

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

Date: April 18, 2012	Norman Cloud, Chairperson	2013
	Mark Stenberg	2013
Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.	* Jeff Johnson	2014
	Troy Siefert	2014
Place: Ames City Hall	Debra Lee, Vice Chairperson	2015
Council Chambers	Rob Bowers	2015
	Yvonne Wannemuehler	2015
Adjournment: 10:15 p.m.	*Absent	

MAJOR TOPICS DISCUSSED:

1. Rezoning to Amend the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan for Ringgenberg Park Subdivision and to Amend the Zoning Map Designation of Outlot E to Government/Airport (S-GA)
2. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Add an Exception for the Striping of Parking Spaces Designated for the Outdoor Display of Vehicles for Sale or Lease
3. Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Adopt Alternative Landscaping Standards for Auto & Marine Craft Trade Uses, and to Adopt a Definition of "Lawn"
4. Subdivision Ordinance Text Amendment to Adopt Provisions for "Integrated Site Plan Subdivision"

CALL TO ORDER: Norman Cloud called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

MOTION: (STENBERG/SIEFERT) to nominate Norman Cloud as Chairperson of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

MOTION: (SIEFERT/STENBERG) to nominate Debra Lee as Vice Chairperson of the Planning & Zoning Commission.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

MOTION: (LEE/BOWERS) to approve the Agenda for the meeting of April 18, 2012.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MARCH 21, 2012:

MOTION: (STENBERG/SIEFERT) to approve the Minutes of the meeting of March 21, 2012.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

PUBLIC FORUM: Katherine Fromm, 3531 GW Carver, Ames, Iowa, spoke to the Commission about how Iowa should be preparing for global warming. She explained that she was born and raised in Escondido, California and lives there in the winter. She spoke to the Commission about what California is doing to prepare for global warming. She listed the states that are ranked in preparation for global warming: California, Washington, Oregon, and Wisconsin. Other states that are preparing not knowing how they are ranked are: New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Vermont. Such an event means preparation and re-ordering the way we operate and putting civilization on a different level. This also means there has to be power to force people to do things they do not like, which is what the state of California is doing.

Ms. Fromm then spoke about the construction that is occurring on South Duff within the flood plain. She stated that, constructing those buildings three feet higher here and there is not progress and preparing for the future.

Rezoning to Amend the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan for Ringgenberg Park Subdivision and to Amend the Zoning Map Designation of Outlot E to Government/Airport (S-GA)

Jeff Benson, planner, gave an overview of the proposed preliminary plat/major site development plan for Ringgenberg Park, and the amendment to the zoning map designation of Outlot E.

Ringgenberg Estates, L.L.C. is requesting approval of a revised Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan to exclude Outlot E, by changing the overall boundary of the area that the Zoning Map designates as Planned Residence District (F-PRD). Thus, a new zoning district must be designated for Outlot E. Most other property in the city that Iowa State University owns is designated on the zoning map as Government/Airport (S-GA). Therefore, a zoning map amendment is proposed to change the zoning designation of Outlot E from Planned Residence District (F-PRD) to Government/Airport (S-GA).

The proposed rezoning reduces the total F-PRD property from 96.22 acres to 55.30 acres and reduces the total number of lots for single family detached residences from 199 to 109. The revised Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan modifies the design of streets, utilities, and the stormwater management system. It allows development of 31 lots for single-family detached residences, completing the project. Because F-PRD zoning establishes zoning standards “as per plan,” approval of a revised Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan for an area zoned F-PRD essentially rezones the property from the original plan to a new plan.

The revisions to the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan were anticipated when the plat was approved that led to the sale of 40 acres of the project site to Iowa State University. The proposed amendments will have a minimal impact on the previously approved Planned Residence Development. However, the City staff concludes that:

- Providing a cul-de-sac at the south end of Red Fox Road does not meet the City’s standards and that it would be prudent over the long-term future to provide right-of-way for a future street extension.
- The proposed revision to the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan reduces the area of the Planned Residence District zoning; therefore a different zoning designation is needed for Outlot E. Government/Airport (S-GA) is the zoning classification of most land owned by Iowa State University in the city. It is important to note the Ames Land Use

Policy Plan designation for this will remain Village/Suburban Residential, which guides future use should the property be sold.

