

ITEM #: 10
DATE: 02-24-26
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REQUESTS FROM AMES MAIN STREET FOR 515 DAY ON MAY 15, 2026

BACKGROUND:

Ames Main Street (AMS) plans to host “515 Day” on Friday, May 15, 2026. This event was implemented by Ames Main Street in 2021 with the intention of celebrating area code 515 through a variety of activities, such as 515-themed specials in businesses and giveaways to attract individuals to Downtown Ames.

The activities include a beer garden, live music on Douglas Avenue, and a family activity zone on Douglas Avenue. The events are free to attend. Organizers expect up to 1,000 people to participate in the activities. To facilitate the activities, Ames Main Street requests the following for May 15:

- Closures of 5th Street from Burnett Avenue through Douglas Avenue, Kellogg Avenue from Main Street to 5th Street, and Douglas Avenue from Main Street to 5th Street.
- Use of City electrical outlets and waiver of fees for electricity (estimated loss to Electric Fund of \$5).
- A blanket Temporary Obstruction Permit and a blanket Vending License for Downtown to allow stores to display and sell merchandise and for food truck vendors. A waiver of the Vending License fee is requested (\$50 loss to City Clerk’s Office).
- Local authority approval for a 5-Day (May 14-18, 2026) Special Class C Retail Alcohol License with Outdoor Service for Thirsty Pigs (515 Day Ames), 215 5th Street

Organizers will have trained volunteers to check IDs and staff the event area. Wristbands will be provided to those of legal age to consume alcohol. Ames Main Street staff and volunteers will monitor the crowd and staff the road closures.

REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION OF ENFORCEMENT OF *MUNICIPAL CODE* 17.16:

Organizers are again this year requesting the ability to allow patrons of all ages to be within the alcohol service area. This requires the City Council to suspend enforcement of Section 17.16 of the *Municipal Code*, which prohibits minors from being on the premises of an establishment where the primary sales are of alcoholic beverages. **In 2025, City staff provided a detailed analysis of the rationale for why, in this specific event, City staff was supportive of the request. The City Council approved the 2025 request and the event occurred with no issues observed by City staff. Therefore, staff is again recommending approval.** The analysis of the 2025 request remains applicable, and is provided below for the Council's reference:

Section 17.16 of the *Municipal Code* makes a distinction between alcohol-licensed premises that function more like a restaurant, with food sales making up the majority of the sales, and premises that function as a bar, where alcohol sales are a majority of the business. For the former, minors may be in the premises without a legal-age adult. For the latter, minors are not permitted without a legal-age adult accompanying them. The Police Department relies on

business records of transactions to make the determination regarding whether minors would be allowed or not under the ordinance's criteria.

Event organizers have requested suspension of *Municipal Code 17.16* to allow for event attendees to carry their beverages throughout the event space. Typically for events of this type, since the license holder sells the alcohol and separate vendors sell food and other items, and since no historical pattern of sales can be evaluated for intermittent events, the alcohol sales have been treated like a bar--a designated alcohol consumption area has been created using fencing, and those allowed in must either be 21 years of age or older, or (if the organizers wish) a minor child accompanied by their legal-age parent or guardian.

Ames Main Street has requested the ability to license the entire event area as the premises for the event and not be required to fence a separate beer garden area. This would allow attendees of all ages to move freely throughout the event area. Ames Main Street has entered into an agreement with Thirsty Pigs, of Madrid, IA, to host alcohol at the event. An alcohol license has been applied for by Thirsty Pigs and is currently awaiting local authority approval by the City Council.

The City has had a long history of requiring alcohol consumption for special events to occur in a designated area without intermingling of legal age adults and minors. The concern from staff has historically been the challenges observed with minors being able to obtain alcohol in establishments that advertise or operate like a bar, but where just enough food sales occur to qualify for minors to be allowed on the premises.

Staff discussed these issues with Ames Main Street and has developed a list of the specific circumstances for the proposed event that the Council could consider to justify allowing a suspension of Section 17.16 in this instance. It should be emphasized that other events in the future, with circumstances outside of these described below, are not likely to receive staff support to allow minors on the premises. The circumstances related to this event that may justify the requested suspension of enforcement of Section 17.16 include:

1. The event includes entertainment and activities that are the focus of the event (alcohol consumption is incidental to the event).
2. Food and non-alcoholic beverages will be offered in a meaningful variety. No distilled spirits are involved.
3. The event is non-ticketed, intended to be family-friendly, and includes promotional materials that suggest it as a family event.
4. It is organized by a locally established entity, with a track record of hosting events successfully and with an interest in continuing to do so.
5. The event will conclude by 8:00 p.m., placing the event entirely during daylight hours.
6. The event area is in a portion of the Downtown that does not contain a significant number of other alcohol-licensed establishments, minimizing the need to manage the area between licensed premises to ensure alcohol does not travel from one premises to another.

Activities will require the closure of 83 metered parking spaces for 8 metered hours, resulting in a loss of approximately \$332 to the Parking Fund. Organizers have requested that this amount be waived by the City Council. The Council's policy regarding the closure of metered parking in an area less than an entire business district

is to consider the waiver of such fees on a case-by-case basis.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Ames Main Street will send email notifications to Downtown businesses in the event area. Additionally, Ames Main Street staff will canvas the area to visit with the businesses in person, explaining the event location and handing out informational posters.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the requests for 515 Day as described above, including the requested waivers of fees, and the 5-Day (May 14-18, 2026) Special Class C Retail Alcohol License with Outdoor Service for Thirsty Pigs (515 Day Ames), 215 5th Street.
2. Approve the requests as indicated above, but require reimbursement for the blanket Vending License, electricity use, and lost parking meter revenue.
3. Approve the requests as indicated above, but deny waiver of *Municipal Code* 17.16 for the event area.
4. Deny the requests.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

515 Day provides an opportunity to attract visitors to Downtown Ames. The events include family friendly activities and promotions that support local businesses. **Given the small dollar amount and number of parking spaces involved, staff believes it is reasonable to waive the parking fees for this event, along with the other requested fee waivers.**

Ames Main Street is a well-established local entity that has successfully hosted many events with alcohol components in Downtown. With future event approvals subject to City staff review, the organization has considerable incentive to ensure a safe, well-run event. Additionally, City staff maintains documentation of any issues or concerns observed and refers to it for any future requests from the organization. Staff believes that the factors listed in the report above, along with the track record in 2025 where the event occurred with no issues, make a case to support a waiver of enforcement of Section 17.16 of the *Municipal Code*. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[05.15 515 Days LOS.pdf](#)

[515 Days Application.pdf](#)

[515 Days - Map.pdf](#)