

## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 16, 2021

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 6:00 p.m. on the 16th day of November, 2021, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue. Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Amber Corrieri, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, David Martin and *ex officio* Member Trevor Poundstone were present.

**WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE ACTION PLAN:** Mayor Haila introduced Assistant City Manager Deb Schildroth, who introduced the Project Team. Representatives of Sustainability Solutions Group (SSG) joined the meeting electronically. Ms. Schildroth told Council the evening would consist of informing the Steering Committee members about the Business as Usual scenario, engagement outputs to date, and target options. Questions and comments from the Steering Committee would also be addressed by SSG.

SSG Senior Consultant and Lead Analyst Brittany MacLean said the City of Ames hired SSG to help develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP). She introduced Lead Modeler Eric Frenette and Principal Yuill Herbert. Ms. MacLean said setting a target is not an objective of this meeting. She said low carbon actions plus target setting will be the third stage of the process, but that this meeting begins the decision-making stages. She said the CAP website has been launched, opportunities were presented for the community to participate in visioning exercises, the Supplemental Input Committee also did the visioning exercise, and the first town hall meeting was held. Ms. MacLean told Council from the feedback received the best things in Ames included a sense of community, parks and nature, services, safety, and ISU/ education. She said feedback received on successful environmental initiatives included renewables, transit, parks, trees, nature, and waste diversion. When asking for feedback about opportunities to transition to a low carbon future, advantages of Ames included expertise and education, community involvement, students and young people, availability of clean energy, and Iowa State University (ISU). She said upcoming engagement opportunities will soon be available and will include a community survey, outreach, a second Supplemental Input Committee meeting, and ongoing website updates.

Council Member Betcher asked when the Supplemental Input Committee will share the information they have received. Ms. MacLean said they will meet on December 1. Ms. Betcher asked about ISU students being on Thanksgiving break. Ms. MacLean said the meeting was planned around the break, and the survey will remain open until they return. Council Member Gartin asked about the input in terms of representation of the community. Ms. MacLean said the visioning exercise is kick-off in nature and isn't statistically significant public engagement. She said about 150 people have submitted feedback. She said demographic information was not collected but will be in the community survey. She said the distribution techniques are very important, and they will be checking demographics to be sure they are receiving a broad representation. Mr. Gartin said results are from those that showed initiative to come to the meeting, so he's not sure how much weight to place on the results of the

engagement without considering the degree to which it represents the community. Ms. MacLean concurred, and said those participants are individuals that are most interested.

Mayor Haila asked how they will know if duplicate responses are received. She said with the technology they use they can limit each device to one response. Ms. Betcher asked if demographic information will show if underrepresented groups are captured. Ms. MacLean said distribution strategies are analyzed along the way to better provide opportunities.

Council Member Martin said it's clear that reaching more people over time is important. He asked about continuity of people who have already participated since different information will be asked along the way. Ms. MacLean said people can subscribe to updates, but they don't have control over members of the public re-engaging.

Mr. Frenette said a Business As Usual (BAU) scenario looks at information from 2018-2058. He said this scenario shows the most likely outcome for Ames if no serious climate action endeavors take place. He said emissions baseline is used to contrast with low carbon results which will be shared at the next meeting. He said the biggest change is the ISU plan to replace its coal boilers in 2024. The transportation change shows 50% of cars sold will be electric by 2030. Mr. Frenette said this scenario is not a forecast, but one possible future outcome if no serious changes are made.

Member Gartin asked about the BAU term. He said he doesn't think that term adequately reflects the many things that have been done for climate in the last eight years. He said the City has been working hard to understand best practices, and a lot of effort has already been made. He said if it's being assumed by anyone that the City of Ames has been or is apathetic to these matters that would be incorrect since much attention has been given to this already, and many changes have been made. Member Beatty-Hansen said even though much has been done, more needs to be done, so she is not offended by the term BAU. Mr. Gartin said that term doesn't accurately include the attention by Council and staff made in the last years. He said he's very proud of the work done so far. Ms. MacLean said BAU isn't meant to have a negative connotation, rather be a starting point that includes what is being done now. Mr. Frenette continued by saying that a decrease in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by sector is followed by a slight increase which is due to population increase. It was noted a large drop in 2024 reflects coal boilers being changed to natural gas boilers. Between 2018 and 2019 sources used to create electricity dropped because of wind energy. Total energy use by sector was discussed.

Council Member David Martin asked about renewable energy credits. Electric Services Director Donald Kom said when wind energy started, some customers were purchasing green energy. Beyond that, he said it was not a direct need so they sold it to others and used that money for energy cost adjustment. He said it made sense for the City to keep the wind energy. It was noted that started in 2019.

