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MEMO

To: Mayor and Council

From: Steve Schainker, City Manager

Date: November 22, 2019

Subject: RESPONSE TO CLIMATE ACTION TEAM LETTER

The Ames City Council recently received a letter from the Ames Climate Action Team asking about responses to several sustainability issues of concern to the group. The letter focused on five key areas: Planning, Policy, Budget, Education, and Project expansion.

In response to the letter, City staff reviewed the topics and offered some recommendations for the Council. The issue identified in the letter is reprinted in *italics*. Staff recommendations are indicated in **bold**.

PLANNING

The 2040 planning that is currently in play provides a unique, enormous, audacious, one-shot opportunity to jumpstart our city planning onto a track suitable to the imminent climate change challenges.

- a. Minimally, task RDG to provide information about climate risk assessment and climate vulnerabilities as related to the scenarios they are building. RDG has some of the best experts in the comprehensive planning field, presenting a real opportunity for the City of Ames to lay important and useful groundwork to integrate climate-prioritized planning (adaptation, mitigation, and resilience) for the future of Ames.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Although City Council has not included climate vulnerabilities into the scope of Ames 2040, the Council recently awarded a contract to PaleBLUEdot to conduct a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory.

PaleBLUEdot will also be doing a climate vulnerability assessment, which will include mapping vulnerable population areas in the community. Results could be applicable to Ames Plan 2040 on citywide basis. We don't believe a specific task for just growth scenarios is warranted.

From the PaleBLUEdot contract, the Climate Vulnerability Plan would include the identification of climate change projections for the City, indication of likely impacts of these projections, and an identification of climate vulnerable populations and conditions within the community. The assessment will include

possible impacts and risks associated with projected climate change for the region.

Drawing from U.S. Census data, the PaleBLUEDot team will map vulnerable populations within the City as well as existing City infrastructure and resources which may be capable of supporting climate adaptation strategies. These assessments will provide a basis for understanding vulnerabilities and resources which will support the decision making process needed for identifying and prioritizing climate adaptation measures to be included in the final Climate Action Plan.

- b. Optimally, agree to introduce a net zero-Greenhouse Gas emission target as the non-negotiable, overarching parameter for the growth and expansion guidelines we've currently given to RDG as priorities for the plan.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff anticipates City Council will set a goal after extensive outreach and analysis through a Climate Action Plan. Once approved by Council, the goal can be addressed within Ames Plan 2040 as necessary.

POLICY

Set the tone! We need to signal commitment, from the top down (to staff and residents):

- a. Adopt a goal to reach net zero GHG emissions. Many cities intend to do this by 2025, 2030, or 2050. Ames should join in this collective effort of cities and governments around the world.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff anticipates City Council will set a goal after extensive outreach and analysis through a Climate Action Plan.

- b. Create a CAP, climate action plan, to reach the net zero goal in a strategic, accountable manner. (Example climate action and adaption plans include Iowa City and Columbia, Missouri among many. An example climate emergency declaration is on the Climate Mobilization website).*

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff anticipates City Council will review the results of the GHG Inventory project and then proceed towards creating a Climate Action Plan. Staff also anticipates that the City Council will set a goal after extensive outreach and analysis through a Climate Action Plan.

- c. Support existing Electric Department efforts to increase energy conservation and efficiency in Ames.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Ames Electric Services is working to continue improving its current programs.

Adopt and implement energy benchmarking and transparency policies in existing and new buildings. (An example is Energize Des Moines).

STAFF RESPONSE: Staff anticipates City Council will set a goal after extensive outreach and analysis through a Climate Action Plan.

- d. *Take political action: Support our Story County supervisors by adding City of Ames endorsement to House File 7173 (115th Congress) “The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act”. (See workshops under point #4 education).*

STAFF RESPONSE: City Council could decide to support this initiative or ask City staff to analyze financial impact on budget.

BUDGETING

- a. *Increase the hours of staffing to support sustainability efforts and policies.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Council should decide what type of sustainability support is needed and make a decision during budgeting.

- b. *Provide incentives, and limit disincentives, to homeowners and businesses to decrease energy consumption and increase use of solar, wind and other non-carbon sources of energy.*

STAFF RESPONSE: The City received the SolSmart award in 2017 for our review and permitting of individual solar installations. Public education focusing on existing City support to citizens to encourage renewable energy would be helpful. PaleBLUEdot will be conducting a renewable energy potentials study, as well as a general ordinance review to identify barriers to homeowners and businesses to increase use of non-carbon energy.

