

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

AMES, IOWA

MAY 16, 2023

The Special Meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor John Haila at 5:59 p.m. on the 16th day of May, 2023, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue, pursuant to law. Present were Council Members Bronwyn Beatty-Hansen, Gloria Betcher, Tim Gartin, Rachel Junck, and Anita Rollins. Council Member Amber Corrieri and *ex officio* Tabitha Etten were absent.

CONSENT AGENDA: Moved by Betcher, seconded by Gartin, to approve the consent agenda.

1. RESOLUTION NO. 23-287 confirming appointment of Emily Roberts and Jian Janes to serve as Iowa State University Student Government representatives of Ames Transit Agency Board of Trustees.

Roll Call Vote: 5-0. Resolution declared adopted unanimously, signed by the Mayor, and hereby made a portion of these Minutes.

WORKSHOP ON SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT: Assistant City Manager Brian Phillips explained that this workshop built on the Organized Collection Report from September 27, 2022, and the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Options study from December 20, 2022.

Following up on the Organized Collection Report, Public Works Director John Joiner explained that staff met with each of the seven licensed haulers in Ames. He presented their feedback and suggestions from the Staff Report, fielding questions from the City Council along with Resource Recovery Superintendent Bill Schmitt. Council Member Betcher noted that changes to waste collection in Ames would have ripple effects on surrounding communities. Council Member Gartin encouraged mindfulness of the business investments existing haulers have made based on the current system, and Mayor Haila noted the complexity of the topic. Recalling the origin of City Council consideration of this topic, Council Member Beatty-Hansen emphasized the importance of sustainability as a driving force behind consideration of organized collection.

Director of Electric Services Donald Kom discussed results of staff research following the Waste-to-Energy (WTE) Options study from the Staff Report along with Assistant Director of Electric Services Curtis Spence, answering questions from the City Council. Superintendent Schmitt clarified that the amount of waste diverted to the Boone County Landfill (BCL) from the Resource Recovery Plant (RRP) increased when the Power Plant had to use Unit 7 rather than Unit 8 due to the lower refuse-derived fuel (RDF) capacity of Unit 7. Council Member Beatty-Hansen suggested introducing a RDF capacity indicator so the public could make informed decisions about waste disposal. Council Member Gartin noted the importance of conversations with BCL, as the agreement to take RRP rejects and construction and demolition (C&D) waste only extends through 2025. In response to a question from Mayor Haila regarding third-party processing of RDF, Director Kom clarified that discussions with Lincolnway Energy were preliminary, but the third-party WTE plant would generate more electricity than a City-owned WTE facility.

Assistant City Manager Phillips presented a hierarchy of goals. The starting point was to landfill as little as possible, followed by combusting as little natural gas as possible at the most economical

times. The last point in the hierarchy was diverting as much Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) from the RRP as possible. Next, he presented strategies for achieving the goals in the hierarchy, including alternative disposal for recycling and organic debris; expanding existing pilot programs; outside partnerships for waste disposal; economic incentives/disincentives for greater separation of recyclable/organic material from trash; pay-as-you-throw; expanding the Water and Pollution Control organic disposal facility; reducing/storing RDF to allow for combustion in smaller Unit 7 with less natural gas timed to high market energy prices; and adjustments to RRP equipment to improve materials separation.

Council Member Gartin inquired about options for reusing or recycling C&D waste. Assistant City Manager Phillips noted that no C&D recycling facilities were located nearby, but the City could set up a transfer station to send C&D waste to landfills farther away. Director Joiner highlighted the possibility of partnering with Metro Waste Authority to explore C&D recycling options. Assistant Director Spence and Superintendent Schmitt described separating and sorting construction materials on site as a strategy for diverting C&D waste, a practice Iowa State University writes into their construction contracts.

Assistant City Manager Phillips identified four potential Next Steps to move forward: 1) Alternative Disposal of C&D Debris; 2) Develop Closer Partnership with Metro Waste Authority; 3) Pilot Drop-off Recycling Program; and 4) Plan Next Steps Regarding Organized Collection. Regarding Next Step 4, Assistant City Manager Phillips noted that there was no consensus among the haulers. He stated that staff concerns about zone bidding could be resolved by a system in which the City bids zones to haulers and handles the billing itself to offer uniform pricing and services while keeping several haulers in the community. Assistant City Manager Phillips explained that mechanisms could be built into contracts for addressing hauler underperformance at the request of Council Member Beatty-Hansen. Council Member Rollins asked about how the organized collection model would impact City billing and contract fulfillment. Assistant City Manager Phillips shared that the City already employed a smaller-scale version of this model for billing involving Xenia Rural Water, so there would not be significant disruption to the overall billing system.

