COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **REQUEST TO JOIN MID-IOWA PLANNING ALLIANCE**

BACKGROUND:

On April 26, 2022, the City Council referred a letter from the newly formed Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance for Community Development (MIPA). MIPA is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting communities in Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Marion, Polk, Story, and Warren Counties which is being provided staff support through a contract with the Des Moines Area Planning Organization.

MIPA representatives suggest that by joining this organization the members will receive the following benefits:

- **Knowledge of available State and Federal grant opportunities**
- **Grant writing and grant administration services**
- **Technical assistance for map-making and local planning projects**
- **Preparation of Comprehensive Plans or Zoning Ordinance Updates (for additional cost above and beyond membership fee)**
- **City projects incorporated into a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy of an Economic Development District like MIPA should improve the competitiveness of the City's federal grant applications.**

MIPA has been designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as an Economic Development District. This designation will pay for 50% of the cost of a new staff member to provide the technical assistance listed above that is requested by the members, along with the availability of other Des Moines Area Planning Organization staff members. This initial EDA grant requires a 1 for 1 local match. **In order to raise these matching funds, a membership fee of $0.15 per capita has been established, for a total cost of $12,455 through June 30, 2023. (Note: the MIPA Board can increase this fee in subsequent years)**

The attached information indicates that many of the larger cities in the seven-county region have already joined, including: Des Moines, West Des Moines, Ankeny, Waukee, and Urbandale along with our neighbors (Boone, Huxley, Nevada, Story City, and Story County).

ALTERNATIVES:

1) Approve the request to join the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance through June 30, 2023 at a cost of $12,455. Funding for this initiative will have to come from the City Council's Contingency Account which has a balance of $85,209.

2) Decide not to join the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance at this time.

3) Refer the request to join the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance to staff to obtain additional information about membership.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff has been reluctant to recommend the City joining a regional planning organization where the entity must prioritize funding requests and make recommendations to the state or federal funding agency. In the past, the City grant requests received a lower priority from the planning agency than the larger cities. MIPA representatives have assured City staff that this will not be the case here. All grant application for members for the same funding program will be processed and sent in without prioritization or recommendation from MIPA.

While most of the services offered by MIPA can already be performed by City staff, the ability to utilize its staff for grant writing and grant administration could prove very beneficial to the City. Because most of the bids for City projects are coming in above budgeted amounts, there will be a need to pursue a greater number of state and federal grants in the coming year in order to proceed with many of the City projects. The assistance offered by MIPA for grantsmanship could free up a substantial amount of staff time. Pursuing membership in MIPA for one year will allow the City to evaluate the services offered and determine if continuing membership is warranted.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, as described above.

April 18, 2022

Mayor John Haila and City Council
Ames City Hall
515 Clark St.
Ames, IA 50010

Honorable Mayor Haila and City Council Members:

The City of Ames is formally invited to join the Mid-Iowa Planning Alliance for Community Development (MIPA), a new nonprofit organization that is dedicated to supporting communities in Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Marion, Polk, Story and Warren Counties.

MIPA was formed late last year by a group of city and county staff members, economic development professionals, and other stakeholders from the Mid-Iowa region. After much preparation, MIPA is now fully operational, effective April 1, and is providing professional planning, programming, and technical assistance to its members, including:

- Grant writing & administration
- Regional Planning, e.g. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- Other member support, e.g. technical assistance, map-making, and local planning
- Option to contract for local planning, such as comprehensive plans or zoning updates

MIPA will leverage federal grant dollars to help pay for staffing costs. MIPA was designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration as an "Economic Development District," which has several benefits. For one thing, the designation will open more funding opportunities for local projects. For another, it will provide $70,000 annually for staffing.

The federal grant for staffing requires 1-to-1 local match, which is why MIPA is charging annual membership dues of 15 cents per capita. For the first 15 months of MIPA's operations, those dues would come to $12,455 for the City of Ames. Membership is optional, so there's no cost if you don't join. Though we believe the benefits outweigh the costs and hope you will consider joining.

We have created a webpage (www.midiowaplanningalliance.com/membership) that outlines all the information about membership. The site includes a rate sheet, bylaws, general information about membership, instructions for joining, and a template resolution. As always, please feel free to reach out to our team if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Todd Ashby
CEO / Executive Director

CC: Steve Schainker

Supporting Economic Development in
Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Marion, Polk,
Story, and Warren Counties.