

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF  
THE AMES CITY COUNCIL**

**AMES, IOWA**

**FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor John Haila called the Special Meeting of the Ames City Council, which was being held electronically, to order at 5:15 p.m. with the following Council members participating: Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin. *Ex officio* Member Nicole Whitlock was also present.

Mayor Haila announced that it was impractical to hold an in-person Council meeting due to the Governor of Iowa declaring a public health emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, limits have been placed on public gatherings, and this meeting was being held as an electronic meeting as allowed by Section 21.8 of the *Iowa Code*. The Mayor then provided how the public could participate in the meeting via internet or by phone.

**FY 2021/22 BUDGET PROPOSALS:**

**Library Services.** Library Director Sheila Schofer informed the Council about the many programs offered at the Library during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Schofer then pointed out what activities the Library has done since the lobby reopened in July 2020. Ms. Schofer mentioned that throughout FY20, the Library was doing a strategic planning process. Key themes emerged from the data and were incorporated into the six identified priorities that will shape important work for the next four years. The six priorities were: Equity, Inclusion, Civic Engagement, Access, Wellness, and Staff Development.

Council Member Betcher inquired what expenses the term “Commodities” covered in her budget. Director Schofer mentioned that the category covers a lot of items. Ms. Betcher commented that she was curious if the terminology had changed as she thought library commodities were book collections, technology, and items that are being used every day. Ms. Schofer explained that there would be two categories; if there is a circulating item or part of the Library collection, it would fall under commodities, but if it is more software maintenance, it would fall under contractual.

The Mayor was curious as to how many Ames residents looked at the New York Times or the *Wall Street Journal*. Ms. Schofer stated they are allotted so many views a month and she didn’t have the exact numbers, but could look into it.

Council Member Martin wanted to know what the wait time would be for someone to check out one of the hotspots. Customer Account Services Manager Tracy Briseno noted it is currently a one week wait.

Director Schofer pointed out that the Ames Library lobby service was re-opened on February 1, 2021.

**Water Operations.** John Dunn, Director of the Water and Pollution Control Department, introduced the members of the Water and Pollution Control Leadership Team. Director Dunn provided an

overview of the various programs included in the Administration budget. Director Dunn mentioned a few programs that were wrapping up in the current FY that he wanted to highlight: 1) Conclusion of a multi-year/multi-million dollar rehabilitation of the Digester Complex at the Water Pollution Control Facility; 2) Major renovation of the co-generation system with the replacement of an engine with a dual-fuel fired boiler; and 3) Completion of the North River Valley Park Low-Head Dam Improvements. It was noted that staff is planning a ribbon cutting ceremony for the North River Valley Park on Saturday, May 1, 2021. Due to COVID-19, a lot of the traditional outreach events were canceled and a big shift to online services was done.

Regarding Plant Operations, Director Dunn advised that the last calendar year had been the most unusual year for water demands. A graph was shown that showed 2020's water usage. It was noted that due to the huge swing in water consumption, it would be tough to predict revenues. Director Dunn explained they will be using three-year monthly averages to predict revenues moving forward.

Programs for Facility Operations. The programs covered under Facility Operations include Administration, Flood Warning, Maintenance, Treatment, and Farm Operations. Director Dunn pointed out that they had a decrease in two FTEs. The decrease was due to the creation of the new Student Operator Program. Two vacant positions were converted to four part-time student operator positions. Director Dunn mentioned that the Ames Water and Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) received the prestigious Platinum 30 Peak Performance Award. The Award recognizes the Ames WPCF for 30 consecutive years of perfect compliance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit. The WPCF holds the second-longest compliance record in the nation.

Laboratory. Highlights were provided for the Laboratory Division. The lab has been supporting the activities for the Squaw Creek Watershed Management Authority and the Ambient Water Monitoring Program that Prairie River of Iowa is undertaking.

W&PC Metering Services. Staff has maintained fiscal accountability through accurate metering and track water loss throughout the system. Director Dunn mentioned that every time one of the staff enters a customer's home, they leave a survey, and the responses have always been positive. It was pointed out by Director Dunn on the summary budget for meters that there is an increase in commodities for water meters and that is due to moving a portion of the meters out of the CIP and into the operating budget. He pointed out that they are budgeting flat for the number of meters being replaced as they were moved from one program to another.

Mr. Dunn reviewed the rate and fee adjustments:

1. Proposed 6% Water rate increase, effective July 1, 2021 (no change to sewer rates)
2. Increase other "water-related" fees based on the across-the-board rate increases
3. Annual update to meter-setting fees based on actual costs

Council Member Gartin inquired as to why the WPC Farm Operations went down 24%. Director Dunn mentioned he didn't recall the exact break-out of what the reduction was. He noted that some of the expenses were tied to soil sampling, which is not done every year. Staff is trying to coordinate

with the tenant farmer as the City has a crop-share arrangement, and it depends on what is being planned for the planting of crops and the amount of fertilizer that the City is expecting to use etc.

Council Member Beatty-Hansen had mentioned that she had seen somewhere where the City may start putting compost in the digester and she was curious about what the City could handle for the capacity of biosolids. Mr. Dunn explained that there have been conversations with the Resource Recovery Plant and there is an option to take the food-waste diversion collected at the Resource Recovery Plant and bring it to WPC to inject directly into the digesters. It was noted that the design capacity of the digester has not even been close to being full. Staff are exploring options to market themselves to people that have high-strength waste that can help generate revenue and to increase gas production.

The Mayor mentioned that there has been work on getting the Discharge Permit and wanted to know if that has been obtained yet. Director Dunn stated that the permit they had expired in 2016 and staff has submitted a renewal application, but one of the issues had to do with managing weather flows. The DNR had stated they would rather wait and get a statewide strategy crafted for that as opposed to trying to negotiate a bunch of permits one on one. It was noted that staff are continuing to follow the guidelines as if they still have an active permit. Mayor Haila inquired if Burke had shipped any of its product to the Water Pollution Control Plant yet. Director Dunn stated they had taken a few loads to try on a trial basis.

