



MEMO

To: Mayor Haila and Members of the Ames City Council

From: Sara Van Meeteren, Building Official

Date: February 5, 2021

Subject: Ragweed Referral

During the Disposition of Communications at the Special Meeting of the City Council on September 1, 2020, Council voted to “refer to staff for a Memo” an email correspondence (Attachment A) requesting that the City add Ragweed to our noxious weed list.

Chapter 5 of the Municipal Code prohibits the presence of noxious weeds on any property within the city limits. The Code section references the State of Iowa Noxious Weed List that is part of the State’s Noxious Weed Law. This law gives counties the ability to appoint a Weed Commissioner to enforce on invasive weeds. The City added the section into Chapter 5 a few years ago to give us local authority to enforce the State’s Code. Ragweed could be added to this list through a local text amendment.

The intent of the Code really is to protect crops from invasive species rather than eradicating allergens. Based on information from Bob Hartzler, a Weed Science Professor at ISU, ragweed is native to Iowa and is so prolific that it would be near impossible to eradicate. Additionally, he stated that the allergens from ragweed are wind-born and would not be eliminated by removing all ragweed in town because it could be transported through the air from surrounding agricultural land.

The Immunology Department Manager at McFarland Clinic stated that ragweed is one of the allergens tested for during routine allergy tests. She stated that typically an antihistamine is prescribed to help treat the symptoms that are triggered by the allergy. If the antihistamine is unable to provide enough comfort by relieving the symptoms, a shot may be administered to help the patient build up a tolerance to the allergen.