

**MINUTES
CITY OF AMES
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION**

Date: May 5, 2010	Kori Heuss, Chairperson	2011
	Jeff Johnson	2011
Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.	Justin Platts	2012
	Chuck Jons	2012
Place: Ames City Hall	Elizabeth Beck, Vice-Chairperson	2012
Council Chambers	Norman Cloud	2013
	Mark Stenberg	2013
Adjournment: 9:04 p.m.	All Members Were Present	

MAJOR TOPICS DISCUSSED:

1. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Allow Small Wind Energy Systems in Planned Commercial (PRC), Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC), General Industrial (GI), and Planned Industrial (PI) Zoning Districts as an Accessory Use
 2. Annual Review of Commission Bylaws
 3. Discussion of Upcoming Joint Workshop with City Council
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CALL TO ORDER: Kori Heuss, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (JONS/JOHNSON) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of May 5, 2010.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF APRIL 7, 2010:

MOTION: (CLOUD/BECK) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of April 7, 2010.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

PUBLIC FORUM: There were no public comments.

Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Allow Small Wind Energy Systems in Planned Commercial (PRC), Highway-Oriented Commercial (HOC), General Industrial (GI), and Planned Industrial (PI) Zoning Districts as an Accessory Use

Sam Perry, planner, gave an overview of the proposed text amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. Interest in small-scale on-site power production has increased over the past few years. In 2008 and 2009, the city received inquiries from a few property owners who desired to install small wind turbines to supplement their electric power consumption. During that same time period, inquiries were also made about the possibility of installing solar photovoltaic panels and solar water heating systems. In August 2009, City Council reviewed possible solar and wind policies and decided to review solar and wind zoning text changes separately. As a result, the City Council passed regulations for on-site solar energy systems in November 2009. Policy

option concepts for wind were brought forward to Council in February 2010. The Council directed staff to prepare text amendments to allow wind energy systems in the following four zoning districts:

1. Planned Regional Commercial
2. Highway-Oriented Commercial
3. General Industrial
4. Planned Industrial

The proposal reflects many outcomes of the Planning & Zoning Commission's initial direction to engage the public through informal workshops and various methods of input. Although there was significant interest expressed verbally at those meetings, there are currently no pending requests for wind turbines in residential districts. Because of the lack of active interest, as well as some compatibility concerns, the Council directed staff to not incorporate residential zones. Currently, there is active interest on a few properties within commercial and industrial zones.

Elizabeth Beck asked staff to clarify the chapter location referred to in Section III – General Regulations, Item a, in the sentence that reads: *“The Zoning Permit may be revoked by the City of Ames any time the approved system does not comply with the rules set forth in this chapter.”* She suggested that the language be more specific about the location of the chapter referenced so that the reader will know where to get the information.

Discussion occurred between staff and the Commission about why the Council did not want to allow wind systems in residential areas. Steve Osguthorpe, Director, explained that this text amendment is scaled back from what the Commission looked at when it was originally drafted to include residential areas. He said he believes the Council wants to be conservative by allowing wind systems in commercial areas first, with the possibility of considering them in the residential areas once people get used to them.

Norman Cloud said he likes the language as it is written for the commercial zones, but is concerned that it doesn't allow an opportunity for wind systems of any type for the residential areas. He said he wishes there is a way we could pass this language as it is, and still have some sort of process for people in residential areas that are really interested in this type of energy system.

Ms. Beck asked if it would be possible to have two sections; one for wind systems in residential and a separate one for commercial.

Mr. Osguthorpe reminded the Commission that we included the residential areas when this was before the Commission earlier; however, the direction from the Council was for the commercial zones only, which is why this language does not provide for or anticipate for residential wind energy.

Mark Stenberg said it was stated at the beginning of the presentation that this text is a starting point. People may be a bit leery about the impacts of these systems and having them in the commercial zones first will allow them to see and experience them. He said he thinks this is a good starting point and an introduction of these systems into the city.

Mr. Osguthorpe said it is also important to remember that this is not imposing a restriction; it is actually making provisions for something that is currently not allowed at all.

Justin Platts said he agrees with Mark. This language seems to be well researched, well written, and very comprehensive as far as the areas it includes.

Ken Howe, Ken's Appliance, 230 Washington Avenue, as well as owner of property located at 811 South Duff, Ames, Iowa, asked for clarification on the language that *"no more than one free-standing small wind energy system may be placed on any lot that is taller than the existing principal building."* Mr. Perry explained that anyone wanting to put three turbines on their property would only be allowed to install one that exceeds the height of the existing principal building; the other two would have to meet the height standards.

Mr. Howe explained that he has been having discussions with two manufacturers. One is telling him that the tower needs to be 80 feet or more in order to get significant power, and the other one is saying that there only has to be a four mph wind to generate power. He said they are currently in the process of trying to monitor the wind on his building located at 811 South Duff, which is taller than any other building around. Mr. Howe again asked for clarification that if he has five acres of land, he would only be allowed to put up one tower that is taller than the existing principal building. Mr. Osguthorpe replied that he can have more than one tower, but only one of them can be taller than the principal building. Mr. Howe said allowing only one tower taller than the principal building doesn't make any sense if the tower has to be 80 feet or above in order to get a reasonable power.

