



# MEMO

To: City Council

From: Corey Mellies, Fleet and Facilities Director

Date: January 26, 2021

Subject: Auditorium Marquee

City Council directed staff on January 28, 2020, to bring back a report on the possibility of adding a marquee to the City Auditorium exterior. Historically, there was never a marquee on the City Hall building. To receive input on the potential change, a memo was sent to the Historic Preservation Commission. The memo is attached, and it includes some current and historical examples of marquees in Ames and what a modern marquee could look like. The minutes of the Historic Preservation Commission meeting are attached. There was consensus among the members that a marquee was not preferred, though a digital sign may make more sense for the Auditorium.

As noted in the Historic Preservation Commission memo, there are several options for a marquee. Most of the existing ones in Ames only announce the name of the business or building and do not allow for advertising events or other information. In doing research on marquees there is also a wide range on how they are constructed. Some work to recreate or rehabilitate historical signs while others look to create an historical look with modern amenities like LED lighting and digital signs. This wide range of options makes it challenging to determine a cost estimate.

The installation of a marquee requires several steps. The marquee would have to be designed, a structural engineer would need to determine how to securely attach it to the building, and then it would be bid out for construction and installation. Through research, it is estimated that the sign could be anywhere from \$100,000 and up for a traditional marquee with the ability to advertise events. This wouldn't include the design and structural engineering components. Also, it was found that the more historically accurate the sign is, the more costs involved.

In consultation with a sign contractor, a digital sign as suggested by the Historic Preservation Committee would cost around \$25,000 to \$30,000. This would be for a sign that is approximately 3 foot by 6 foot, dual-sided, and in color, which is the type that is normally mounted and seen at commercial properties.

If City Council decides to move forward with a marquee, it is recommended that funds be included for design and structural analysis so that an accurate cost estimate can be determined.

To: Historic Preservation Commission

From: Corey Mellies, Fleet and Facilities Director

Date: July 7, 2020

Subject: Auditorium Marquee

City Council has directed staff to bring back a report on the possibility of adding a marquee to the City Auditorium exterior. While this project would not need the approval of the Historic Preservation Commission, historically we have asked for input on changes to the exterior of City Hall from the Commission and included that in the information to City Council. Currently and originally the Auditorium has not had exterior signage and is only identified by the stonework as you can see in this picture.



There are a myriad of options when discussing a marquee but there are some existing examples in Ames that show what some possibilities could look like. These pictures show vertical style marquess in the Downtown. These styles identify the building or business but don't allow for announcing any more information.



The following picture shows a historical marquee for Ames for the Collegian theater. As you can see this allows for messaging to be displayed.



For recreated marquees there are several examples of where places have designed a marquee to look historical but have added modern amenities like LED message boards and lighting. You can see this in the picture below.



We are not asking for any formal motion from the Commission but would like your input to be shared with City Council about the possibility of a marquee on City Hall. There are no predetermined ideas on what the marquee would look like but the examples shown here should give an overview of the possibilities.

I will attend the Commission meeting to see if you have any questions and to hear your input for the report to City Council.

**MINUTES  
CITY OF AMES  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

Date: July 13, 2020	Peter Hallock, Chairperson	2021
	Ted Grevstad-Nordbrock, Vice-Chair	2022
Call to Order: 6:03PM	Lisa Hovis	2021
Place: Zoom Meeting	Edith Hunter	2020
	Barry Snell	2020
Adjournment: 6:29PM.	Susan Minks	2021

[\*Absent]

**\*Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic this meeting was held electronically\***

CALL TO ORDER: Peter Hallock, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:03PM.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (Snell/Hovis) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of July 13, 2020.

*MOTION PASSED: (6-0)*

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 9, 2020:

MOTION: (Snell/Hovis) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of March 9, 2020.

*MOTION PASSED: (6-0)*

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PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

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**DISCUSS THE ADDITION OF A MARQUEE SIGN ON THE EXTERIOR OF THE ENTRANCE TO THE CITY AUDITORIUM**

Mr. Anderson explained that the request to install a marquee at the City Auditorium was made last fall at a town Budget Meeting. A marquee has never been installed on the building as a City auditorium, nor as a school auditorium. This would be an entirely new feature for the building/site. Corey Mellies, who manages the City Hall/Community Center facilities, has prepared a memo which he will discuss in more detail with the Commission this evening.

Mr. Mellies stated that the standard procedure by staff is to bring items to the Historic Preservation Commission whenever something that relates to historical sites is suggested or proposed. The City Council requested input from the Historic Preservation Commission on whether installing a marquee on the exterior of the City Hall Auditorium would be appropriate from an historical perspective. There are two examples of marquee designs provided in the memo that was sent out to the Commission by Mr. Mellies. Many places are now designing marquees to look historical but are using LED lighted signs instead of placing individual letters on the sign face each time the message changes.

