

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

**SUBJECT: REQUEST TO WAIVE PARKING ENFORCEMENT AND METER FEES
AT POLLING LOCATIONS WITH METERED PARKING**

BACKGROUND:

The Story County Auditor supervises the election process including all 20 polling places within the City of Ames. Two of these city polling locations (Ames Public Library and Collegiate United Methodist Church) have metered parking that serves as the primary public parking resource for these locations. A third, Collegiate Presbyterian, has three meter spaces along with additional private parking. Citizens who use these locations have frequently requested that metered spaces be available to accommodate voters and that the associated meter fees be waived on election day. The other 17 locations in the city have private parking associated with the facility or, in the case of Iowa State University, already allocate parking for poll workers and voters.

While there is no statutory requirement to provide parking, some citizens who have raised the issue have noted that meter fees may serve as a potential barrier to voting. Others have referred to the principle of removing barriers to voting in their comments, noting that the City has waived parking fees for commercial events in the downtown area.

Elections are typically held twice per year although special elections or runoff elections can add to the frequency in any given year. Since elections are typically held on Tuesday, any waiver of parking fees would cover the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on that day.

Polling locations can be very busy at peak times of day. It is unlikely that any number of spaces will ensure availability to all voters at all times. Iowa State University, however, has been successful accommodating voters with four spaces at their campus locations.

After a review of parking options at each site, it appears that 20 spaces on Douglas Avenue would provide a great deal of convenient, short-term parking. There are additional spaces on Fifth Street (11 spaces) and in Lot Q (62 spaces) for a total of 93 spaces available in the area. At Collegiate United, there are nine spaces on Lincoln Way that are adjacent to the church. At Collegiate Presbyterian, there are three spaces on West Street.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve election day-related parking of up to 20 meter spaces near the Ames Public Library, up to nine spaces at Collegiate United Methodist Church, and up to three spaces at Collegiate Presbyterian. In addition, this alternative authorizes the Traffic Engineer to determine the final number of parking spaces allocated to these three election polling locations along with the City Council approval of the waiver of meter fees for the spaces.

This action should be viewed as a one-year experiment. Before making an on-going commitment to metered parking spaces for election day, the staff will need to analyze the situation and determine if there are any unintended consequences from this action.

2. Same action as in Alternative #1, but authorize less meter spaces for one or all of the three locations.
2. Do not approve the allocation of election-related parking spaces.

This alternative should be pursued if the City Council is concerned that neither the Campustown Action Committee nor the Main Street Cultural District have been asked to provide their opinion on this issue.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The allocation of parking spaces and the waiver of meter fees will assist the Story County Auditor in making polling places accessible within the city of Ames. In those areas where parking is limited, allocating parking to the polling place will allow poll workers to ensure turnover, and as a result, improve access to polls for Ames residents.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby approving the allocation of up to 20 meter spaces near the Ames Public Library, up to nine spaces at Collegiate United Methodist Church, and up to three spaces at Collegiate Presbyterian for parking on elections days. In addition, this alternative authorizes the Traffic Engineer to determine the final number of parking spaces allocated to these three election polling locations along with the City Council approval of the waiver of meter fees for the spaces.

The reservation of parking spaces for polling locations in our two major commercial areas could meet with resistance because of the belief by some that there is already not enough customer parking in these areas. Therefore, if Alternative #1 is approved, the action should be viewed as a one-year experiment allowing staff an opportunity to review the impact on the surrounding areas.