**Public Works.** Public Works Director John Joiner showed a video highlighting many of the accomplishments of the Public Works Department. It was pointed out that Public Works now has its own Facebook page and it has been very important with reaching out to the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. An overview was given of the work activities for the Utilities Program, including Water Distribution, Sanitary Sewer Collection, and Stormwater Maintenance. Water Distribution and Sanitary Sewer Maintenance share the same FTEs (same workgroup). It was noted that staff is proposing to get new equipment, referred to as the sewer RAT (Rapid Assessment Tool). The sewer RAT will send acoustics through the pipe and there are sensors at both ends that can detect any breaks or blockages that would need further investigation.

Regarding the Stormwater Permit Program, it was noted there was a lot of public education and outreach done with the Stormwater Permit program. The 2020/21 EcoFair was replaced with virtual EcoChats.

**Resource Recovery.** Due to COVID-19 staff was unable to have Rummage RAMPage, but there are plans to hold the event this year. Staff is working with WPC with a partnership on how to manage the food waste diversion program. There is also a partnership with Electric Services to look at the optimization of the program and what technologies might be the most efficient and effective moving forward. A Request for Proposals is currently active for that program and should be bringing a recommendation for a consultant to the Council in the spring. Director Joiner mentioned that the City has had a closed landfill for the past 25 years, and because of the great job staff has done with managing the landfill the DNR has told the City they could ask for a Long-Term Environmental

Covenant. This will reduce the amount of inspections, reporting, and interactions with the DNR.

Highlights were given for Public Works Administration, Engineering, Traffic Engineering and Operations, Street System Maintenance, Parking Operations, and Airport Operations. For Administration, the *Ames-on-the-Go* mobile and Web site has seen an increase in usage. There were over 900 requests made through the system and there was a spike in requests due to the Derecho.

Under the Snow & Ice Control Program, Director Joiner noted that staff planned for 19 events with a total of 36" of snow, there have been 12 events with 34.5 inches of snow to date. A graph highlighted the average response time per season has continued to trend down for the past seven years as the team has continued its efficiency. A graph of salt usage was shown.

Regarding Airport Operations, Mr. Joiner reported that in the Fall of 2020 the Airport Master Plan was completed. The City will continue to receive fixed-based operator services from Central Iowa Air Service. There was damage at the airport due to Derecho and staff has been working with the insurance company and FEMA to have the damages repaired.

**Fleet Services.** Director Corey Mellies advised that the hourly rate for maintenance services will increase to \$78.18/hour in FY 2021/22, which is a 2.9% increase. The rate is designed to recover the cost of the technicians' salaries and benefits. The average fuel costs are projected to be \$2.45 for FY 2021/22. There were 52 vehicles and equipment purchased for the City in 2019/20. A chart was shown of the fuel trends from 2012/13 to 2020/21. Director Mellies mentioned that 25% of the Fleet is currently Green. B100 Conversions were installed on five snow plow trucks. During Year 1 the City used 10,500 gallons and equates to savings of 104 metric tons of greenhouse gas. Seven more trucks have been ordered. There is also an Agreement with the IA DOT that they will fill its trucks from the Cities B100 tank. A graph was presented showing the amount of diesel hours versus biodiesel hours that were used for the five B100 snow plow trucks. Council Member Beatty-Hansen inquired as to why one of the trucks showed a greater usage of diesel hours than the other four trucks. Mr. Mellies mentioned it was probably due to the truck being turned on and off more frequently.

Regarding the Greenhouse Gas Inventory, the Fleet Department was able to reduce the annual greenhouse gas by 4% along with reducing fuel consumption. Staff will also be participating in a new RFP for the Climate Action Plan.

Director Mellies mentioned that going forward, Fleet will be looking to expand its biodiesel vehicles. They are also starting to expand hybrid and electric vehicles. Staff is starting to see less options for E85 vehicles and the cost of all electric vehicles is still high.

Council Member Gartin wanted to know if Director Mellies had a sense of what it would cost to break even with City vehicles being changed over to all-electric. Mr. Mellies stated right now the majority of City vehicles don't put a lot of miles on them and with fuel costs being low it would be hard to find the breaking even point.

Council Member Betcher pointed out that there was a significant decrease in the Fleet Acquisitions budget and inquired if that was due to recent large purchases, don't need any new vehicles, or trying to cut costs. Finance Director Duane Pitcher explained that staff has delayed a few replacements to reduce expenses.

Mayor Haila noted that he was disheartened to see there are less options for E85. Knowing this does not bode well for ethanol or for the State of Iowa with corn production. The Mayor wanted to know if this is something that is being seen around the nation. Director Mellies stated that Dodge has removed themselves from E85, Chevy has limited vehicles, and Ford still has some. The truck market is moving away from E85 and hybrids are unable to use E85.

**Facilities.** Director Mellies presented project highlights. Some highlights were the COVID-19 Mitigation efforts, keycard (access control), Fabric Building at Maintenance Facility, assisting with the Homewood Clubhouse Project, and a consultant was hired for the City Hall Interior Update (color palette, flooring, shades, and furniture). Future projects were mentioned.

**Finance Services.** Finance Director Duane Pitcher presented the budget for the Economic Development Program. He noted that an additional TIF District within the ISURP Urban Renewal area has been established. Staff is preparing the application for the Iowa Reinvestment District. It was mentioned that TIF Funds were now collecting more incremental property tax than the annual debt service payments.

