

ITEM #: *
DATE: 02-24-26
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REQUESTS FOR AMES MAIN STREET FARMERS' MARKET

BACKGROUND:

The Ames Regional Economic Alliance is planning to host the annual Ames Main Street Farmers' Market this summer. This year, organizers are requesting to hold the event on the 200, 300, and 400 blocks of Main Street and on Burnett Avenue from Main Street to the U.S. Bank drive-through. The request to include the 200 block of Main Street is an expansion to the event boundary from previous years. The Market will operate every Saturday from May 2, 2026 to October 17, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. To facilitate set-up and teardown, streets and parking spaces need to be closed from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day.

To facilitate the event, organizers request a blanket Vending License for the entire Central Business District from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. each day of the Market, which will allow downtown businesses that file an insurance certificate with the City to display items for sale on the sidewalks. The Chamber has requested that the \$50 Vending License fee be waived.

Organizers have also requested the use of Tom Evans Plaza between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. for vendor booths and entertainment. As in previous years, this space would be used for entertainment and educational activities for children and families. However, to prevent damaging the turf in the plaza, vendors will not be permitted to use the turf areas for their activities.

The use of electricity in Tom Evans Plaza, along Main Street and on Burnett Avenue has also been requested. Organizers have requested a waiver of the \$5 per day fee for use of electricity.

To facilitate the Market, organizers have also requested that the two- and four-hour limits in parking in CBD Lots X and Y be waived during Market hours. Additionally, 103 metered parking spaces will be closed for 4.5 metered hours each day the Market operates (25 total days). **City staff estimates that this will result in a loss of \$2,897 to the Parking Fund.**

Market organizers have requested that the meter fees be waived because the Market is a non-profit organization, and in return the City would be included as a sponsor on all Market advertising materials. **The City Council's adopted parking fee waiver policy allows the City Council to waive parking fees on a case-by-case basis for requests that do not involve District-wide free parking. Last year, the City Council did not waive meter fees for this event.**

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the requested street and parking space closures from 5:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Saturdays from May 2 to October 17, use of Tom Evans Plaza for entertainers, use of City electrical outlets, a blanket Vending License, suspension of parking enforcement in

CBD Lots X and Y from 6:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. each of the affected days, and waiver of the fees only for the Vending License and electricity use. **This alternative requires reimbursement for lost parking meter revenue in the amount of \$2,897.**

2. Approve the requests as stated in Alternative No. 1, but do not require Farmers' Market to reimburse the City for the Vending License, electricity use, or parking meter revenue.
3. Deny the requests.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The Main Street Farmers' Market has successfully attracted visitors to the Downtown for the last several years. It has become a signature event in Ames, enhancing the local economy and providing a family-friendly activity that showcases the Ames community. **However, due to the overall poor health of the City's Parking Operations Fund, staff is advising that the Council require reimbursement for lost parking revenue, as was the case in previous years.** Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, as noted above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Letter to Mayor and City Council 2026.pdf](#)

[Farmers' Market Application.pdf](#)

[Street Map for City.pdf](#)