

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
AMES ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**

AMES, IOWA

NOVEMBER 13, 2024

The Ames Zoning Board of Adjustment met, pursuant to law, in Regular Session at 6:00 p.m. on November 13, 2024, in the Council Chambers of City Hall. The following members were present: Chad Schneider, Caleb Whitehouse, Leah Patton; Julie Kruse and Marshall McDaniel (absent). Also, present were Assistant City Attorney Jane Chang, and City Planner Benjamin Campbell.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES JULY 24, 2024

Moved by Whitehouse, seconded by Patton, to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2024, Zoning Board of Adjustment meeting. Vote on Motion: (3-0). Motion declared carried unanimously.

CASE NO. 24-09

Public Hearing on a request for an Exception to the Minimum Requirement for Two-Story Buildings and Minimum Floor-Area-Ratio for a building addition in the Downtown Service Center Zoning District (DSC) at 218-220 Main Street. (Parcel number 09-02-381-255)

Planner Benjamin Campbell stated the owners met with the City at the end of 2023 about demolishing the building at 218 Main Street for an addition to their property at 220 Main Street. The architects for the owners explained that, due to the layout and the structural issues, it made sense to demolish and rebuild. The DSC zoning has a minimum height of two stories and a minimum floor-area-ratio (FAR) of one. Historically, most of the buildings on Main Street are two-story. This site once had two-stories, which were demolished decades ago. The floor-area-ratio is a measure of the size of the building to the lot, which encourages density downtown. The current Ames Silversmithing building dates to 1990. The requirements of FAR and height date back to 2000, when the zoning ordinance was written, and the current DSC zoning district was adopted. The Council created an exception process with criteria for the FAR and height requirements. The building to the east that the owners are wanting to demolish is very narrow, more so on the front than the rear. The narrowness accommodates a stairway that leads to the second story of the adjacent building at 216 Main Street. The applicants stated that they do not want a second story due to the small size and for which they have no use. Staff reviewed those exception criteria with this project and find that those criteria are met. Staff recommends Alternative 1 with two conditions. The first condition is there needs to be a design element over the stairway door at 216 Main Street. There would also not no parking allowed behind 218 Main Street. The parking spaces behind 220 Main are still allowed as non-conforming.

There was a letter received from a neighbor regarding historical value of 218 Main Street. Staff presented a map showing the Downtown Ames National Register Historic District. Neither 218 nor 220 Main Street are historic resources. Mr. Campbell said he wasn't sure if the writer of the letter was referring to 216 Main Street which is a contributing resource on the National Register. 220 Main Street was built in 1990. It is possible that part of the original building does exist at 218 Main Street, but the 2nd story was removed, and the façade is completely different. Mr. Campbell researched the properties when the Downtown Ames National Register Historic District was created, and the analysis of this property was there was no historic merit.

Questions for Staff

Mr. Schneider asked what the comparison of the square footage for the FAR would be for the lot with the combined properties. Mr. Campbell stated that the new FAR requirement is a minimum of 0.5 and the addition will bring the Ames Silversmithing property to 0.73. Mr. Schneider confirmed that the FAR for the current Ames Silversmithing building is also below 1. Mr. Campbell confirmed. Mr. Schneider asked about the area behind the building was currently. Mr. Campbell stated that it is a sloped grassy area.

Leah Patton questioned are 218 and 220 one or two-story currently. Mr. Campbell stated they are both one story buildings. It is only replacing a one story with a one story. Ms. Patton questioned when they were last two-story buildings. Mr. Campbell said sometime between 1961 and 1990. Ms. Patton asked if there were any other properties that are one story in the Main Street. Mr. Campbell stated that the quilting store on the corner of Main Street and Kellogg Avenue is a one

story. The original two-story building was destroyed in a fire in the 80's, and before the current Code, it was rebuilt as a one-story building. There is a map included that shows there are several one-story buildings. Mr. Schneider asked about how many of the 2nd story buildings are used as the 2nd story. Mr. Campbell stated that there are many that are rented out for housing / commercial / office spaces. There are 114 rental units downtown including the Sheldon Munn. Ms. Patton questioned if the owners of Gilger designs were the only ones were to file an opinion. Mr. Campbell said that was the only comment received. Ms. Patton asked if there were any trends for one story versus two-story. Mr. Campbell stated that the bigger buildings are two-story on the north side and all the smaller buildings are one-story, they were most likely a two-story at one point in time.

Applicant: None

Discussion: Caleb Whitehouse stated that he is torn about allowing more one-story buildings downtown. Mr. Schneider said that it is already one-story building, and the façade will be an improvement. Mr. Whitehouse said it would be preferable to have two stories. Mr. Schneider stated that it would be cost prohibitive at this juncture. Mr. Campbell also said that the existing Ames Silversmithing building may not have been built to withstand a second story. Mr. Schneider said this does encourage development. Ms. Patton shares Mr. Whitehouse's concern.

Moved by Whitehouse to accept Alternative 1, seconded by Patton.

The Zoning Board of Adjustment may approve the Exception to the Minimum Requirement for Two-Story Buildings and Minimum Floor Area Ratio in the DSC to allow a single-story addition to an existing building at 218-220 Main Street by adopting the findings of fact and conclusions stated herein and with the following conditions applied:

- a. The façade for the entrance to the second story to 216 Main Street include architectural detailing consistent with features of the 216 building for the extension of a brick parapet wall.
- b. The site plan be amended to remove the proposed, but not permitted, parking space behind 218 Main Street.

Roll Call: Schneider, aye; Whitehouse, aye; Patton, aye.

Vote on Motion: (3-0). Motion declared carried unanimously.

Mr. Schneider stated that this decision can be appealed through the District Court within 30 days after the filing of the Decision and Order.

ADJOURNMENT: Moved by Patton, seconded by Schneider, to adjourn the meeting at 6:19 PM.

Vote on Motion: 3-0. Motion declared carried unanimously.


Natalie Rekemeyer, Recording Secretary


Chad Schneider, Chair