Director Pitcher briefly covered the budgets and gave highlights for Financial Services, including Administration, Purchasing Services, Information Technology, Utility Customer Service, and Parking Violation Collection. He noted that Finance has continued to maintain its Aa1 G.O. Bond rating. They have implemented electronic document systems and continued to expand on electronic payments. New this year are the CARES Act, FEMA, COVID, and Derecho grants.

**Purchasing Services** - Staff recently rolled out a new electronic bidding system called AmesBids, that will hopefully expand the reach out to more bidders. This Department supported all large City initiatives including COVID communications and there was an increase in purchasing supplies due to COVID.

**Information Technology.** This division completed the transition from IBM Notes to MS Outlook, Office 365, and Teams. Staff has continued with updates to network and infrastructure to support transitioning to more cloud-based systems including new redundant core switches, MFA, workstation imaging and encryption of mobile devices. There was an increase in responses due to COVID challenges and to maintain services with remote access and video meetings.

**Utility Customer Service** - It was pointed out that this area gets the most customer interaction. During the building's closure staff were able to handle everything online or by phone; however, there are a lot of customers who prefer to come inside to pay their bill. This division implemented multiple COVID relief assistance programs. Staff is currently in the process of implementing the community

solar credits. A new parking ticket collection system has been implemented and the roll-out new parking ticket issuance went well. The cashier positions were reclassified to Utility Customer Service Clerk positions. Cashiers are expected to be able to perform the duties of a Utility Customer Service Clerk and vice versa.

The Mayor asked if the CARES funding was spread throughout the budget or would it be a new income stream. Director Pitcher explained it was all recorded as revenue in the General Fund for the current FY.

**DISPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:** The Mayor noted that there was only one item. It was an email from Robert Long requesting to rezone the west side of Grove Avenue from High Density Residential to Medium Density Residential.

Council Member Betcher stated she had a discussion with Mr. Long as he is one of her constituents. She understood this was discussed when Sherwin-Williams was going to move to this area. Ms. Betcher stated she would be interested in getting a memo from staff on the situation in this area.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen to get a memo from staff.  
Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

**COMMENTS:** Council Member Betcher mentioned that the International Town and Gown Association had extended its early bird rate, and if any of the Council Members are interested in attending to let her know.

Council Member Gartin stated an Iowan made history today: Secretary Tom Vilsack became the Secretary of Agriculture again.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Moved by Corrieri to adjourn at 7:10 p.m.

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## **FY 2021/22 BUDGET PROPOSALS:**

**Parks & Recreation.** Parks and Recreation Director Keith Abraham explained that two surveys were done in May and November 2020 to get a feel for what services the citizens were comfortable doing. There was a big impact on participation due to COVID-19. The impact affected revenue and part-time staffing. In 2019 there were 459 part-time staff, but due to COVID there were only 272 part-time staff hired in 2020. During the pandemic they offered Outdoor, Virtual, and eventually In-Person classes. Since band concerts were unable to be held, staff had started a “Virtually Anywhere” program that shows live concerts every Thursday night. Director Abraham noted that they were unable to start the first youth and adult Miracle Leagues in the Fall 2020, but are hoping to start this summer. Dance and Gymnastics classes were canceled, but have recently reopened with the students wearing masks. Lap swimming was offered at the Ames Municipal pool and private rental of the Municipal Pool has gone up.

Director Abraham mentioned that there would be some fee changes for FY 2021/22. The overall activities/programs are experiencing a 31% increase. Staff is recommending the Ice Rental Rates increase by 5%. The recommended increases for Homewood Golf Course are the Green Fees to increase to \$1.00 per round and with Season Passes the increase will vary. No changes are being proposed for the Furman Aquatic Center. A 3% increase in the Auditorium Rental Rates was recommended.

Director Abraham stated that the Ames Youth Dance program and the Yoga program were named as finalists in 2020 for the *Ames Tribune* “Best of Story County.” Homewood Golf Course was voted the best golf course in 2020.

**Ames/ISU Ice Arena** - This facility was affected the most with the budget. Mr. Abraham mentioned that there have been some increases in the General Fund with FTEs. There have been FTE reductions at the Ice Arena. Staff is trying to do what they can to make sure they don’t have the unreserved fund balance go too low. For FY 2021/22 it is projected that the fund balance will be about \$50,000. It was noted that there has been a reduction in ice rentals, due to COVID-19 ISU participation has been limited for open skate sessions.

**Bandshell.** Lighting Upgrades were done. This will help promote different programs and provide a different service for anyone that will be using the Bandshell.

**Park Maintenance** - A slide was shown showing the before and after pictures of the Inis Grove Restroom Renovation. Staff is continuing to do trail cleaning and had the first woodland burn at Munn Woods and Ada Hayden. Volunteers are used to help with vegetation management.

Pertaining to **Cemetery Operations** - Director Abraham noted there was the Wreaths across America ceremony in December. There were seven wreaths laid out for all seven branches of the military. The American Legion Riders want to lay a wreath on every veteran grave and currently there are 1,495

veterans between the two cemeteries. It was noted that cemetery fees will have a 7% increase. A scatter garden is being worked on and a new columbarium will be put up.

Council Member Betcher mentioned that the number of cemetery lots sold seems to be down. She wanted to know if that was normal. Mr. Abraham noted the average is 120 a year.

Right-of-Way Management. Staff has the City broken into 29 different areas and are doing zone pruning once every five years. Staff does post door flyers in the areas they will be working on to educate the community about what staff is doing in the rights-of-way and education on how the property owners can take care of their own trees. The Public Works Department is letting the Parks and Recreation Department borrow a bucket truck to allow the trimming of trees to happen a lot faster. An update was given on the Emerald Ash Borer. The plan is currently in its 8<sup>th</sup> year and there are currently 500 trees that are left to be removed. It was noted that the remaining trees are the larger ones and may need to be removed by a contractor. It was asked by Council Member Gartin how many trees have been planted due to the removal of the Emerald Ash Borer trees. Since 2014 the City has planted over 1,000 trees. Council Member Betcher inquired as to how many trees were lost during Derecho. Director Abraham explained that they removed 100 trees and that was just in the Park System, but not sure how many in the rights-of-way. Staff is continuing to see tree issues around town that need to be addressed.