Mr. Hallock, Chairperson of the Commission, stated that he believes attaching a marquee to the building detracts from the historic image of building and would not be appropriate. He stated that the City Auditorium is a significant part of the structure. The building was originally designed to be strictly classrooms, but plans were changed shortly before construction to add a gymnasium and auditorium to the new structure. Mr. Hallock suggests a free-standing marquee sign rather than attaching a sign to the building, and would not favor a faux vintage sign, which would be contrary to the idea of historic preservation. Images of three different freestanding signs from other communities, each with a digital display, were shown by Mr. Hallock. He believes the sign features shown in the images may be workable as a freestanding marquee sign for the City Auditorium.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock, Commission Member, asked if the motivation behind installing a marquee would be to generate more interest in the auditorium and performances held there.

Mr. Mellies replied that a citizen had made a request at a City Budget Meeting, last October, to investigate the feasibility of adding a marquee to the City Auditorium for the purpose of generating local interest in the arts. The City Council directed staff to research the feasibility of adding a marquee sign to the City Auditorium and requested that staff report back to the City Council with their findings.

Lisa Hovis, Commission Member, stated that the City Auditorium was never a theater and a marquee sign seems more appropriate for a theater, than for the City Auditorium. She is more receptive to the idea of a freestanding sign that has LED lighting, as Mr. Hallock suggested. This may help to draw attention to future events in the City Auditorium.

Susan Minks, Commission Member, said she agrees with having marquee signage separate from the building, and believes the City Auditorium would benefit from such signage. The signage would help to keep the community informed of upcoming events in the City Auditorium.

Mr. Grevstad-Nordbrock commented that the separate marquee sign would be reversible and could be removed in the future without damaging the exterior of the building. He prefers a freestanding sign as opposed to something attached to the building that creates a false sense of history.

Mr. Mellies said he will report back to City Council and will send a copy of the report to the Commission detailing the Council's response. He mentioned it might be awhile before he is able to send the report, depending on how long it takes to complete the rest of the research necessary to provide the additional information requested by the City Council.

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**CONSIDER THE REQUEST FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DECK IN THE REAR YARD AT 720 DUFF AVENUE IN THE OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Mr. Anderson said the applicants for 720 Duff Avenue are not participating in the meeting through the Zoom technology this evening. The request is a proposal for construction of a deck in the rear yard and removal of the existing stairs that provide access to the back door of the house. The Commission Action Form includes graphic illustrations showing the design of the proposed deck, including the railings and stairs. The house is an Italianate style of architecture. There are no specific design criteria for the Italianate style of architecture that apply to deck design. The deck will be constructed of wood materials, except a composite material will be used for the deck floor. Wood materials comply with Design Guidelines for the Old Town Historic District.

Composite materials for the deck floor are an acceptable alternative to a wood floor. The deck will be self-supported and not attached to the house, which is also in compliance with the Design Guidelines. The staff recommendation is for approval of the deck, as proposed by the applicant.

Mr. Hallock commented that the deck will not be visible from the street since the deck will be constructed inside the fenced rear yard.

MOTION: (Hunter/Grevstad-Nordbrock) to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a deck in the rear yard of the property at 720 Duff Avenue, in the Old Town Historic District.

*MOTION PASSED: (6-0)*

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COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Mr. Hallock said it has been awhile since the Commission had met together and noted the signage for downtown was still unresolved. He asked if there had been further action.

Ms. Hovis said there had not been any further action taken. She is uncertain as to what the next official step should be.

Mr. Hallock reminded the Commission that the City Council had said they could cover the cost of the signs with existing funds, but he was sure that revenue would be down due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and that may no longer be the case. He asked if City staff could approach the City Council to determine if design of the signs may proceed with funding by the City.

Mr. Anderson asked Ms. Hovis if she could prepare a memo to the City Council with the background information for their request. He said once the memo is received it will be included in a packet sent out to the Mayor and City Council members.

Ms. Hovis agreed to write the memo, and to provide it to Mr. Anderson for inclusion in the City Council packet.

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STAFF COMMENTS:

Mr. Anderson thanked everyone for joining the meeting on Zoom. He said the Historic Preservation Commission will most likely continue to conduct their meetings virtually through the Zoom technology for the foreseeable future.

Ms. Minks inquired if the revision to the Comprehensive Plan would commence, since not much else is going on.

Mr. Anderson said he would speak with the Planning & Housing Director and update the Commission at their next meeting.

Mr. Hallock adjourned the meeting at 6:29 PM.

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Peter Hallock, Chairperson  
Historic Preservation Commission

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Laura Colebrooke, Recording Secretary  
Department of Planning & Housing