Mr. Gartin asked Merry Rankin if she agrees with the assessment BAU "baseline" energy use by sector. She said with the information known right now it could be accurate because it's unknown what

technologies will be available in the future. Member Betcher asked about the electricity supply for 2018, which was produced mostly by coal. Energy Services Coordinator Kayley Barrios Lain said the emissions factor, which is the best single metric, has been decreasing. Mayor Haila asked about the 2018 emissions factors for energy suppliers. Mr. Frenette said Ames Electric Utility shows as the highest. It was noted that in the end of the technical report it shows Ames as the lowest. Mayor Haila said this needs to be accurate and appears contradictory. Ms. Barrios Lain said she will look into this to see for sure, but she believed the data to be correct and the comment on page 23 of the technical report to be incorrect.

Ms. MacLean reviewed the target setting process:

- Present the four options to the City Steering Committee
- Present the four options to the Supplemental Input Committee
- Present the four options to the public
- City Steering Committee sets the target

She said a CAP that goes through 2050 is being considered, and said there are many Net Zero 2050 commitments around the world. She said the past few years have focused on the interim target or process. She said not all targets are created equal, and this process will help Ames find the right one.

Science-based Target (general):

- 45% reduction in greenhouse emissions from 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050
- Aligns with the Paris Agreement and the 2018 recommendation from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- Based on staying below 2 degrees Celsius

Ms. MacLean said this target was the gold standard at one time but it's possible this will be updated.

Aligned with Federal Target:

- 50-52% reduction in greenhouse emissions from 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050
- In line with the federal emissions reduction target announced in April 2021
- Based on the United States' Nationally Determined Contribution in line with Article 4 of the Paris Agreement

Ms. MacLean said nationally determined contributions are non-binding, self-imposed, climate neutrality by 2050, minimum 2 degrees Celsius aligned, based on a baseline figure, adaptation considerations, and adjusting financial flows to align with reducing GHG emissions.

Mayor Haila asked about the Net US Greenhouse Gas Reductions by Policy graph. Ms. MacClean said options to address the BAU Report are listed. Mr. Frenette said the top line of the graph is BAU.

Science-based Target (Carbon Budget + Equity) or Fair-share Approach:

- 83% reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050

- In line with the Science-based Targets Network and C40 Climate Leadership recommendations
- Based on staying within 1.5 degrees Celsius in warming while considering equity

Ms. MacLean said the carbon budget means the maximum amount of greenhouse gases that can be emitted world-wide without increasing the global average temperature more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Ms. MacLean said population projections are taken into account, and science-based targets can be a range. Mr. Yuill said it's important to understand the focus is emissions reductions, not energy reductions. He said energy consumption may increase as emissions decrease. Member Gartin said it's being presumed there is a constant supply of renewable electricity. Mr. Yuill said there will need to be more renewables and storage.

Member Betcher asked if BAU and business as planned mean the same thing. She said business as planned is a better name since what is planned has been considered. Mayor Haila asked about listed challenges to the Evidence-based Target. Mr. Herbert said with a scenario by 2040, the City would need to turn over the entire vehicle fleet. He discussed retrofits to home would be needed and options to accomplish this. Mr. Herbert said they have been working on a plan for the City of Toronto, which has a population of 2.8 million. He said their two options are Net Zero by 2040 and Net Zero by 2050, but both had the same net zero present value. Mayor Haila asked what extensive behavior changes would be needed. Ms. MacLean said changing lifestyles, education, and accepting change are examples.

Mr. Gartin said he believes these are tremendous costs. He asked how to think about enforcement. Ms. MacLean said there isn't control over everything that happens in the community, and businesses will be at the forefront of the change so the City will need to find the right mixture of intervening and not intervening. She said in Canada they have a property assessed clean energy program where residents receive a discount on energy for making improvements and that money can be paid back over time with low interest.

Member Gartin said the cost-benefit is a challenge to think about. He said benefits have been presented, but there is little information to help understand the cost. He asked if any modeling work has been done to determine what a city of this size would see for cost for a level of carbon reductions. Mr. Herbert said there's no clear pattern. Capital costs can be consistent, but there are different patterns of housing stock and vehicle usage. Mr. Gartin asked if the City would increase taxes to pay for some of this or if residents would be required to bring properties up to a certain standard. He said the cost of living in Ames will change either way. Mr. Herbert said the fourth option (Evidence-based Target) would build all of this up as you go to then set the target. He said some communities know their target and start there, but others want to understand all implications first. Mr. Gartin hopes Council will not adopt something that is political without first understanding the implications. He said he would like Electric Services Director Don Kom to participate in conversations. He said it seems difficult to understand how this will be done without nuclear energy.

