

[This is to be added to the Introductory pages, at A Review of a Video Recording of the “Changing Cultural Face of Ames,” at the November 27th, 2007 Meeting in City Council Chambers, p. 19, et seq.]

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES AREA METROPOLITAN  
PLANNING ORGANIZATION TRANSPORTATION POLICY COMMITTEE AND  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL  
AMES, IOWA MAY 13, 2008

REGULAR MEETING OF THE AMES CITY COUNCIL

The regular meeting of the Ames City Council was called to order by Mayor Ann Campbell at 6:00 p.m. on May 13, 2008, in the City Council Chambers in City Hall, 515 Clark Avenue. Council members present were Doll, Goodman, Larson, Mahayni, Popken, and Rice. Ex officio Member Beals was absent.

REPORT FROM INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY TASK FORCE: Mayor Campbell advised that the Inclusive Community Task Force was established after a public meeting on November 27, 2007, raised a number of issues as to the ability of the Ames community to adapt to an increasingly diverse population. The Mayor introduced Jane Acker and Barbara Woods as the Co- Chairs of the Task Force. Ms. Acker identified other members of the Task Force present: Linda Butler, Amber Corrieri, G. P. Foote, Betsy Hoffman, Mary Kitchell, and Cherie Wandling. Ms. Acker stated that the Task Force began meeting in January with a charge comprised of the following four principal components:

To identify and support existing programs and activities in the Ames community that foster greater understanding and better relations within the entire community; To identify unmet needs and opportunities for growth and improvement, including use of appropriate practices developed in other communities; To keep the community informed about the Task Force’s progress and identification of unmet needs or underutilized resources; and, To present to the community and the City Council, by April 30, a report including findings, recommendations, and a plan for regular evaluation of progress.

It was noted by Ms. Acker that one element of the charge, which was to identify activities that are ongoing in other communities, was one that she did not feel was sufficiently addressed. She acknowledged that there are many useful possibilities to be found in Iowa and elsewhere in the country; however, the Task Force was challenged to meet its deadline of April 30 without leaving the City. Ms. Acker also pointed out that the activities of the Police Department were not part of the Task Force’s charge.

Ms. Acker advised that the principal activity of the Task Force members was to reach out to the community and talk to a wide variety of people about what made them feel welcome or not welcome in Ames. They attempted to get as specific as possible about the perceptions and incidents. After that information was shared at meetings of the Task Force, it attempted to develop themes, which are summarized in the Report in the form of challenges and opportunities. The three largest themes were: (1) Increasing understanding (building bridges) among

community members; (2) Sharing information timely and consistently; (3) Developing the capacity of the community to accommodate the diverse needs of residents, e.g., housing; access to recreation services, shopping, dining, transportation, places of worship.

Barbara Woods detailed possible roles that individuals and institutions can play. She shared that the Task Force was concerned that it could not tell people or institutions what to do, but it could make suggestions and encourage people to be inclusive of others. Ms. Woods identified seven opportunities to improve welcoming others. She added that some of the issues raised initially were relative to newcomers, but it was also found that long-time residents, in some cases, have the same issues and concerns.

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Ms. Woods advised that the City of Ames, in collaboration with United Way or other human service group, needs to lead efforts to maximize the use of resource and referral database services. The Task Force encouraged the City to look at the “Cedar Rapids Diversity Focus,” which offers suggestions on how communities can be welcoming and inclusive.

It was stated by Ms. Woods that businesses, educational institutions, and service-providers need to step up the level of customer service, especially relating to first-time interaction with residents. Each person needs to make a difference in a community that prides itself in being a wonderful place to live. Ms. Woods said that there are a number of suggestions contained in the report as to how to make that happen.

Council Member Rice commended the Task Force for the work that it had done. He commented that the report seemed very socioeconomic and racially motivated. Mr. Rice noted that the gay/lesbian community was not included in the process or the report. He also advised that a website listed in the report as [studycircles.org](http://studycircles.org) has changed its name to [everydaydemocracy.org](http://everydaydemocracy.org). Mr. Rice recommended it highly for free training on community-building efforts. Mr. Rice also stated that Ames has a 60% turnover in its population approximately every six years.

Ms. Woods stated that, in parallel with the efforts of the City Council, ISU Extension Service has been looking at study circles as a way to have community conversation. Plans are being made for community conversations, using the model of study circles, to be held in the fall when students are back and there will be a broader representation of the community. Facilitators will be trained to lead the study circles. Council Member Doll said that he wanted to make sure that there were some “next steps” to follow the work done by the Inclusive Community Task Force.

Council Member Larson pointed out that he was impressed by the personal statement submitted by Debbie Lee, a member of the Task Force. In that statement, Ms. Lee described the challenges of living in a transitional neighborhood, which contains many rental housing and apartment units. Mr. Larson explained that one of the Council’s goals is to strengthen neighborhoods and to create methods for neighborhood groups to communicate better.

Council Member Goodman asked what the Task Force heard from people who had been residents of the community for a long time, but still felt disconnected. Ms. Acker said that it ranged from a lady who has lived in Ames for 50 years and hates traffic jams at mid-day to those

who reported that they see a lot of “different” people when they shop at Fareway. Some reported that they did not feel included in the community because they did not live in the right neighborhood, didn’t make enough money, or were not connected to the social fabric of the community.

It was also asked by Mr. Goodman if any ideas had surfaced for getting information out to people. Ms. Acker said that there are people in the community who do not have access to a computer, and she suggested Neighborhood Ambassadors to knock on doors and speak to people face-to-face. Task Force Member G. P. Foote described additional venues where notices and information could be disseminated. Ms. Woods noted that it is important to pay attention to how the message is crafted; make sure that it is understandable by all.

Council Member Mahayni pointed out that Ames has a large transient population. He noted that the City hosts the FACES festival, which is specifically designed to celebrate diversity and ethnicity; however, that is only one day in March. Mr. Mahayni suggested that a festival celebrating neighborhoods be held. He also endorsed a suggestion made by the Task Force, i.e., establishing a “Welcome to Ames” packet and other informative packets.

Council Member Popken asked what one thing should be done by individuals as well as groups. Ms. Woods stated that the City Council members should become involved in community conversation. They should use their influence to influence others to participate. Each individual and organization needs to step up when he or she sees or hears things that make people think that they don’t belong. It was also recommended that service organizations and businesses train their

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employees on treating their customers with respect. Council Member Mahayni added that the issue is how those efforts can be institutionalized so that employees will be trained properly. Mayor Campbell asked that members of the Inclusive Task Force be willing to sit down with individual groups (faith communities, City organization, School District, Chamber of Commerce, etc.) to figure out who should do what. Ms. Woods advised that they would ask Task Force members if they wanted to volunteer to meet with individual groups. Council Member Larson suggested that members of the Breaking Down the Barriers committee might be interested in helping the Task Force carry out some of the recommended action items.

The Regular Meeting of the Ames City Council recessed at 6:44 p.m.