

Staff Report

DISCUSSION REGARDING PROPOSED NEW TAGLINE AND LOGO

September 13, 2011

THE TAGLINE

The City staff recently became aware of an issue that should be addressed by the City Council before the selection of a new logo is finalized. If you search the City of Council Bluffs, Iowa's website, you will find that that this community is using a tagline strikingly similar to the one suggested by Brand Endeavor. Our recently adopted tagline is "Heartland's Leading Edge. Council Bluff's is "Iowa's Leading Edge." It appears that they have been using their tagline for some time.

In light of this revelation, staff asked Christie Harper from Brand Endeavor to share her thoughts regarding this latest development. The following comments are the pertinent points offered by Christie:

- When the tagline, The Heartland's Leading Edge, was first recommended, she searched both the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office's Electronic Trademark Search System, along with a Google search of several terms. Christie indicated that these searches did not reveal any conflicts and did not reveal Council Bluff's tagline.

Given the almost infinite combination of words that might be reflected in a tagline and the possibility that the proposed one has never been trademarked, it is difficult to guarantee through a search effort that some other community is not currently utilizing a "similar" tagline.

Christie advises that if we hope to move ahead with this tagline, we should retain an attorney with expertise in intellectual property to advise us how to proceed to ameliorate this situation. Her recent search continues to indicate that Council Bluffs has not yet secured a trademark for their tagline.

Because the wording between our two taglines is slightly different, it is possible that both taglines can be trademarked. This fact will only lead to further confusion. In addition, since it appears that Council Bluffs has been using their tagline for some time, it is possible that bad feelings will be created if we are successful in preventing the continued use of their tagline.

- **Christie emphasizes that she does not believe that the vision created for our community is compromised in any way by this new information and she recommends that we continue to implement this vision.**

After reviewing the Council Bluffs materials, she explains that their reference to leading edge refers to “both its geographic location on the Iowa frontier” as well as its “anything is possible attitude.” Our concept of leading edge is “intended to signify Ames’ creativity and innovation that creates meaningful contributions to not just Iowa – but to the entire Midwest region, and ultimately, to the world.” Therefore, she concludes the newly adopted vision for Ames is sufficiently different from Council Bluffs that it does not have to be reworked.

Christie has concluded that the two taglines are too similar “to ensure appropriate differentiation with a geographic neighbor.” Therefore, her recommendation at this time is that we should develop a new tagline with the assistance of the Vision Steering Committee.

She reminds us in her letter that “a tagline should not be confused with the vision itself. The tagline is an expression of the vision, and could be phrased in many different ways.”

Fortunately, Christie is willing to assist our community in developing another tagline by offering, at no added charge to the City, to do the following:

- Explore another round of taglines that express the core concepts reflected in our vision and, hopefully, excites the City Council and community, and
- Rewrite the vision statement to remove the term “leading edge” and create greater alignment with the new tagline.

OPTIONS RELATED TO A NEW TAGLINE:

1. The City Council can decide to move ahead to trademark the previously adopted tagline, “Heartland’s Leading Edge.”

As is mentioned above, it is possible that this tagline can be trademarked and Council Bluffs would be allowed to continue to use their tagline. However, the similarity of the two taglines used by cities in such close proximity to each other might cause confusion among the audiences we hope to attract. In addition, since it appears that Council Bluffs has been using their tagline for some time, we should expect them to take actions to protect their investment, thus resulting in possible conflict between our communities.

2. The City Council can follow our consultant’s initial advise and pursue a new tagline that will reflect our vision while, hopefully, not causing any confusion by the intended audiences. **Under this option, the City Council would work directly with our consultant to identify a new tagline.**

3. The City Council can follow our consultant's initial advise and pursue a new tagline that will reflect our vision while, hopefully, not causing any confusion by the intended audiences. **However, under this option, the City Council would ask the Vision Steering Committee to reconvene and work with our consultant to identify a new recommended tagline for the City Council to approve.**
4. The City Council can follow our consultant's initial advise and pursue a new tagline that will reflect our vision while, hopefully, not causing any confusion by the intended audiences, but reject her offer to assist the community in identifying another tagline. **Under this option, the City Council would seek assistance from volunteer resources in the community to develop possible alternatives. One approach to this option would be to sponsor a public contest.**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING A NEW TAGLINE:

It is not clear at this time if trademarking the proposed tagline will prevent Council Bluffs from continuing to use their tagline. If they are allowed to continue its use, there likely will be some confusion generated from the marketing campaigns by our two Iowa communities. Our consultant has concluded that "the two taglines are too similar to ensure appropriate differentiation with a geographic neighbor." Based on this professional advice, the City staff would support Option #3 to rely on Brand Endeavor, working with the previous Vision Steering Committee, to identify a new tagline for the Council's consideration that will express the core concepts reflected in our vision and, hopefully, excite the City Council and community.

THE LOGO

As you know, we have planned for the City Council to discuss the development of a shared logo for the third time on September 13th. Julie Weeks, Director of the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau, will be prepared to outline a new process that will offer the City Council and the general public choices and an opportunity to have input into the preferred logo.

Under her proposal, she will ask their consultant, PUSH, to develop five logos for the Council to consider. After reviewing this limited set of possibilities, the City Council would reduce the number to three alternatives. These three logos would then be offered to the public for their comment. The logo that receives the most positive public feedback would be selected by the City Council as our next logo to be shared by the City, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, Ames Chamber of Commerce, and Ames Economic Development Commission.

OPTIONS REGARDING THE SELECTION OF A NEW LOGO:

1. The City Council can decide to adopt the logo that was recently recommended by the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Ames Chamber of Commerce.
2. The City Council can ask the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau to have their consultant offer a new logo for Council consideration.
3. The City Council can approve the suggested public input process now being suggested by the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau, which will involve (a) the development of five logo possibilities by PUSH, (b) the identification by the City Council of the top three “finalist” from this group of five, and (c) the selection by the City Council of the shared logo through a public feedback effort.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE LOGO:

Given the public feedback received about the proposed logo, the City Council might want to first make a decision regarding the logo selection process. The new process recommended by the Ames Convention and Visitors Bureau that allows for more public input, Option 3, seems to be the best course of action.

However, it is important that the logo and the tagline be integrated tools to market our overall vision. Therefore, it would be advisable to not move forward with the selection of the proposed logo or the development of new alternatives until the tagline issue is resolved. Once the tagline is identified, we should proceed with one of the options identified above.