Electric Services. Donald Kom, Director of Electric Services, mentioned that in 2021 the Electric Services Department will celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Other Community Connections. This covers streetlights with Public Works and the Storm Warning Siren System with Police. There is a cost decrease with both programs for FY 2021/22.

The Electric Administration budget request for FY 2021/22 is \$1,259,974 and reflects a 0.6% increase over FY 2020/21. The increase was due to a slight increase due to building maintenance. Ames Electric has a high score on the annual survey and is anticipating the next survey to see more issues and concerns as the survey was done prior to Derecho. Director Kom mentioned that overall, electric rates are 15% lower than neighboring electric companies.

Mr. Kom emphasized that the Demand-Side Management program has been able to keep the peak down to below 130.7 megawatts.

Demand Side Energy. The Sun Smart program went operational in December 2020. They will be adding pollinators, sheep, and native vegetation to the Solar Farm. Rebate programs have been reviewed, updated, and a few new rebates have been added. Some federal funding was received from the VW Grant Program. A Level 3 Charger is being planned to be put in by the Kum & Go off Highway 30 and Dayton Avenue sometime in the Spring. Two other chargers will be put in at the Intermodal Facility and the west side of town by Hy-Vee west. A new geothermal pilot is being built in the new Baker Subdivision.

Regarding the Electric Production program, the total expenditures for FY 2021/22 is \$13,439,147. This is a 6.2% increase from FY 2020/21 Adopted budget. The cost increases were due to property insurance increases and building/boiler repairs. A Waste-to-Energy Study is being done along with the Resource Recover Plant to study new ways of how to best use the garbage from the County. The study is complete, and the next step is to look for a contractor or an architectural engineering firm to work with the City.

Fuel & Purchased Power is the largest of all the program budgets with estimated total expenditures of \$32,731,895 for FY 2021/22. That is a 10.0% decrease from FY 2020/21 Adopted Budget resulting from a decrease in natural gas costs. Director Kom noted that regarding a Contract with Alliant Energy to transport the gas, it stated that for the first five years of the contract it would be at one rate and that rate will drop by half starting in 2021. This rate decrease should save the City close to \$1 million in transportation costs. Purchase power costs have remained flat and sales have been lower due to COVID.

Electric Distribution Operations/Maintenance will see an increase of 0.5% for FY 2021/22 to \$3,510,841. The increase was due to a tree trimming contract and Derecho caused a lot of overtime. Mr. Kom mentioned that they are expected to get reimbursed from FEMA and are working with Finance and other Departments to work through the process for reimbursement.

Electric Distribution Extensions/Improvements. The total expenditures for FY 2021/22 are estimated to be \$2,607,010. This is a 4.6% increase from FY 2020/21 Adopted Budget. The increase is due to the Mortensen Road feeder upgrade, the New Ames High School, University Blvd/S. 4<sup>th</sup> reconfiguration, and Street Light on Grand Avenue and the South 5<sup>th</sup> Street extension.

Technical Services. Due to COVID staff is finding it is taking longer to receive meter parts, due to this delay they have been trying to order more items at once to have in stock. The total expenditures for FY 2021/22 will be \$1,208,248. This is an increase of 5.2% from the FY 2020/21 Adopted Budget. The increase is due to long lead time on parts, replacement of meters with AMR, increase due to maintenance management software, SF6 Breaker replacement, and portable mapping software.

Electric Engineering. The total expenditures for FY 2021/22 are estimated to be \$1,015,214. This is a 0.7% increase from FY 2020/21 Adopted Budget. Director Kom mentioned that a lot of the electrical system is over 30 years old and staff is continuing to replace failing underground/overhead lines. The Top-O-Hollow substation rebuild has been completed. Staff is continuing to work on LED streetlight change out to finish in FY 2021/22. Retail solar approvals are up with 147 retail customers that have solar.

The Electric Fund is estimated to have total expenditures of \$69,319,403. This is down 6.9% from the FY 2020/21 Adopted Budget due to fuels and a decrease in energy consumption due to COVID. The estimated FY 2021/22 revenues is \$67,408,350 which is a 1.4% decrease over FY 2020/21 Adopted. The minimum Fund Balance Target is \$10,100,000 and the at the end of 2022 it is

anticipated that the. Unreserved Fund Balance will be \$19,746,235. Staff is not suggesting any rate increases for FY 2021/22.

Director Kom highlighted that Electric Services was recently recognized by the National American Public Power as a reliable public power provider, and currently at the Gold level. He noted that he was told if able to incur a couple more points than the City of Ames would be recognized at the Platinum level. The City was also recently named a Smart Energy Provider based on the combination of wind, solar, and refused derived fuel. An award was given for this in 2020.

Mayor Haila inquired how the electricity purchased by solar panels compared to wind, what is purchased at the market, and what the City produces. Mr. Kom mentioned that the wind and solar contract are similar in cost per kilowatt hour (under \$0.6). Power produced at the Power Plant for about \$0.3 and the market can vary hour by hour.

The Mayor asked Director Kom to explain what steps his Department is taking to minimize the issues that were encountered during Derecho. Mr. Kom mentioned that Ames is fortunate to have a lot of generation. The City also has two major tie-lines. One runs to Boone and the other runs to Ankeny. A third smaller line runs down Highway 69 to Johnston. The City should be able to take any two lines out and be able to serve the City efficiently, but when Derecho came through it took out all the lines with trees falling on the lines. The moment the trees were removed from the Boone line they were able to re-energize that line and get some power back on throughout the City. This pointed out that the City is basically beholden to someone else to restore power. To move forward the City needs to be able to start its own line without waiting for outside help. There are two projects in the Capital Improvement Plan to help bring in generation to help get the City back up and running faster. Director Kom pointed out that no amount of generation at any of the locations would have prevented the outages and devastation that was seen in the backyards of homes.

