears that the intent of the conference is to focus on programs, solutions, and strategies that will promote housing opportunities for low and moderate income citizens in Ames and Story County.** It became clear to these volunteers that in order to give credibility, it would be preferable if the City and University would sponsor the event.

In addition, the group is asking that a City staff person be assigned to participate on the committee that is planning the conference. It is the City staff's understanding that the University and Convention and Visitor's Bureau will also provide this same level of conference planning assistance.

Lastly, it is apparent that in order to hold a successful conference, a minimal amount of funding will be required for meeting space, food, marketing materials, speaker costs, etc. Council Member Corrieri is requesting that the City share the cost of hosting the conference with the University by matching its contribution, up to a \$5,000 commitment by the City.

As Council will remember, \$20,000 was appropriated in the FY 2014/15 to hold two special workshops (Youth Master Planning and Entrepreneurship). Approximately \$17,000 of this amount remains unspent after hosting one workshop and booking the reservations for the second. The leftover funds were not carried over into the City Council's budget for FY 2015/16, but rather were returned to the General Fund balance. The City Council may, therefore, direct that a portion of this savings be re-appropriated from the General Fund available balance to pay for the City's match for the Affordable Housing Conference.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Support a motion agreeing to 1) co-sponsor the proposed Affordable Housing Conference with the University, 2) authorize the City Manager to devote staff time to participate on the committee that is planning the conference, 3) approve a match to the University's contribution to the event, up to \$5,000 from the General Fund balance to cover the expenses for this conference and 4) support the first three actions conditioned on the City Council reviewing and approving in advance the proposed conference program agenda.

If the City is going to co-sponsor this event, it seems advisable that the Council is in support of the issues that will be covered at the conference before the event is publicized.

2. Do not agree to host the proposed Affordable Housing Conference nor authorize staff to help coordinate this conference or allocate any City funding for it.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The City Council has established as one of its top goals to "Address Affordable Housing Needs" by accomplishing two objectives: 1) explore ways to encourage the availability of all types of housing and 2) investigate ways to increase availability of affordable housing.

If programmed correctly, a county-wide conference regarding this topic could complement these objectives. Therefore, co-hosting this conference to initiate discussions about affordable housing issues would provide an opportunity for the community to better understand what can be done to achieve your objectives. **However, if the City is going to host this event, it would seem appropriate that the Council approve the proposed conference program in advance to make sure the topics to be covered are consistent with the City Council's goal and objectives.**

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council approve all three of the requests listed in Alternative #1, subject to the advance approval of the conference program agenda by the Council.

Since this is being billed as a county-wide event, it would be appropriate to inquire if the Story County Board of Supervisors would also like to sponsor the event. We wouldn't want to create any negative feelings because the Board was not invited to co-host an event regarding a topic that might be a priority for them as well.