EDUCATION

- a. *Host a series of staff and/or council and/or public workshops to build understanding and commitment of rationale for developing a climate action plan. Example topics: city design principals by Jonathan Rosenbloom of Drake University; climate vulnerability webinar by Ohio State University Climate Research Center; introduction to CAPs by Eric Giddens; CAP plans for Iowa City and Columbia, Missouri; economic risks of climate crisis by an ISU faculty member, and/or FEMA or others.*
- b. *Host council workshop to better understand the role of cities in supporting national policy formation that will financially empower municipal climate change adaptation. (For example, CCL, non-partisan citizens climate lobby, and the bi-partisan “Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act previously referenced under point 2).*
- c. *Complete a survey of sustainability efforts or policies already established in Ames. Share through public workshops.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Items a-c would be part of developing a Climate Action Plan.

- d. *Sponsor competition: "Mayor's Contest for Carbon Drawdown or Carbon Sequestration in Ames." Have a competition event, uniting university and city, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day. Offer small cash prize? Presentation to Mayor and University President.*

STAFF RESPONSE: Many sustainability activities, exhibits, and speakers are being planned for the 50th anniversary of Earth Day and the 10th anniversary of EcoFair. However, a large scale community engagement effort could be saved for the kick-off of a Climate Action Plan.

EXPANSION ON ACTIONS ALREADY IN PLAY

- a. *Composting and waste reduction – a pilot composting project is active, although preliminary indications (personal conversations) are indicating weakness in public participation. Continue to explore waste stream reduction through city-wide composting that encourages as much composting as possible. Ames Climate Action Team is in favor of a community wide system like in DSM and Iowa City (single fee, three-bin system for recycling, compost/yard waste, and garbage).*

STAFF RESPONSE: The City should continue to promote and encourage participation in the current food waste diversion pilot project. Nearly 90 buckets have been distributed. By increasing the number of participants, this shows community support to expanding food waste diversion opportunities. Feedback is being collected on this pilot program to determine future modifications. Additionally, the City continues to promote food composting through its food composter rebate program.

- b. *Energy -- Meet municipal energy demand through renewable energy sources. Adopt community geothermal systems for all new developments. Continue investment in Sun Smart solar farm, expand program to bring in business options. Expand incentives (for example, facilitate private sector challenge programs) related to business and residential building and appliance efficiency. Enforce building energy code compliance. Educate and reward the public and businesses for reducing waste. Commit to energy plant retrofits suitable for biomass fuels, and create a supply chain for biomass fuel for co-firing for energy.*

STAFF RESPONSE: The City of Ames currently has contracted to purchase 36 megawatts of wind energy and will be purchasing 2 megawatts of solar energy soon. Electric rebates (air conditioners, appliance, Prime Time Power) provide financial incentives to reduce electric consumption. The Smart Business Challenge provides custom assistance to business to reduce energy consumption, which reduces costs.

c. Transportation:

- i. Install electric vehicle charging in municipally owned parking lots.*

STAFF RESPONSE: City will continue to explore and look for more opportunities. The current charging stations were well-received and are being used.

- ii. Continue to invest in public transportation and service.*

STAFF RESPONSE: CyRide support remains strong, and funding from the three funding partners has and will continue to increase each year.

- d. Green and growing: substantially increase the number of trees in Ames. Partner with The Ames Foundation, volunteer organizations, or youth development organizations to assist with watering and maintaining the trees. Prioritize creative, large-scale planting projects. Consider grant programs for this.*

STAFF RESPONSE: The City has engaged in a multi-year partnership with the Ames Foundation as part of its Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Response Plan. The plan calls for the removal of thousands of ash trees on public property and a minimum of a one-for-one replacement of a diversified variety of trees. As City staff and volunteers move through community neighborhoods replanting trees, it is helpful to have support from residents to commit to watering the new trees to grow our new urban tree canopy. Additionally, Ames Electric Services incentivizes tree planting with a partnership with Ames Trees Forever.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Staff appreciates the thoughtful input of the Climate Action Team members, but believes many of the recommendations being suggested more appropriately align with Climate Action Planning. A Greenhouse Gas Inventory is traditionally the foundational piece of a Climate Action Plan. Therefore, the next most important next step is for the City Council to budget funding in FY 2020/21 for the development of a Climate Action Plan.