**Fire Department.** Fire Chief Rich Higgins stated that the Fire Department is broken down into two programs: Fire Safety and Building Safety. There is currently one opening in the firefighter ranks and Chief Higgins will evaluate filling that position later this year as he continues to realize the real financial impact of COVID-19 on the General Fund. Staff is recommending a 2.8% overall increase in Fire Safety Budget. He recognized ISU and its 25% commitment to the City's operating budget and debt services, which is projected at \$2 million next year. A great example of the relationship with ISU was the Mass COVID-19 testing for ISU Students last Fall. During the testing the Ames Fire Department committed two members to provide emergency medical support to help support ISU's operations.

**Fire Administration and Support** - Since March 2020, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) has been up and running. There are two teams, a Command Team and a Working Group Team. The teams meet weekly and were even meeting twice a week up until September 2020. The Fire Department hosted a Community Partners' Meeting which met every week since March 2020. This meeting helped to strategize the setup and operation of the Story County Test Iowa Site. Crews were responding to COVID-19 medical incidents every day, dealing with COVID amongst other crew

members, and even dealt with COVID at home.

As Emergency Medical Services providers, they were part of the first group of individuals within the community to get vaccinated. Currently over 80% of the department has been vaccinated.

On August 10, 2020, crews experienced a Derecho and responded to over 90 calls for service within the first 48 hours of the storm. Last February 2020, there was an all-day strategic planning retreat with the Command Staff. Chief Higgins is hoping to have a draft copy available to review later this year. Working with the City's Risk Manager, Training Officer AJ Plach was able to secure a grant through the City's insurance provider, ICAP, to purchase three stop the bleed kits to be placed throughout City Hall.

Fire Suppression & Emergency Action. Last fall new firefighter testing was done as part of the recruitment process. Testing was completed in one day, versus being spread out over two days. Chief Higgins noted that they were able to hire five new recruits. It was noted that crews were able to use the old Homewood Golf Course ClubHouse for training and were able to log many training hours at the clubhouse practicing different drills and techniques. Last year the Council approved a water and pump slide in unit. It had been put to great use and has allowed crews to get back into areas where a fire engine could not reach. A graph was shown with the type of incidents the Fire Department responded to over the last eight years. Response numbers were down, specifically within the medical response category. The decrease can be attributed to the consolidated emergency medical response protocols during the pandemic. Under the direction of MGMC, to decrease exposure opportunities and slow PPE burn rates during the pandemic, Ames Fire medical crews are only being dispatched to high acuity emergency medical calls. Low acuity calls are being handled by MGMC paramedics. Photos were shown of the new Ames Public Safety Training Site.

The EMT Transition process is underway. The Department has increased the minimum hiring requirements to now require EMT within the first 18-months of employment. There are currently 37 out of 52 firefighters and lieutenants that are EMTs.

Chief Higgins mentioned that the new StoryComm radio system is well underway. Crews received new radios in June 2020 and quickly underwent training with the new radios.

Community Outreach. It was mentioned that this was a tough year for outreach due to having to close the fire station doors to the public, but crews found a way to safely share fire safety messages and engage with neighbors. The Fire Department Social Media Team launched a "Where's Sparky?" campaign and other fire safety messages.

Building Safety According to Chief Higgins, the Division budget is requesting an overall increase of 3.6 % and no Building Permit fee increases. The Inspection Team is working on some different enforcement strategies and recommendations on some tools that would assist in the nuisance abatement process. It was also recommended to not have any Rental Fee increases. For the first time since 2001, there was not an increase in the total number of rental units on the market. During

COVID-19 the inspectors got creative, allowing customers to submit pictures of their work instead of being in person. Contractors could do live video walkthroughs of construction projects to limit exposures. Staff also worked with landlords to ease tenant's concerns about inspectors going through apartment units and allowed videos of working smoke detectors in those rental units to take place of having to go into each unit. With the Self-Service Portal, customers were able to request and receive building permits, schedule appointments, check the progress of their project, and inspectors were able to issue permits throughout the entire pandemic.

The inspectors played a vital role in the early hours after Derecho hit. The inspectors, who are trained in damage assessment, quickly completed a preliminary damage assessment of the community; this helped provide the EOC with improved situational awareness. Team members helped staff information centers and went door to door in some neighborhoods, personally checking in on customers. In 2019, there were 63 new single-family homes and 275 Multi-dwelling homes that were issued building permits. In 2020, there were only 88 new single-family homes and 11 Multi-dwelling homes building permits issued.

Council Member Martin stated that the Inspection Division had allowed people to use video technology for their inspections. He asked if that was something that will continue to be utilized going forward. Chief Higgins stated that they have not as it was out of necessity that they did it, and part of the main part of the job is education not enforcement. Staff would prefer the face-to-face communication.

**Law Enforcement.** Acting Police Chief Geoff Huff said that a critical component of the mission of the Police Department is "Relationship Building and Problem Solving," and because of COVID-19 this caused some issues and the Police Department had to get creative. Police Chief Geoff Huff noted the personnel changes in the department. There are currently openings for nine Police Officers. The budget includes an upgrade of a current Police Officer position to a Sergeant Position.