Norman Cloud asked for clarification that Iowa State University is requesting in their letter that there not be a cul-de-sac but a continued through street as was shown on the original plan. Mr. Benson said he believes that they are requesting that some accommodation be made to extending that street through in the future should it ever be necessary. Mr. Cloud asked if that is because they want access to their parcel. Mr. Benson said if the right-of-way was extended, the main access would be Cedar Lane on the east side, which is there, but that would be a secondary access into that parcel.

Mark Stenberg asked for clarification that the right-of-way will be retained for that connection to the Iowa State property and retained as green space until the road is constructed. Mr. Benson said that is what staff is proposing.

Mr. Stenberg said he is assuming that Iowa State would like access to that field on that side of its property. He asked how they would access this property from the north if they were to develop it for an agricultural purpose. Mr. Benson said they would need to make an agreement with the City Council because the City owns the right-of-way.

Debra Lee asked if Red Fox Road will potentially go out to Oakwood Road since there are no plans of any kind for the north side of the property. Mr. Benson said there is a master plan for that property, which essentially shows some apartment-type buildings and some private streets. If there is going to be a public road or any kind of development of that property, there would need to be a preliminary and final plat, which is when it will be decided if a road will go out to Oakwood Road. The intention of the City is to use Cedar and Cottonwood as collector streets and have access go to them. Cedar would then go to Oakwood instead of providing more access points onto Oakwood.

Rob Bowers asked if Lots 108 and 109 are already owned and developed. Mr. Benson said no; everything south of this line has not been platted. Mr. Bowers asked if there were future development beyond the cul-de-sac, would there have to be an easement written into the development plan for Lots 108 and 109. Mr. Benson said they can dedicate the street right-of-way now, which is what staff is proposing. Another way to do it is to provide some kind of easement.

Mr. Osguthorpe said the concern with an easement is when you measure setbacks for the structures on those lots, you measure from the property line. The property line may be right in the middle of that easement so you could basically build a house right up to the edge of it. An actual street right-of-way defines the property line from which your setback is measured. The right-of-way is the better option in terms of ensuring that you don't have a house right up against what would potentially become the street pavement.

Kurt Friedrich, Friedrich Companies, developer, showed a plan depicting a pedestrian easement that is being proposed to the south. He stated that the map shown depicting the conceptual design the City created with the 55 foot right-of-way does not accurately depict the effect of the right-of-way being put in place. What happens is that 55 feet will take away about 27-1/2 feet north and south from each of Lots 108 and 109. This significantly reduces the size of both of those lots, and with the side yard setbacks the envelope for building on those two lots is significantly compromised.

Mr. Friedrich said Iowa State approached them about wanting to purchase some property for the sole purpose of having a buffer zone between the residential development and their new dairy farms and operations to the south. He said it is his belief that there is no intent on Iowa State's part of selling that land and seeing it developed.

Mr. Friedrich went on to explain that the two arterial streets in this area are Cedar and Cottonwood. The responsible thing to do from a development standpoint is to direct the vehicular traffic to those larger, arterial streets and not to promote heavier use of the local streets, which is what potentially what would happen if the right-of-way is created and if the land were sold and developed to the south. They want the traffic to go back out to Cedar and not compromise the ability to build on these two lots. They are prohibited to access Oakwood via Red Fox by the current plat. There are no plans to take Red Fox forward so it doesn't really make sense that it should continue south.

Mr. Friedrich stated that they are concerned with the request to insert the right-of-way because it diminishes the desirability of the two lots. However, they are delighted to be able to bring 31 new lots to the community. These will be the first residential lots built in Ames in over 18 months and all 31 of these lots are in the Ames School District.

