

## Staff Report

**SUSTAINABILITY TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS**

September 27, 2011

**WHAT TO DO WITH TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS?**

In an effort to accomplish the City Council's goal to "Go Green To Promote Environmental Sustainability", the Council established the Ames Sustainability Task Force and contracted with ISU to utilize the services of Merry Rankin to lead this new committee. Their first assignment was to develop a plan to reduce electrical consumption community-wide. This task was selected because our ownership of the electric utility gives us 1) access to the customer information necessary to accomplish the assignment and 2) the decision-making authority to facilitate implementation of the Task Force recommendations.

After working on this Council assignment for over a year, the Task Force presented their priority recommendations in August. The primary recommendation of the Task Force is for the City Council to direct the Electric Services staff to establish the following three staff advisory committees.

**Electrical Efficiency Education Committee**

The focus of this committee is to take a collective look at the current electrical efficiency educational resources within the community and offer recommendations related to increasing their accessibility, availability, and utilization.

**Electrical Efficiency Engagement and Recognition Committee**

The focus of this committee is to create a recognition program specifically related to achievements and engagement in electrical consumption reduction by members (individuals and organizations) in the Ames community.

**Electrical Efficiency Policies Review Team**

The focus of this team is to consider and evaluate current community policies and make recommendations to the City Council as related to planning and policy considerations that should be undertaken and/or implemented to further assist and incentivize electrical consumption reduction.

**OPTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL DIRECTION**

The Council must decide if you want the Electric Services staff to work with any, or all, of these three staff advisory committees. Given the many priorities being recommended from the numerous sectors, a realistic implementation timeframe needs to be developed by the staff in order to assure that these priorities can be addressed.

## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE REGARDING SUSTAINABILITY?**

Assuming that the Council agrees that there is more to do in accomplishing your sustainability goal, direction is needed regarding next steps. The Sustainability Task Force has contemplated this issue and has developed their recommendation for next steps. While the full text of their recommendation is reflected in Attachment I, the essence of their proposal is for the Council to consider sustainability in a broader context than your stated goal related only to the environment. They believe that a broader definition of sustainability is needed that includes social and financial considerations, along with environmental issues.

With this broader context in mind, the Task Force members believe that now is the appropriate time to create a more comprehensive Sustainability Plan for the community. However, they understand that before this type of plan can be developed, it is important to select a framework that can guide the creation of this plan as well as connecting individual initiatives occurring prior to the approval of a final plan. Therefore, their suggested next step is for a newly reconstituted Task Force to analyze the three most prominent frameworks now in use by some communities throughout the country with the objective of recommending a framework that appears to be most appropriate for our community. (See Attachment II)

## **OPTIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL DIRECTION**

**Option 1** -The City Council can decide that the next step in accomplishing your goal of sustainability is to support the recommendation of the Sustainability Task Force as outlined on the Attachment I.

This approach would expand the Council's goal beyond environmental sustainability and be more in line with the broader definition of sustainability that is being implemented by some communities throughout the country.

**Option 2-** The City Council can decide that the next step in accomplishing your sustainability goal is to create a plan for reducing natural gas, water, storm sewer and/or sanitary sewer "consumption" community-wide.

This approach would be in keeping with the current stated sustainability goal of the City Council that focuses on environmental issues only.

**Option 3** - The City Council can decide the next step in accomplishing your sustainability goal is to ask Merry Rankin and/or the existing Task Force to assist the Electric Services staff in implementing the numerous priority recommendations reflected in their recent report to the City Council.

This approach would place a priority on working to implement the recommendations related to electric consumption reduction before moving on to new assignment.

**Option 4** - The City Council can decide that there is no next step required in conjunction with your sustainability goal.

This approach would indicate that your sustainability goal has been achieved and no further steps are needed.

## Attachment I

### Ames Sustainability Task Force Recommendation

#### **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

The Task Force is aware that one of the City Council's top goals is to "Go Green To Promote Environmental Sustainability." Towards this end the first assignment to the Task Force was to develop a plan to reduce electrical consumption throughout the community. After working on this assignment for almost a year, the Task Force presented last month to the Council findings and priority recommendations.