Under Police Administration and Records. Technology in the Department is a shared investment with local partners, whenever possible. The Dispatch and Records system is shared, the network is shared, and the radio system is shared. The Police Department has been utilizing a temporary radio system while building the permanent StoryComm system. The goal is to be on a full P25 compliant radio system by summer. The Lexipol Policy conversion is almost complete with over 90% of the Police Department's policy manual available to officers online/phone. They have now added daily training bulletins to test officers' knowledge of policies and procedures. The Policy manual has also been published on the Police Department's website. Chief Huff mentioned they have an ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. One recommendation from the policing report is to have an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion officer for the City.

Pertaining to Crime Prevention and Police Services, staff worked on helping increase relationship building and problem solving in the community. StoryComm, the new radio system, is a fully compliant system for first responders and other neighbors. The goal is to be fully on the new system this summer. The Department now has three Police Hybrid patrol units and anticipate transitioning

to all hybrids within the next two years. Chief Huff commented that they will save just over \$5400 per year on fuel, reduce CO2 by 32.1 metric tons, increase MPG from 8 to 19, reduce oil changes from 13 a year to two, and reduced engine time that will save on some maintenance costs. Mental Health call volumes continue to be high and staff is continuing to use the community partners, most notably the Mobile Crisis Response Team. During Derecho both officers and CSOs were utilized to staff water, work ice stations, and information tents. In some cases, making phone calls or going door to door to check on residents. With the power lines being down it did affect the temporary radio system creating some communication challenges.

A graph showing the trends of personal crimes was shown and it was noted that there was a reduction in assaults; however, there was a slight increase in both domestic violence calls and sexual assaults. Noise complaints are trending down, however fireworks are still a sore spot for citizens. A chart showing the trends in property crimes from 2010 to 2020 was shown. While thefts have fallen off burglaries have trended up. Examples of scams and fraud that resulted in significant financial losses were given.

The number of accidents from 2015 through 2020 was shown. The numbers were down in 2020, but they still had \$4.9 million in vehicle damage with 2,193 vehicles. Ames ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the state for the highest number of accidents.

Pertaining to the Communications - Emergency Medical Dispatch. Approximately 4,000 times a year, dispatchers provide medical assistance over the phone.

Under Parking Enforcement. This area was greatly affected due to COVID-19 due to the cancellation of football games. New parking enforcement software (ParkMobile) has been implemented.

Animal Control. There have been many upgrades in the past 12 months. The current facility is a challenge and they are currently doing an architectural review for further shelter upgrades. There are new state standards that the Animal Shelter is trying to meet.

**DISPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:** None.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Moved by Gartin to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

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**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF  
THE AMES CITY COUNCIL**

**AMES, IOWA**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor John Haila called the Special Meeting of the Ames City Council, which was being held electronically, to order at 5:15 p.m. with the following Council members

participating: Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and David Martin. *Ex officio* Member Nicole Whitlock was also present.

Mayor Haila announced that it was impractical to hold an in-person Council meeting due to the Governor of Iowa declaring a public health emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, limits have been placed on public gatherings, and this meeting is being held as an electronic meeting as allowed by Section 21.8 of the *Iowa Code*. The Mayor then provided how the public could participate in the meeting via internet or by phone

### **FY 2021/22 BUDGET PROPOSALS:**

**Transit System.** Transit Director Barb Neal stated CyRide's goal is about connecting people to their community safe and efficient transportation that exceeds expectations. She provided an overview of the budgets for the Transit System. The budget that was presented was approved by the Transit Board. CyRide has had to reinvent themselves to align with health mandates and customer service needs.

Ms. Neal explained that FY 2021/22 ridership estimates will be difficult to predict due to the uncertainty of ISU's 2021/22 academic year. If ISU has in-person education CyRide estimates the total ridership will recover to 60-65% of the pre-COVID levels of 4.1 to 4.9 million passengers. One of the greatest objectives is the recovery of the large ridership base. Over \$1.3 million (half of the federal funding) is tied to high ridership and operational efficiencies. By using the CARES funding carefully, CyRide has been able to control expenditures without reducing services. The budget will require no additional funding from the local funding partners. Director Neal mentioned that the budget is a 3.85 increase over last year's budget request. Overall, for the City it is \$2,037,720, which is down 2.3% from last year.

CyRide has been successful with Grant funding which decreases the need for local funding. Ms. Neal highlighted a few CIP projects. They plan to increase technology, expanding the amount of real time passenger counters. With the expected decreases in ridership and revenues, staff plans to increase the amount of data collected to make the system as efficient and responsive as possible. They will be expanding the number of automatic passenger counters. CyRide will be investing in bus display monitors that will visibly display the next stops along the routes for passengers with disabilities.

Director Neal explained that for people who are unable to use the fixed route services they offer Complimentary para-transit service known as Dial-A-Ride. Working with HIRTA helps close the transportation gap. Ridership on Dial-A-Ride was trending down due to the pandemic. CyRide will continue to work on improving transportation with Ames High School and DMACC.

Council Member Gartin inquired if the Biden Administration indicated its perspective on transit going forward. Ms. Neal commented that President Biden is very pro-transit, but she is not sure what is going to happen. Mr. Gartin wanted to know what the status of the trust fund that is maintained with ISU. Ms. Neal stated that didn't know a lot right now. The students haven't voted for the

activity fee increase yet. It was estimated that the trust fund balance would be \$200,000 for next year.

Council Member Betcher wanted to know how much COVID impacted non-student ridership. Assistant Director of Operations Chris Crippin mentioned COVID affected a lot of areas. Dial-A-Ride went down by 50%; people are looking for other types of transportation.

Council Member Martin liked the idea of having the monitors to display the next stop and wanted to know if those will run advertising. Ms. Neal stated that the model shown in the presentation is not what is going to be used as they will be using LED signs. When moving forward they will make sure they don't lose control of what is displayed.

