

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: POLICY FOR USE OF U.S. HIGHWAY 30 & DAYTON AVENUE LIGHT TOWERS

BACKGROUND:

In 2012, the City installed a series of lighted tower sculptures along U.S. Highway 30, near Dayton Avenue. The towers can be programmed to display a variety of color combinations and transitions. From time to time, these towers have displayed light shows celebrating community events (e.g., Ames High and ISU Football games) and raising public awareness (e.g., Public Works Week). The light towers were also used to honor Celia Barquin Arozamena after her death in 2018.

Light shows are currently programmed at a terminal located on Dayton Avenue. The current controller holds eight pre-set shows, and requires a programmer to be sent on site any time a new show is desired, at a cost of approximately \$300. Funds have been approved in the FY 2020/21 Budget to purchase a new controller, which can be programmed by City staff with significantly less time investment.

From time to time, requests have come from outside organizations (primarily ISU) to program specific shows for the light towers. With the purchase of the new controller, City staff expects an increase in the number of requested shows. There is currently no guidance regarding who may request that staff program the towers or for what reasons. Therefore, it would be helpful to have a City Council adopted policy relating to how light shows may be requested for display.

The attached policy outlines the Staff's recommended criteria through which a light show may be approved. The policy establishes how long in advance such a show may be requested, how long a light show may be displayed, who may make a request, what the display may commemorate, and what the display may not commemorate.

As being recommended, displays may be used to celebrate local sports or achievements of a local non-profit agency, but a display could not be used to recognize an individual's birthday or anniversary, or to promote a private event not open to the public.

If adopted, the policy would go into effect upon the installation of the new controller, which is expected to take place in July 2020.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the attached recommended policy relating to the use of the light towers along U.S. Highway 30 near Dayton Avenue, effective July 2020.
2. Refer the policy back to staff and provide direction to make modifications.
3. Do not approve a policy relating to the use of the light towers.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Although only a few requests have been received to re-program the light towers along U.S. Highway 30, City staff expects that in the future, more requests will be received. It is important to have some criteria to allow City staff to approve or deny such requests. The attached policy allows outside groups to request light shows for recognition of community events, but prevents the use of the light towers to recognize private or personal milestones or events.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.

It should be noted that this initial recommended policy does not limit the number of displays an entity can have in one year. Should it become evident that one entity is monopolizing the light towers so that other entities are denied access, there might be the need in the future to modify the policy to limit the number of displays that one entity can have in a year.

U.S. HIGHWAY 30 LIGHT TOWER DISPLAY POLICY

Background:

The light towers along U.S. Highway 30 near Dayton Avenue can be programmed to display various solid and transitioning colors. The displays are coordinated by the Public Works Traffic Division. Any special light displays requested by outside organizations will be evaluated according to this policy. Nothing in this policy prohibits the City from utilizing the light towers at other times for its own purposes.

Organizations Eligible to Request a Special Light Display:

For-profit organizations may not place requests for special light displays. Special light displays may be requested by:

1. The Ames City Council
2. Other governmental agencies
3. Organizations that have an established partnership with the City of Ames, which promote the economic welfare, tourism, or industry of the City.

Requesting a Special Light Display:

Requests for a special light display may be placed up to one year in advance of the proposed display start date. Requests for displays must be placed at least two weeks in advance of the proposed display start date if the display requires new light programming, and at least one week in advance if it is a previously used display. Displays will be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. Each display may be up to seven nights in length.

Requests should include the name and contact information of the organization placing the request, proposed dates of the display, a statement outlining what the display is intended to recognize, and requested colors and patterns. City staff may modify displays to ensure compatibility with the display technology, viewability, and motorist safety from U.S. Highway 30.

Requests may be placed directly with the Public Works Traffic Division. Applicants should place their requests well in advance to ensure enough time to receive approval for the display and program it if necessary.

Acceptable Light Display Uses:

Light displays may be used to:

- Acknowledge commemorative observances recognized by local, state, or federal proclamation (e.g., Earth Day, Public Works Week, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, etc.)

- Celebrate local achievements (completion of a non-profit fundraising campaign or construction project)
- Support local sports (Ames High School, Iowa State University athletics events)
- Honor or memorialize individuals who have had a profound impact on the Ames community

Light displays may not be used to:

- Promote commercial products, services, or interests; or promote political candidates, campaigns, or parties.
- Recognize personal milestones, such as birthdays, anniversaries, congratulations, or retirements.
- Promote messages inconsistent with local, state, or federal law (such as non-discrimination laws).
- Promote messages that are pertinent only to selected individuals rather than the community at large.
- Promote private events not open to the public.

If a request is denied by City staff, the applicant may appeal to the City Council. The City Council's decision regarding the request is final.