

Staff Report

ENCROACHMENT REQUEST FOR A MAILBOX AT 426 5TH STREET

January 12, 2010

Background:

On November 24, 2009, the City Council tabled the attached request from Chuck Winkleblack seeking approval of an encroachment permit that would allow the placement of a mail box in front of 426 5th Street. Before making a decision regarding this request, staff was directed to discuss this matter with officials from the Ames Post Office to clarify the options to serve this building.

Discussions with local Post Office staff indicated that new or retrofitted mailboxes must meet current standards, which means they must be securable, centrally located, and provide the highest efficiency and security (visible from the street in which property is addressed) possible for mail delivery as determined by the Post Master or designee.

The U.S. Post Office, under current laws, will only determine if a mailbox meets or does not meet their standards. The property owner can either take the suggestions of the Post Office staff to bring their receptacle into compliance, or if not, the Post Office will refuse to deliver mail to that location, thereby holding it at the Post Office for pick-up. The property owner also has the option to acquire a Post Office Box if a suitable on-site delivery location cannot be found.

The new owner of this building, Mr. Winkleblack, has been making tremendous improvements to the building that was formerly owned by the Red Cross. In order to provide greater security, it is his desire to lock the entry door serving the second floor tenants, thereby inhibiting access to a mail carrier. In addition, even if access through this door is provided to the Post Office, the small entry area makes it impractical to provide the necessary space to install the mail boxes to serve these tenants. Therefore, Mr. Winkleblack is requesting permission from the City Council to install a group mail box (see attachment) in the public area between the curb and sidewalk in front of this building.

Over the years the City has made significant investments in the Downtown and Campustown Districts to improve the aesthetic appeal of these key commercial areas. Because there are many other buildings with multiple tenants in these two business districts, the City Council was concerned with the precedent of allowing the installation of this type of structure in a public area clearly visible from the street. Mr. Winkleblack has emphasized that his building is unique in that there is an extremely small entryway into his second floor which does not allow for an interior location. He also doubts there are very many other structures with this similar situation. Therefore, he has maintained

that approval of this encroachment will not be a precedent that will require other similar approvals in the future.

It appears that there are three options related to this situation:

- 1) The City Council can approve the encroachment permit. This action will allow the installation of a mailbox in front of 426 5th Street on public property as requested by the owner and will assure that mail is picked up at the building.
- 2) The City Council can deny the encroachment permit that would allow the installation of a mailbox in front of 426 5th Street on public property as requested by the owner. In this option, Mr. Winkleblack could install the mail box on his private property (perhaps in the landscaped area in the parking area to the east of the building.)

While the mail box would still be visible from the street, as will be the case in Option 1, it will not be located on public property. This location will eliminate the precedent issue for the Council.

- 3) The City Council can deny the encroachment permit that would allow the installation of a mailbox in front of 426 5th Street on public property as requested by the owner. In this option, if Mr. Winkleblack chooses not to install the mail box on private property or allow mail carriers access to the building, then the tenants will have to pick up their mail at the Post Office.

Item # 16
11-24-09 around dais

To: City of Ames

From: Chuck Winkleblack, Manager
Turnkey Investments

Date: November 16, 2009

RE: Encroachment permit

Turnkey Investments respectfully requests 2 permanent encroachment permits for the property located at 426 5th Street in Ames.

~~The first encroachment is to allow an exterior door to swing out into the public right-of-way. The proposed encroachment is for the middle door on the North side of the building (see attached drawing). It is the door going to the upstairs. The upstairs has residential and commercial uses (City of Ames IT department). We are in the process of replacing the doors and would like this door to open out for safety and security reasons. The building currently has an awning that already extends out into the right-of-way and this door will be under that awning.~~

The second encroachment would be for the installation of a gang mailbox in the parking in front of the building. The post office encourages the use of gang style boxes rather than individual boxes. This would allow the box to be secured and on the exterior of the building. Currently there are a number of unsecured mail boxes in the stairwell leading to the upstairs. The gang box would be placed in the parking area between the existing parking meters on 5th Street directly in front of the building. The box will set on a 3 foot by 3 foot piece of concrete and would set completely behind the curb. I am not sure if this is considered an encroachment or not since it is for the post office but thought I would include it with my other request.

Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Chuck Winkleblack, manager
Turnkey Investments