Since the concept of sustainability remains a goal of the Council and funds have been budgeted in 2011-12 to continue the contract with ISU for Merry Rankin's services, it appears that the City Council is committed to pursuing additional initiatives in the area of sustainability. The logical next question for the Council is, "Where do we go from here?"

The Task Force acknowledges that the City Council's current stated goal focuses on only environmental sustainability. However, after pursuing this goal for almost a year, and in considering the connection of the Council's other goals to sustaining community and the economy, Task Force members believe that it is an appropriate time for the City Council to consider expanding this goal to encompass a broader consideration of sustainability. This broader consideration is defined as the following, "**sustainability is a condition in which everyone's needs are met without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their needs,**" (thus acknowledging the current considerations (and Council goals) that encompass social and economic factors as well as environmental factors.)

With this in mind, we are recommending that the next steps for the City Council as it relates to achieving your sustainability goal are:

- To broaden the Council's consideration and definition of sustainability to include social, economic, and environmental factors.
- To appoint a newly constituted Task Force lead by Merry Rankin to focus on assisting the Council in pursuing this broader sustainability goal. The membership of this body should encompass the same sectors reflected on the existing Task Force with the addition of rental property owners and managers. In addition, we, as Task Force members believe it is very important that Story County representatives be represented on the new body.

- To direct the new Task Force to:

- examine the three possible frameworks reflected on Attachment I (ICLEI-Local Governments For Sustainability, The Natural Step Network, and Transition US) in the hope that one of these approaches could serve as the framework for a comprehensive community and county-wide sustainability plan. (See Attachment II)

- educate the community and the City Council regarding the components, features, results, and ramifications for each of the three frameworks identified above.

- recommend to the City Council a framework that best fits our community.

- recommend specific action steps to move ahead with the implementation of the selected framework.

## Attachment II

**Sustainability** is a condition in which everyone's needs are met without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

A sustainable community requires the integration of economic, environmental, and social factors.

Many communities, large and small, are developing and implementing comprehensive sustainability plans using the model, experiences, and advice of one of three organizations.

1. *ICLEI--Local Governments for Sustainability*<sup>1</sup> provides technical consulting, training, and information services to build capacity, share knowledge, and support local governments in the implementation of sustainable development. Its basic premise is that locally designed initiatives can provide an effective and cost-efficient way to achieve local, national, and global sustainability objectives. Although the City of Ames is not a member of ICLEI, it followed ICLEI's guidelines in devising the "Cool Cities Initiative". <http://www.icleiusa.org/>

2. *The Natural Step (TNS) Network – USA* is a non-profit organization that has been active since 1997 in helping businesses and communities take meaningful steps toward sustainability. TNS helps organizations translate science-based sustainability into action through the use of a strategic framework for practical implementation. In addition, it promotes learning and inspiration from a network of leaders from the private and public sector. It is a licensee of The Natural Step, an international non-governmental organization inspired by the work of Dr. Karl Henrik-Robert over 20 years ago. <http://www.naturalstep.org/en/usa>

3. *Transition US* is a nonprofit organization that provides inspiration, encouragement, support, networking, and training for Transition Initiatives across the United States. Transition US works in close partnership with the [Transition Network](#), a United Kingdom based organization that supports the international Transition Movement as a whole. The Transition Movement is a grassroots movement that seeks to build community resilience in the face of such challenges as peak oil, climate change, and the economic crisis. It assists local governments in the process of engaging people in strengthening their communities against the effects of these challenges, "resulting in a life that is more abundant, fulfilling, equitable and socially connected." There are currently 90 official US Transition Initiatives in 27 states and 360 Transition Initiatives world-wide in 34 countries. <http://transitionus.org/home>

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<sup>1</sup> The organization's name is 'ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability'. In 2003, ICLEI's Members voted to revise the organization's mission, charter and name to better reflect the current challenges local governments are facing. The 'International Council for Local Environmental initiatives' became 'ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability' with a broader mandate to address sustainability issues.