Mayor Haila asked Ms. Neal to comment on if the ridership doesn't come back up what the federal funding consequences would be and if this is something that is trending all over. Ms. Neal stated all transit agencies' ridership are down all over, but university towns have been hit the hardest.

**City Council.** Assistant City Manager Brian Phillips stated this year was defined by Emergency Response. One of the major changes had been moving to online meetings via Zoom for the Council, Boards and Commission and several others. Derecho impacted everyday operations. The City Council's Goal Setting meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 6, 2021. The Council's progress in its goals have been problematic due to COVID and Derecho. Mr. Phillips highlighted special events that occurred in 2020.

Mr. Phillips noted that normally in the budget they have allocated a substantial amount for Special Events, and given the uncertainty of the upcoming year not as much was budgeted as previous years. He then pointed out that there was a high percentage change for the bottom line, and this was because the City Council had taken over the Metro Coalition funds for the year. Overall, the budget had increased a little under 2%.

Council Member Betcher wanted to know where in the budget it showed the \$10,000 Art Grant money as she thought it was in Council Contingency. Mr. Phillips mentioned it was out of the Council Contingency and it came out of the 2019/20 adjusted budget and then carried forward. Ms. Betcher asked for further explanation as the numbers were not adding up. Budget Manager Nancy Masteller explained that the \$10,000 was in the 2020/21 Adjusted Budget under Council Contingency.

**City Manager.** Assistant City Manager Deb Schildroth mentioned that staff has remained constant except for the Management Analyst position. Due to the potential revenue shortfall associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, this position will remain unfilled at least until July 2021. Ms. Schildroth highlighted all the major projects supported in Ames by the City Manager's Office. A monitor has been installed in the lobby area that will display the real-time output from the Solar Farm and will also be adding information about meetings and events going on throughout the City. Another responsibility of the City Manager's Office is to staff six of the 18 Boards and Commissions.

**City Clerk.** Diane Voss, City Clerk, presented the City Clerk's Division budget. Many of the services provided by the City Clerk's Office were summarized. Major sources of revenue and the largest expenses were highlighted. The City Clerk's budget for FY 2021/22 does not have any requests for capital. A major upgrade to the Files Management System (FMS) is underway.

**Public Relations.** Public Relations Officer Susan Gwiasda mentioned that the Public Relations office works on press releases, newsletters, social media, website, public education/speaking, recognition events, and print shop collaboration. The four main projects were the Cyclones Care, Derecho Response, Claim Ames, and Sustainable Ames. She highlighted several events that occurred in 2021.

Council Member Martin wanted to know about continuing online meetings even after COVID. Ms. Gwiasda mentioned it is hard to know with online meetings if some of the traditional audience was lost during the change to online meetings or was there a gain in a virtual audience. She stated she is excited by the convenience of the virtual public input concepts and wondered if there was a way to offer a hybrid option in the future.

**Media Production Services.** Media Production Coordinator Bill Gebhart mentioned that video is everywhere especially since the pandemic. Staff has done a slow roll out from changing its identity from Channel 12 to Ames Television. Looking to be more identifiable with the City of Ames and looking to have Ames Television put on MetroNet's internet/cable system. Mr. Gebhart pointed out that it is not guaranteed that the City of Ames will always be able to be on Channel 12 with Mediacom. There have been a lot of internal and external videos being done. A video was shown highlighting what Media Productions had done throughout the year.

Mayor Haila commented that, on Page 219 of the Program Budget, it mentions the lawsuit that was filed by 46 cities against the FCC and that more appeals may follow. The Mayor wanted to know if Mr. Gebhart had any updates. Mr. Gebhart explained that there have not been any appeals filed yet, but stated that cities have filed appeals to the FCC as the FCC had changed the regulations that the cable providers are allowed to take out a portion of the funding that is given to the City. An example was given that the studio across the street could be taken out of the percentage of the funding given to the City and state that the building is part of the funding. Ms. Gwiasda commented that to prepare staff has been slowing moving items out of the building and preparing themselves in case there is a day where that building is not an option for staff anymore.

The Mayor asked about APATV (Channel 16) and that channel was on Mediacom only. Mr. Gebhart explained that it is except that the channel number is 121-16. He mentioned that this channel may need to be rebranded as well.

Council Member Martin stated it was his understanding that since MetroNet is not a cable tv provider there is not any question of franchise fees, but he found it interesting to hear that staff is considering how to get Channel 12 like content on MetroNet. Mr. Gebhart mentioned that MetroNet reached out to the City to let us know that they offer for government access channels to have the

opportunity to be on MetroNet.

Council Member Betcher stated that she noted in that budget report that staff is going to start researching ways to improve the audio quality of the Council Chambers and upgrade equipment to allow for hybrid live/Teams meetings. Ms. Betcher wanted to know if it is connected to a problem that was identified earlier on with Zoom. She wanted to know what the relationship was between this item and the Council's potential to have City Council meetings that are hybrid. Mr. Gebhart mentioned that it is the same issue.

**Legal Services.** City Attorney Mark Lambert summarized the services provided by the Legal Department. City Attorney Lambert showed the Department's funding sources and how they are allocated. He also reviewed the budget allocations to four main items: Personal Services, Internal Services, Commodities, and Contractual. He pointed out that Outside Legal Services were reduced by \$10,000 for the 2020/21 budget to assist with city-wide cost savings. Staff participated in virtual conferences for the 2020/21 budget yet resulting in a reduction of \$9,000. It was noted that one major project will be forming new wards and precincts in the fall of 2021.

The Mayor inquired what the implications are for the redistricting in respect to City Council elections in the Fall. Attorney Lambert explained that by state law it has to be done within 60 days of the legislature setting it. He is not sure of all the decision points and will have to bring the information to the Council when he knows more.