Mr. Cloud asked if the current residents have been notified that the swimming pool and clubhouse are no longer being proposed. Mr. Friedrich said yes. It became clear that it was not financially sensible to build the clubhouse and pool when they sold the property to Iowa State because it reduced the number of home sites in the subdivision from approximately 200 to 110. In consideration to doing that, they gave the site along Cedar that was originally intended for the three lake lots to the association, and constructed a playground facility and pedestrian trails around the lake.

Ken Krumple, 2519 Timberland Road, Ames, Iowa, representing the Timberland Neighborhood Association, asked for clarification on what the strips are for between Lots 81 and 82 and 84 and 85. Mr. Krumple further mentioned that there was significant grading done last summer in the new area and wanted to know if additional grading will occur again in this area.

Mr. Friedrich clarified that the area between Lots 84 and 85 is a planned pedestrian easement to allow access to the trails. There is a similar type of access between Lots 74 and 75 to the north in the existing plat. Between Lots 81 and 82 is an easement for a storm sewer. With regard to the grading, Mr. Friedrich stated that they have done the majority of the grading for this area; however, some minor additional grading will occur as contractors complete the underground utilities and the paving of the roads.

MOTION: (STENBERG/WANNEMUEHLER) to accept Alternative #2, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission can recommend that the City Council approve the rezoning to amend to the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan for Ringgenberg Park Subdivision and to amend the Zoning Map designation of Outlot E to Government/Airport (S-GA), with the following conditions:

No conditions were stated when the motion was made.

Mr. Stenberg said there doesn't appear to be a good reason to have a right-of-way through there other than the City doesn't like cul-de-sacs. Iowa State will most likely not sell its property for future development and will more than likely use the property for their own purpose.

Encouraging traffic to go through a low-density residential neighborhood to access an institutional lot is not a good idea when the same purpose can be served through Cedar Lane.

Mr. Osguthorpe suggested that if the Commission recommends that there be a pedestrian easement, that it be clearly stated as a public pedestrian easement.

Yvonne Wannemuehler suggested that we include the walk easement as a condition since it wasn't included as part of the packet we originally saw. Mr. Benson clarified that the materials included in the Commission's packet did include the sheet showing the sidewalks.

Ms. Lee said she thinks what Steve is suggesting is that the Commission might want to add as an amended condition that it is defined as a public access for clarity purposes.

Mr. Cloud suggested that the Commission could state that it must be a paved access and not just an easement access.

Ms. Wannemuehler said she doesn't see why we would want it paved because that would encourage people to walk into the ISU property. But the fact that it is there and clarified that it is public would be important at the very least.

Mr. Stenberg inserted a condition to be included with the motion that the right-of-way is a public pedestrian easement.

Troy Siefert said it appears that Red Fox Road was originally intended to run the whole length of the subdivision, and the developer didn't seem to have a problem with it serving that purpose when it served that use. He said we don't have a crystal ball to tell the future of what is going to happen to that land to the south, and we have seen what happened up north when we limited options for circulation and it wasn't in the public's best interest. He said he is more in favor of going with what staff is proposing, which is Alternative #1.

Ms. Lee reminded the Commission about the recent meeting with the City Council and we were expressing concern about decisions that were made in the past that created traffic flow problems that were not apparent at the time and then became a problem when development occurred. She said it is very hard for her after just having had that discussion to turn around and make a decision to enable a cul-de-sac that ends a street when we cannot know if a property will develop or not.

Mr. Cloud asked if there be enough access off of Cedar Lane to develop what we see on the original site plan if a cul-de-sac were developed.

Mr. Osguthorpe explained that it is the recommendation of the City's traffic engineer to have the property extend and not have a cul-de-sac. He said he cannot speak to whether or not there is capacity on Cedar Lane; all we can forward to the Commission is what the subdivision code states in terms of discouraging cul-de-sacs and the comments we received from the traffic engineer on that issue.

MOTION FAILS: 2-4 (Cloud, Lee, Siefert, and Wannemuehler voted against the motion.)

Mr. Siefert said when the applicant sold the land to Iowa State, there was no guarantee that they could develop the land as it had been previously platted.