City Manager Steve Schainker identified a significant philosophical shift in staff's approach to solid waste management policy. As further research uncovered a high cost for constructing a new WTE facility, the focus shifted to reducing the amount of waste coming into the RRP. Recycling initiatives have costs, but the cost would be far less than constructing a new WTE facility. City Manager Schainker also emphasized that organized collection would be an important aspect of reducing waste as well. Still, increasing the level of service to the customer by adding curbside recycling and other similar options would result in higher prices for the customer.

Moved by Beatty-Hansen, seconded by Betcher, to direct staff to proceed with Next Steps 1-3.
Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to amend the *Municipal Code* to remove the requirement for haulers to offer two collection days per week.
Motion withdrawn.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to place discussion of reducing the requirement for two collection days per week on a future Agenda.

Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Moved by Gartin, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to direct staff to continue exploring models for organized collection and return with feedback from haulers and the community.

Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

At Council Member Gartin's request, Mayor Haila opened the Public Input.

Taylor Eichinger, co-owner of Garbage Guys, expressed concern about the direction the City Council was considering, noting that his company had invested a lot in serving the Ames area. While he strongly opposed organized collection, he supported ideas like one pickup day a week and C&D recycling, offering to meet with staff to share his ideas.

Jason Engnell of Walters Sanitary Service opposed organized collection, pointing out that move-in/move-out produces a high volume of waste which may overwhelm a smaller number of haulers. He also noted that a zone system would push haulers to use fewer but bigger trucks, which would put more wear and tear on the roads.

Carl Arends of Arends Sanitation spoke against organized collection, asking the City Council to consider all of the extra costs that would be involved in moving to a zone system, such as the need to wash and redistribute thousands of carts.

Mayor Haila closed the Public Input.

Mayor Haila recessed the meeting at 8:29 p.m. and the meeting reconvened at 8:39.

BILLING ERROR RELATED TO MINIMUM CHARGES FOR 1 ½ INCH WATER METER: Finance Director Corey Goodenow and Utility Accounts Supervisor John Odenweller presented the Council Action Form, explaining that staff discovered a transposition error which resulted in 278 commercial customers being underbilled since June 2021. Director Goodenow recommended allocating the underbilled amounts across monthly payments on a five-year schedule. Since water rates increase every other year, Council Member Betcher suggested a three-year payment schedule to conclude before another rate increase. Council Member Gartin expressed skepticism that a shorter payment schedule would benefit customers.

Moved by Betcher, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to direct staff to collect the underbilled amounts over three years and waive any underbilled charges associated with former customers no longer being served by the utility.

Vote on Motion: 3-2. Voting Aye: Betcher, Beatty-Hansen, Junck. Voting Nay: Gartin, Rollins. Motion declared carried.

CLOSED SESSION: City Attorney Mark Lambert stated that there was legal reason to go into Closed Session, referencing Section 21.5(1)(c) of the *Code of Iowa*, which provided for discussion of matters presently in or threatened to be in litigation in Closed Session.

Moved by Gartin, seconded by Betcher, to go into Closed Session.
Roll Call Vote: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

The City Council entered into a Closed Session at 8:59 p.m. and reconvened in Regular Session at 9:38 p.m.

DISPOSITION OF COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL: Mayor Haila noted one disposition to the City Council, an email from Shawn Kenny on the Sidewalk Safety Program.

Moved by Beatty-Hansen to get a memo regarding potential connections to the Bike/Pedestrian Master Plan.
Motion withdrawn.

Moved by Beatty-Hansen, seconded by Junck, to request a memo from staff on the Sidewalk Safety Program.
Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: Council Member Beatty-Hansen invited residents to participate in the Mayor and City Council's Bike Ride on Saturday, May 20, 2023, at 9:00 a.m.

Council Member Betcher congratulated Council Member Junck on graduating from Iowa State University with a Bachelor of Chemical Engineering and a Master of Business Administration.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Junck, seconded by Beatty-Hansen, to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m.
Vote on Motion: 5-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.

Jeremy Neefus, Principal Clerk

John A. Haila, Mayor

Renee Hall, City Clerk