Council Member Beatty-Hansen said there's a cost to inactivity. She said it will cost no matter what, so those costs also need to be measured.

#### Evidence-based Target

- 45% reduction in greenhouse emissions from 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050
- Aligns with the Paris Agreement and 2018 pathway identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- Based on staying below 2 degrees Celsius and ideally 1.5 degrees Celsius in warming above pre-industrial level

Ms. MacLean said this option is built from the bottom up to include local constraints. She said this allows cities to focus on areas that cities believe are important. She said this works well for cities that are very ambitious but also have other entities involved. She said it could be looked at as a long-term plan that can be built in a way that focuses on what can be done.

Mayor Haila asked what "infrastructure lock-in" means. Ms. MacLean said using bare minimum code requirements to build a long-lasting asset is an example of infrastructure being "locked in." She said higher initial costs to build better and save ongoing operational costs is a better alternative.

Mayor Haila asked about the total GHG Emissions by Sector, and asked if a huge decrease in energy use is needed. Ms. MacLean said not necessarily, but with changes made the energy will be cleaner. Mayor Haila asked about everything needing to be moved toward electric and wondered about the magnitude of the Power Plant needed. Ms. MacLean said if efficiency actions are being taken at the same time, the increased need will not increase as substantially as assumed. Mr. Gartin said if natural gas is turned off, there just isn't enough clean energy and storage available. Mr. Frenette said Ames having control over its own electric utility is a big opportunity and will play a significant role. Ms. MacLean said electricity as 100% doesn't work for every community so other options will be considered.

Council Member Betcher asked when cities use an evidence-based target to what extent they are prioritizing global equity over local equity. She said cities have a responsibility to residents as well as the global community. Mr. Herbert said there is a good financial case for most interventions that decarbonize communities, but being able to raise money to make it happen in a way that is equitable is a real challenge.

Mayor Haila asked if cost was discussed as the team met with community members. Ms. MacLean said the cost is not discussed, rather feedback on the challenges to reduce the carbon footprint is the focus. Mayor Haila said if the price was added to the conversation the feedback received could change. Member Martin asked if there are going to be any cost discussions at this point. Ms. MacLean said not at this stage, and that generating specific costs for Ames goes outside the scope of what they are doing, as they would need to know all the actions going into the CAP to determine the costs.

Mayor Haila said he doesn't want Council to pick a target and then find out the cost is so high the community won't support it. He said during the first Steering Committee meeting when cost was brought up it was discussed that it could cost \$50,000 to retrofit a single family home. He said Council needs to know what kind of decisions need to be made so Council can be realistic to ensure the CAP can be created with confidence and that it can be accomplished.

Mr. Herbert said calculation gives a sense of the magnitude of capital that can be required. He said the evidence-based target can start with ambitious goals spread out over years and adjusted based on results. He said using that approach allows exploration of the future without spending any money when looking at scenarios. He said it's good that the practical concerns are being voiced.

Ms. MacLean shared communities that have committed to Net-Zero by 2050. Mayor Haila asked what role MidAmerican Energy plays in Des Moines' and Iowa City's goals since it uses wind energy. Ms. MacLean said she was unsure. She said Ames is in a unique position because of its own utility, and that she hopes there are funding opportunities that would offset some upfront capital costs.

**DISPOSITIONS OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:** Moved by Betcher, seconded by Corrieri, to request a memo from staff regarding the email from Cameron Gray regarding community libraries in city parks.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Junck, to ask Ames Main Street to present at the November 23, 2021 City Council meeting. Member Martin said he doesn't want to open it up for budget conversation. Member Betcher said an update would be appreciated without a budget conversation. Mayor Haila said he recently challenged the Board about the vision for Downtown.

Vote on Motion: 6-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

*Ex Officio* member Poundstone said Student Government joint meetings will start soon and he will share updated information with Council.

Member Gartin thanked the team that has been working on the CAP. He said he's very proud of the Council's past voting toward climate change. He said he knows there will be benefits from this process.

Member Betcher said she will attend the National League of Cities Conference is this week.

Mayor Haila said he appreciates the partnership with ISU and the work of *ex officio* member Poundstone.

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

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Diane R. Voss, City Clerk

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John A. Haila, Mayor

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Erin Thompson, Recording Secretary