Mr. Perry said the language for the limit on the height and allowing only one system taller than the principal building came from the Des Moines Metro Area Council of Governments model ordinance.

Mr. Osguthorpe said that is not to say that this is the language we should adopt if there is something in the language the Commission thinks needs to be changed. He said he believes the reason the height limitation is there is for aesthetic purposes, which is very subjective, but the Commission and the Council should be the ones to determine what the appropriate aesthetic standards should be.

Mr. Howe said what he is questioning is what the usage would be versus the cost for payback, and would like to see the language changed to not limit the number of towers taller than the principal building.

MOTION: (BECK/CLOUD) to accept Alternative #1, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the text amendments allowing wind energy systems in the PRC, HOC, GI, and PI zoning districts, which would amend Chapter 29, Articles 5 and 13.

Discussion occurred on amending the language that would allow how many systems can be placed on any parcel or lot that can be taller than the height of the principal building.

MOTION: (BECK/CLOUD) previous motion withdrawn.

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

MOTION: (BECK/JONS) to accept Alternative #1, as amended, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the text amendments allowing wind energy systems in the PRC, HOC, GI, and PI zoning districts, which would amend Chapter 29, Articles 5 and 13 ***with the deletion of the language in Section IV, 6.a and 6.b.***

MOTION PASSED: 7-0

Annual Review of Commission Bylaws

The Commission made no changes to the Bylaws.

Discussion of Upcoming Joint Workshop with City Council

Mr. Osguthorpe mentioned that a joint work session between the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council, and the Historic Preservation Commission and the City Council, will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18, in the Council Chambers. He reminded the Commission of its priorities that were forwarded to the Council in December, which is the same list that was forwarded to the Council in 2008. However, the precursor to addressing the listed items was the evaluation of the assumptions and projections which the LUPP goals and policies were based upon. The Council therefore directed staff to do that analysis, which was presented to them on December 22 in a report titled *LUPP Update: A Snapshot*. Accordingly, in addition to the attached listed items, the Commission also requested review of any sections of the LUPP that may need updated to reflect the data provided in said report.

Mr. Osguthorpe said what he would like the Commission to do tonight is review the priorities and make sure they are clear on what the thoughts were then, discuss how they would like to present them to the Council, and create an agenda to help with the discussion with the Council at the work session.

Mr. Osguthorpe mentioned the items that are already in the works:

- Relooking at the Targeted Growth areas (growth priorities and direction)
- The updating of the Long Range Transportation Plan by the Public Works Department

After a lengthy discussion, each Commission member listed their top three priorities to be considered as an agenda item:

Chuck Jons:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation
- Industrial Land
- Village Concept - why are we incentivizing it, where does the village concept fit in with the present City Council's direction?

Justin Platts:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation - it is a foundational piece for the rest of the topics

Elizabeth Beck:

- Planning Base – because that will bring in the hard data
- Transportation
- Planning for a Specific District – specifically Campustown

Kori Heuss:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation
- Industrial Land
- Density

Jeff Johnson:

- The City's vision – none of this makes sense unless we have a vision; whatever we work on needs to support the Council's vision

Norman Cloud:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation
- Growth Priorities and Direction – ties into things like school district, cost of infrastructure, the ability to control how much expansion we have versus revitalization of what we have
- Industrial Land

Mark Stenberg:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation – ties into second point of planning base and looking at data
- Vision for City is a fluid thing - get clarification from the City Council
- Density – this issue comes up quite a bit so we need to get some clarification from Council on if this is a priority

Based on the Commission's individual list of priorities, the agenda for the Council workshop is:

- LUPP and Zoning Evaluation / Planning Base
- Industrial Land
- Growth Priority & Direction, which includes density
- Vision for Ames

Ms. Heuss explained that she will put together comments based on tonight's discussion and e-mail them to the Commission for input. The Commission will meet prior to the meeting with the Council.

Norman Cloud and Jeff Johnson indicated that they will not be in attendance at the work session with Council on May 18.

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Mr. Platts thanked staff for the presentation on wind energy systems, as well as Mr. Howe for his input on the same topic.

Mr. Platts then spoke about the power of design guidelines and enforcement. He encouraged the Commission to visit the Casey's Store at Jordan Creek Mall in West Des Moines, Iowa. He said this store is pretty incredible in light of the fact that we were told at our last meeting that the store in Ames would be the best Casey's that they have ever done.

STAFF COMMENTS: Staff reviewed the tentative agenda for the meeting of May 19, 2010.

With no further business coming before the Commission, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Kori Heuss, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission

Cindy L. Hollar, Recording Secretary
Department of Planning & Housing

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