

ITEM #: 12
DATE: 12-09-25
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REQUESTS FROM AMES MAIN STREET TO EXTEND FREE PARKING TO INCLUDE ALL REMAINING SATURDAYS IN DECEMBER 2025

BACKGROUND:

Ames Main Street (AMS) previously submitted requests for Small Business Saturday on November 29, 2025, which included providing free parking at metered spaces in Downtown and Campustown. The City Council approved the requests and approved a transfer of \$2,468.25 from the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund to the Parking Fund to reimburse the waived fees. Due to a significant early snowfall event on that date, organizers asked for an additional round of these same requests for Saturday, December 6, 2025. This request was approved by the City Council in the Special Meeting held on Tuesday, December 3, 2025.

On December 4, 2025, AMS submitted a letter extending its request to include all remaining Saturdays in December in order to provide continued support to small businesses. To facilitate this, organizers are requesting a blanket Temporary Obstruction Permit and suspension of parking regulations and enforcement for the Downtown and Campustown Areas from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on December 13, 20, and 27, 2025 (**\$7,404.75 estimated loss to the Parking Fund**).

In February 2020, the City Council adopted the following new policy regarding metered parking waivers:

Metered parking fees will not be waived for special events. Any event organizers intending to provide free parking or to close metered parking spaces must reimburse the City's Parking Fund for the lost revenue. The City Council may consider waivers to this policy on a case-by-case basis for parking spaces that are obstructed by the event area (not for area-wide free parking).

A total of \$10,000 has been included in the FY 2025/26 adopted budget in the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund to support parking waivers. The table below illustrates the budget for these waivers:

Expenses		Funding Source	
Summer Sidewalk Sales	\$ 1,370.25		
Small Business Saturday	2,468.25		
Small Business Saturday Re-Do (approved)	2,468.25		
Winter Sidewalk Sales (approved)	1,370.25		

Additional Saturdays in December (this request)	7,404.75		
		Hotel/Motel Tax Fund	\$ 10,000.00
TOTAL	\$ 15,081.75	TOTAL	\$ 10,000.00
		Shortfall	-\$ 5,081.75

The request results in exceeding the budgeted amount by \$5,081.75. This amount can be taken from the available balance in the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund, which was \$1,635,024 as of September 30, 2025.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the requests for free parking in all of Downtown and Campustown for the remaining Saturdays in December 2025 as requested by Ames Main Street, including the waiver of fees, and transfer of \$7,404.75 from the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund to the Parking Fund.
2. Deny the requests.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Small Business Saturday is an annual event for the Downtown and Campustown areas. This event aims to attract people to Downtown and Campustown and promotes shopping locally to kick off the holiday shopping season. Although parking was made free on the original November 29 date, it was not heavily utilized due to the abnormally severe winter weather. Ames Main Street requested a second round of free parking on December 6 to compensate for this, but as of the time of this writing, another round of significant snowfall is expected on that date. To encourage local shopping on subsequent Saturdays to accommodate for these unusual snowfall events, Ames Main Street has requested additional free parking days in December. Sufficient funding is available to reimburse the Parking Fund for the loss of revenue. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as noted above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[AMS Letter of Request 12-4-25.pdf](#)