Mr. Osguthorpe said this PRD is one collective approved plan comprised of multiple ownerships, which is why the City needed to get Iowa State's statement before moving forward. We needed to know if they are interested in retaining the PRD on their portion of the property or if they had other interests that they want to make sure are addressed in moving forward.

Mr. Stenberg asked the applicant if there was a discussion or an agreement made about keeping the right-of-way when this property was sold to Iowa State. Mr. Friedrich said no. He said he spoke to an Iowa State representative today about this and thinks the City had requested a letter from them about this issue. Obviously selling the land to Iowa State does change the whole picture, but there was no agreement that there would be a right-of-way established there to continue Red Fox Road to the south.

Mr. Cloud said he understands that the City does not like cul-de-sacs or dead ends because fire trucks cannot turn around. Mr. Benson said the City doesn't typically approve something if the road came to a dead end. The City does have a regulation for fire trucks turning around so there would be some accommodation made at least temporarily for a fire truck to turn around. He said the City isn't opposed to cul-de-sacs; our diagram shows a cul-de-sac. What we are in favor of is connectivity and inter-connected street network as the city grows.

Mr. Friedrich said he thinks that they have provided ample connectivity within their development with the two arterial streets that exist (Cedar and Cottonwood). They do have the right-of-way at the end of Cottonwood for a future connection to the west, which is highly unlikely to happen since the property is owned by Iowa State.

Ms. Wannemuehler said Iowa State has sold some of its property in the past. Mr. Friedrich said that is true, but not in this area. Iowa State has identified this area as their research corridor and it is of primary importance for them to retain this land.

Mr. Siefert asked Mark to clarify his opposition to having the right-of-way.

Mr. Stenberg said he thinks that access is adequately served with the north-south route. If Iowa State wants to have access to their property from the north, we are then looking at increased traffic through a residential neighborhood to access an institutional site. Maybe there will be a buffer and the property will remain a field with trees, or maybe they will sell it. But more than likely it will remain Iowa State property and that access is going to be served by some institutional-type traffic that can easily be served by Cedar Lane.

Mr. Siefert said he is thinking from the perspective of if the land were sold in the future and there was a need to invade traffic through there. He said he is not looking at it from the perspective of Iowa State needing a driveway there to access their land because it appears that is already being served with the existing infrastructure.

Ms. Lee said she is not expressing concerns about Iowa State access. She said she is concerned about the cul-de-sac and about the future for traffic flow for things we will probably not even be here to know if it ever mattered or not. She said she is trying to envision how big of a bottle neck it's going to create if we allow a cul-de-sac at the south end of Red Fox now.

Mr. Bowers asked if we will get another opportunity to look at this property if we change this to Government/Airport and then at some point in time Iowa State sells this property or chooses on their own to develop it.

Mr. Osguthorpe explained that if Iowa State sells the property to private hands it will have to be rezoned to a residential zone. This action tonight will basically erase the plan on Iowa State's property so they will have to come back with a new plan.

Mr. Bowers said if he understands the process, we will then be able to look at that when that happens. Ms. Lee said the problem with that is there will be houses built on Lots 108 and 109 and it will be too late to look at that connection.

Mr. Cloud asked if there is a way to put a cul-de-sac in there and leave the easement and not remove one or two of the parcels of land. Mr. Osguthorpe said you could leave a cul-de-sac with either the easement or the extension of the right-of-way. The difference is going to be if it's the easement, there may be some setback issues should we ever need to extend the street through the easement. If it's right-of-way, you will still have the configuration of the cul-de-sac. It is the City's expectation that at least until the easement or right-of-way is needed, that the cul-de-sac configuration be retained. The issue is that the people that buy that kind of a lot are not happy when the City does need to extend it.

MOTION: (SIEFERT/WANNEMUEHLER) to accept Alternative #1, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the rezoning to amend to the Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan for Ringgenberg Park Subdivision and to amend the Zoning Map designation of Outlot E to Government/Airport (S-GA) with the following condition:

- a. The Preliminary Plat/Major Site Development Plan shall be revised to show the right-of-way for Red Fox Road extended to the south property line of Outlot D including sufficient right-of-way for a fire truck turnaround.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Add an Exception for the Striping of Parking Spaces Designated for the Outdoor Display of Vehicles for Sale or Lease

Ray Anderson, planner, gave an overview of the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

A new automobile dealership is proposed, and an existing dealership is expanding its business operations. The owners and representatives of these developments have brought specific zoning code requirements to staff's attention that, in their opinion, are problematic for the display of vehicles for sale or lease.

One such Code requirement for which a change is requested is the requirement that parking spaces for vehicles on outdoor display for sale or lease must be striped, the same as parking spaces that are used by the customers, employees and others.

Outdoor Display means the outdoor exhibition of products, vehicles, equipment and machinery for sale or for lease. Uses that often have outdoor displays include car and boat sales and plant nurseries. Outdoor display does not include goods that are being stored or parked outside.

The proposed zoning text amendment to grant an exception for the striping of parking areas used for the outdoor display of vehicles for sale or lease is a reasonable change to the current parking requirements. Parking spaces used by customers, employees and others require minimum dimensions for parking, circulation throughout the parking lot, and access in and out of the site. Vehicles for sale or lease that are on display do not require the same accommodations for maneuvering on the site, since the vehicles are not moved frequently and the purpose is for “display”, not “access” to and from the site.

Discussion occurred about clarifying the exception language. It was decided that the exception language will be inserted at the end of the sentence instead of in the middle, which will clarify the exception.

Danny Wilson, Wilson, Toyota, Scion, applicant, said this particular amendment offers the flexibility that they need the most. He explained that the display area they have incorporated in the design of the outlay of their dealership is constantly fluctuating to market their products. He said they need the flexibility and appreciates the Commission’s consideration on this amendment.

MOTION: (STENBERG/BOWERS) to accept Alternative #1, as revised, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the zoning text amendment to Section 29.406(11)(b) to grant an exception for the striping of parking areas designated for the outdoor display of vehicles for sale or lease, by including the “underlined text”, as follows:

Section 29.406(11)(b) Striping. All parking areas must be striped in accordance with the dimension standards described in Figure 29.406(9) to clearly delineate parking spaces and drive aisles for use by customer, employee, business and other vehicles, except parking areas designated for outdoor display of vehicles for sale or lease.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment to Adopt Alternative Landscaping Standards for Auto & Marine Craft Trade Uses, and to Adopt a Definition of “Lawn”

Steve Osguthorpe, director, gave an overview of the proposed amendment to the Zoning Ordinance.

The City Council referred to staff a request from Wilson Toyota Scion, to evaluate and amend the landscaping requirements for automobile dealerships that would give more flexibility.

This request was prompted by a recent application from Wilson Toyota to amend their site plan to incorporate into their site the property directly south of the main dealership site. When reviewing required landscaping for the amended site, it became evident that some of the current landscaping requirements are at odds with some of the ways auto dealers prefer to market their product. This is significant because the product line of auto dealers is largely placed outdoors on surface parking lots. In this sense, the parking lot becomes the dealer’s product “showroom”, where the dealership strives to maintain the same flexibility in arranging its product as might otherwise occur in an indoor showroom.

Staff believes that the proposed amendments address the stated essential needs of auto dealers interested in developing or expanding in Ames, while also reflecting the purpose and intent statement of current landscaping regulations.

Troy Siefert asked if the proposed definition of lawn will include residential, as well as commercial properties. Mr. Osguthorpe explained that the definition will go into the definition section of the Code and would apply wherever the word lawn is used in the Code. Mr. Siefert said he finds that problematic because lawns or peoples yards have evolved and aren't just manicured turf grass. If we are going to impose that kind of a rule or standard that will include most of the properties within the city, then more thought would be needed on his part.

Mr. Siefert stated that his other concern is that it seems like landscaping is sometimes the first thing to go in a commercial setting. There are often times arguments from business owners that too much landscaping is unnecessary and more often than not we have accommodated the business owners.

Danny Wilson, Wilson Toyota Scion, applicant, stated that they understand the City has minimum landscaping standards that needs to be abided by; they do not have a problem with landscaping and would like to do as much as they possibly can. However, they are concerned with the current language pertaining to the location of trees because of the damage that occurs to the vehicles from tree sap and birds and would like to be allowed some flexibility about the location of trees. He appreciated the added flexibility the proposed standards would provide. He explained that they will be putting in more landscaping and they already spend a lot of time trying to soften the place up because of the concrete, metal, and glass that is associated with their business. He said the biggest thing for them is that they have had some merchandising issues because of the damage from the trees, and appreciates the Commission's consideration on this.

Norman Cloud asked for clarification that there will be more clustering of trees out on the edge of the lot. Mr. Osguthorpe said this doesn't get into requiring any larger trees – it basically states that there will be clusters no less than three trees every 200 feet. He said there is quite a bit of flexibility in the Code now about types of trees; we don't specify to the type and height of detail for trees.

Mr. Osguthorpe addressed the concern Troy expressed about the term lawn. He said the term can be placed just within the context of this section of the Code instead of putting it in the general definition section. Mr. Siefert said this is important to him because it's so broad reaching and thinks more thought needs to be put into it.

Mr. Cloud expressed concern that in trying to meet the need of the applicant that we could open up precedence so that others can come in and use the same need requirement. Mr. Osguthorpe said that would happen only if the Code allowed it; the way it is drafted now would not allow it to be used for any other use except for auto and marine craft trade.

Scott Renaud, FOX Engineering, said one of the problems he sees with these types of changes is typically we end up with a lot of non-conforming uses. Every car dealership in town, including the Wilson's, will be non-conforming and is curious how those non-conformities will be handled in the future. He said he understands that the amendment is basically moving the landscaping to the exterior of the property but it still creates the same problems. He reiterated the concerns of Mr. Wilson about the damage to the cars because of the trees.

Mr. Renaud expressed concern about the proposed language pertaining to the clustering of trees and the proposed language pertaining to landscaping around the perimeter of all principle facades visible from a public street -- particularly the minimum depth of five feet. He then spoke about how he doesn't agree with the language pertaining to shrubs. He has received comments from his clients that they don't like shrubs because they require more maintenance than trees.

Mr. Renaud said he is not certain that we have gained much from this amendment. We really haven't eliminated the landscaping on the interior we just changed its location; we put it around the building and around the perimeter. He said he appreciates the attempt to make it more flexible, but in the end he is not certain this is a huge improvement for what they are trying to do. Car dealerships have a very specific need to have a minimal amount of landscaping, and they need a little more flexibility than maybe what is being proposed. We have talked about flexibility and yet it seems like this is more prescriptive.

Mr. Osguthorpe responded to the concerns expressed by Mr. Renaud.

Pertaining to the concern about the non-conforming issue:

This is an alternative standard so if a building is non-conforming today it's non-conforming under the current code. This amendment will not make it non-conforming; this simply gives another option for new developments that come in to have a different approach to it. This amendment doesn't replace the current standards; it is in addition to and an alternative to the current standards. It is possible that the existing car dealerships in town are non-conforming under the current landscaping standards.

Pertaining to the tree spacing around the building:

This amendment was intentionally drafted as one tree per 50 feet, which is a ratio -- it's not one every 50 feet. The intent is to specify the ratio and then cluster them however the area is configured.

Pertaining to the clustering:

The intent is to reasonably reflect the existing purpose statement in the Code about shading the pavement. Putting the trees to the edge leaves the interior exposed and they are trying to at least get some shadowing along the perimeter, whether it is 8 feet or some other dimension based upon the tree height. There may be other ways to figure that out and is open to suggestions or ideas.

Mr. Osguthorpe reiterated that his approach was to respect the purpose and intent statement for landscaping in our current Code and not just ignore it.

Mr. Wilson said there are a lot of things that go into the landscaping side of it. He said there are six or seven car dealerships in Ames and is an industry that is a little unique. The biggest thing to offer is just the flexibility. He said if there are different options to work from, he thinks most or all of them will in good faith work really hard to maintain that, which is the spirit that they have worked under with staff during this process.

An extensive discussion occurred between the Commission and staff addressing some of the concerns expressed about the proposed amendments, which resulted in modifications and/or clarifications the Commission would like addressed.

MOTION: (STENBERG/LEE) to accept Alternative #2, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the zoning code text amendment adopting alternative standards for auto and marine craft trade uses, and adopting a definition of “lawn” with the following modifications:

- Clarify the intent of the tree clustering language in Section ii (full paragraph in subsection (i.a.ii)) to help address applicant’s concerns about protecting cars but still keeps the landscaping attractive.
- Change the language in Section ii. Item a. to read: Minimum landscape area equivalent to 5 feet times the length of each visible facade.
- Ensure that the lawn definition applies only to this section of the Code.
- Clarify that lawn or groundcover plants as defined covers but does not exclude prairie plantings.

The Commission agreed that staff will make the proposed modifications and/or clarifications and forward the Commission’s recommendations directly to City Council.

Mr. Siefert suggested that it be stated that lawn may include naturalized plantings but shall not include noxious weeds. He said he wants to make sure that if a customer wanted to utilize plantings that would allow them to minimize or eliminate fertilizers, watering, and weed control, that we allow that. Mr. Osguthorpe said he hears the concerns and thinks this is something that we want to tackle and address in the broader landscape discussion.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

The Commission took a five minute recess at 9:55 p.m. and reconvened at 10:00 p.m.

Subdivision Ordinance Text Amendment to Adopt Provisions for “Integrated Site Plan Subdivision”

Steve Osguthorpe, director, gave an overview of the propose amendment to the Subdivision Ordinance.

The City Council referred to staff a request to put in place a Binding Site Plan process that would allow division of a site for ownership purposes, but would ensure that the divided lots function as a single site for purposes of compliance with development standards otherwise applicable to individual lots. Under current standards, individual lots are subject to all development standards, including setbacks, on-site parking, on-site landscaping, etc., even if the lots are commonly owned and collectively part of a larger site plan or project. The proposed amendment would provide a mechanism to bind together individual lots under a common site plan so that it functions as a single site.

The proposed provisions for Integrated Site Plan Subdivisions would provide needed flexibility to sites that are developed as one project but will entail multiple owners. This would greatly advantage developers of retail malls, strip malls, apartment sites, and other types of development that, for financing or marketing purposes, require an integrated project to be developed under separate ownerships. There are currently no provisions in City code that directly allow this option.

Troy Siefert said this proposed amendment makes sense and can see why staff has wanted this amendment for a long time.

Debra Lee asked if this situation exists in other communities. Mr. Osguthorpe said he could not find precedence or a model for this in Iowa; however, he is familiar with this process from his previous job and is familiar with the benefits.

Scott Renaud, FOX Engineering, said he has also wanted to see this amendment happen for a long time. He expressed concern about processing since major site plans and subdivisions means approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council, and is not sure why this can't be accomplished administratively by staff. These days we end up with financial arrangements on projects that are very complicated and then we have to try to meet the City's requirements on top of that. Otherwise, this amendment is much needed and will be a good tool to use in lots of places.

MOTION: (SIEFERT/WANNEMUEHLER) to accept Alternative #1, which states:

The Planning and Zoning Commission recommended that the City Council approve the subdivision code text amendment adopting a new section 23.700, Subdivisions for Integrated Site Plans, per the attached draft ordinance.

MOTION PASSED: 6-0

COMMISSION COMMENTS: Debra Lee and Norman Cloud welcomed the new members to the Commission.

STAFF COMMENTS: Steve Osguthorpe welcomed the new members to the Commission.

Mr. Osguthorpe updated the Commission on the City Council workshop scheduled for April 24, on airport protection planning.

The tentative agenda for the meeting of May 2, 2012, was reviewed.

With no further business coming before the Commission, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 10:15 p.m.

Norman Cloud, Chairperson
Planning & Zoning Commission

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