**Human Resources.** Human Resources Director Bethany Jorgenson presented the budget for the Department. Ms. Jorgenson stated that the Human Resources Department is fully staffed. A snapshot of the Employee Extranet was shown with FAQs regarding the COVID-19 pandemic for employees.

Ms. Jorgenson mentioned that recruitment has remained steady with approximately 75 recruitments to date in FY 2020/21. Staff has changed to web interviews instead of in-person. Employee Training Opportunities have continued with a hybrid system where some are online, and some are in person.

**Diversity and Inclusion.** A consultant was hired to provide the city-wide training. The goal of training is to provide foundational training for all City employees. The training will begin in June 2021. Funding has been requested in the FY 2021/22 budget to hire a full-time Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion coordinator.

**Risk Management.** Risk Manager Bill Walton provided information on the different City of Ames Liability Insurance and Property Insurance claims. Initiatives include reviewing the Liability Insurance program, and have the Life and Long-Term Disability taken to the market along with the Workers' Compensation TPA service.

**Health Insurance Management.** Human Resources Officer Krista Hammer mentioned that FY 20/21 was the first full year having non-grandfathered plan medical plans. It was noted that there will be some changes in the Drug level tiers. For FY 2021/22 the Tier 4 drugs (specialty drugs) will change

to a \$60 co-pay. For FY 21/22, the projections indicate there needs to be an 8% increase to the existing health insurance premium rates; however, there are very high reserves in the Health Insurance Fund balance and will use approximately \$242,449 along with a 5% increase to premium rates starting July 1, 2021. Health Expenditures for FY 20/21 were mentioned.

Wellness & Health Care Initiatives. Health Promotion Coordinator Andrea Cardenas mentioned that Health Promotion Program and services are funded through the Health Insurance Fund. The Program was affected significantly due to COVID. Her focus has been on mental wellbeing, financial wellbeing, and COVID-19 response. The ultimate goal was to prevent COVID-19 from spreading. She continued to work on a return to work guide for employees with COVID.

**Planning.** Planning and Housing Director Kelly Diekmann provided an overview of Planning Services, which includes Current Planning, Long-Range Planning, and Administrative Services (shared with the Public Works and Fire Departments). Staff supports three Boards and Commissions (Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Historic Preservation Commission). A chart was shown indicating how much time is spent on Planning activities in eight different categories.

Under Current Planning, there was a steady number of Site Development Plan applications. According to Director Diekmann, they are anticipating new zoning and subdivisions in 2021. There were not any new apartment developments approved in 2020, including senior housing. There were four potential residential sites for FY 2021/22 (pending approvals). There are some small scale commercial and industrial buildings anticipated for the upcoming year. Retail and hospitality have been low in demand. Commercial projects for FY 2021/22 are the Downtown Plaza and the Indoor Aquatic Center.

Director Diekmann highlighted the Long-Range Planning Activities and the budget for planning studies and Council projects is \$80,735. He mentioned there were still a few upcoming and ongoing major projects. There was the Downtown Plaza Concept, Reinvestment District Application, Sign Code Updates, Beautification Plan, Fringe Plan Update, and the Ames Plan 2040. Staff is continuing to work on the Ames Plan 2040 and a draft of the Plan should be presented to the Council in March 2021.

**Administrative Services** - Staff has maintained five positions. They cover multiple Boards and Commissions. One major accomplishment was they completed the transition to online building permit applications.

**City-Wide Affordable Housing.** Housing Coordinator Vanessa Baker-Latimer reviewed the activities of the City-Wide Affordable Housing programs. She reviewed the activities that the City-Wide Housing Program covered in FY 2020/21. Ms. Baker-Latimer also noted the activities that will be undertaken in 2021/22.

**Community Development Block Grant.** Ms. Baker-Latimer advised that the City received its 17<sup>th</sup>

allocation of CDBG funding for 2020/21 in the amount of \$602,550. She noted that they are expecting approximately \$316,254 in anticipated program income. Ms. Baker-Latimer highlighted several activities that were done in FY 2020/21. For FY 2020/21 the CDBG allocation has not yet been announced; however, for budgeting purposes the FY 2020/21 CDBG allocation of \$602,550 is being projected. The Annual Action Plan is to be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development on or before May 17, 2021, if funding has been announced.

**HOME Program.** It was noted by Ms. Baker-Latimer that the City received its third allocation of HOME funds in the amount of \$468,771. HOME funding requires a 25% local match contribution. The City has allocated \$250,000 of General Obligation Bonds towards the infrastructure improvement for 321 State Avenue. HOME also requires that 15% of the annual allocation be set-aside for certified Community Housing Development Organizational (CHDO) when created/designated by a City. The FY 2020/21 allocation has not yet been announced; however, for budgeting purposes, the same amount as last year's allocation is being projected.

**CDBG/IEDA CARES Program.** Through the CDBG Program the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) funded a Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). In 2020/21, the City received \$354,515 during the first round of CARES funding. Also, a round three award of \$356,550 is expected to be received. The CDBG CARES funds are being used to implement programs to provide low-and moderate-income households with Rent, Mortgage, and Utility Relief financial assistance for up to six months. To date, 104 households have been assisted through one or all three programs. In 2020/21 the City is anticipated to receive \$604,386, a round two of CDBG CARES funding that has been set aside from the IEDA and programs to be implemented to utilize those funds have not yet been determined.

**Conclusion.** City Manager Steve Schainker pointed out to the Council that Budget Analyst Nancy Masteller had provided them a summary of the budget decisions that will need to be made at the Budget Wrap-Up session to be held on February 9, 2021. He reviewed what amendments to the FY 2020/21 Adjusted Budget would be needed as well as the proposed amendments to the FY 2021/22 Budget. Supporting information for each of the items was also provided to the Council members.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:** None.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Moved by Gartin to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m.

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Amy L. Colwell, Deputy City Clerk

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John A. Haila, Mayor

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk