

ITEM #:	<u>36</u>
DATE:	<u>03-11-25</u>
DEPT:	<u>ADMIN</u>

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: **REQUESTS FROM AMES MAIN STREET FOR 515 DAYS ON MAY 15-16, 2025**

BACKGROUND:

Ames Main Street (AMS) plans to host “515 Days” from Thursday, May 15 through Friday, May 16. This event was implemented by Ames Main Street in 2021 with the intention of celebrating area code 515 through a variety of activities each day, such as 515-themed specials in businesses and giveaways to attract individuals to Downtown Ames. Additionally, this event is the first of a three part Ames Summertime Series.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

The activities on Thursday May 15 include a beer garden, live music on Douglas Avenue, and a family activity zone on Douglas Avenue. The events are free to attend. Organizers expect up to 1,000 people to participate in the activities. To facilitate the Thursday activities, Ames Main Street requests the following for May 15:

- Closures of 5th Street from Burnett Ave through Douglas Ave, Kellogg Ave from Main Street to 5th St, Douglas Street from Main Street to 5th Street.
- Use of City electrical outlets and waiver of fees for electricity (estimated loss to Electric Fund of \$5).
- A blanket Temporary Obstruction Permit and a blanket Vending License for Downtown to allow stores to display and sell merchandise and for food truck vendors. A waiver of the Vending License fee is requested (\$50 loss to City Clerk’s Office).

Organizers have hired 10 private security officers to check IDs and staff the event area. Wristbands will be provided to those of legal age to consume alcohol. Ames Main Street staff and volunteers will monitor the crowd and staff the road closures.

REQUEST FOR SUSPENSION OF ENFORCEMENT OF MUNICIPAL CODE 17.16:

Section 17.16 of Municipal Code makes a distinction between alcohol-licensed premises that function more like a restaurant, with food sales making up the majority of the sales, and premises that function as a bar, where alcohol sales are a majority of the business. For the former, minors may be in the premises without a legal-age adult. For the latter, minors are not permitted without a legal-age adult accompanying them. The Police Department relies on business records of transactions to make the determination regarding whether minors would be allowed or not under the ordinance's criteria.

Event organizers have requested suspension of Municipal Code 17.16 to allow for event attendees to carry their beverages throughout the event space. Typically for events of this type, since the license holder sells the alcohol and separate vendors sell food and other items, and since no historical pattern of sales can be evaluated for intermittent events, the alcohol sales have been treated like a bar--a designated alcohol consumption area has been created using fencing, and those allowed in must either be 21 years of age or older, or (if the organizers wish) a minor child accompanied by their legal-age parent or guardian.

Ames Main Street has requested the ability to license the entire event area as the premises for the event and not be required to fence a separate beer garden area. This would allow attendees of all ages to move freely throughout the event area. The alcohol license will be presented to the Council at a later date for local authority approval.

The City has had a long history of requiring alcohol consumption for special events to occur in a designated area without intermingling of legal age adults and minors. The concern from staff has historically been the challenges observed with minors being able to obtain alcohol in establishments that advertise or operate like a bar, but where just enough food sales occur to qualify for minors to be allowed on the premises.

Staff discussed these issues with Ames Main Street and has developed a list of the specific circumstances for the proposed event that the Council could consider to justify allowing a suspension of Section 17.16 in this instance. It should be emphasized that other events in the future, with circumstances outside of these described below, are not likely to receive staff support to allow minors on the premises. The circumstances related to this event that may justify the requested suspension of enforcement of Section 17.16 include:

1. The event includes entertainment and activities that are the focus of the event (alcohol consumption is incidental to the event).
2. Food and non-alcoholic beverages will be offered in a meaningful variety. No distilled spirits are involved.
3. The event is non-ticketed, intended to be family-friendly, and includes promotional materials that suggest it as a family event.
4. It is organized by a locally established entity, with a track record of hosting events successfully and with an interest in continuing to do so.
5. Private security is being hired for the event, in addition to volunteers to manage the event area.
6. The event is on a weekday night and will conclude by 9:00 p.m., placing the event entirely during daylight hours. Evening civil twilight ends at 9:00 p.m. on May 14.
7. The event area is in a portion of the downtown that does not contain a significant number of other alcohol-licensed establishments, minimizing the need to manage the area between licensed premises to ensure alcohol does not travel from one premises to another.

The Thursday activities will require the closure of 76 metered parking spaces for 10 metered hours, resulting in a loss of approximately \$190 to the Parking Fund. Organizers have requested that this amount be waived by the City Council. The Council's policy regarding the closure of metered parking in an area less than an entire business district is to consider the waiver of such fees on a case-by-case basis.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

Organizers were asked to contact the businesses in the area where the Thursday event would take place to inform them specifically of the proposed change to the event regarding alcohol. Ames Main Street sent flyers to the entire listing of downtown businesses on four separate occasions (two standalone emails and two mentions in the Business Bulletin). Additionally, Ames Main Street forwarded the standalone emails to the businesses in the event area, and followed up with a hand delivered paper notice. The notices indicated the proposed change regarding alcohol, the proposed event date, and the date and time of the Council meeting where approval is to be considered.

FRIDAY MAY 16:

To facilitate the Big Bash in Bandshell Park, on Friday, May 16, Ames Main Street requests the following:

- Use of City electrical outlets in Bandshell Park and waiver of fees for electricity (estimated loss to Electric Fund of \$10).
- Blanket Vendor Permit for Bandshell Park and waiver of fees (estimated loss of \$50 to the City Clerk's Office).

As with the Thursday event, for the Big Bash in Bandshell Park, organizers have hired private security to check IDs and staff the entrance/exit points to the beer garden area. Wristbands will be provided to those of legal age to consume alcohol. Minor children will be permitted into the event area with their legal parent or guardian, in compliance with the City's existing ordinance pertaining to minors in liquor-licensed establishments. Ames Main Street staff and volunteers will monitor the crowd.

The Council should note that for both of these events, the alcohol license application will be submitted at a later date for Council consideration.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Approve the requests for 515 Week as described above, including the requested waiver of fees.
2. Approve the requests as indicated above, but require reimbursement for the blanket Vending License, electricity use, and lost parking meter revenue.
3. Approve the requests as indicated above, but deny waiver of Municipal Code 17.16 for the event area on Thursday, May 15.
4. Deny the requests.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

515 Week provides an opportunity to attract visitors to Downtown Ames. The events include family friendly activities and promotions that support local businesses. Given the small dollar amount and number of parking spaces involved, staff believes it is reasonable to waive the parking fees for this event, along with the other requested fee waivers.

Ames Main Street is a well-established local entity that has successfully hosted many events with alcohol components in Downtown. With future event approvals subject to City staff review, the organization has considerable incentive to ensure a safe, well-run event. Additionally, City staff will document any issues or concerns observed and refer to it for any future requests from the organization. Staff believes that the factors listed in the report above make a case to support a waiver of enforcement of Section 17.16 of Municipal Code. If approved, staff would look to these same factors in evaluating future requests for similar events. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as described above.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[05.15 515 Days LOS.pdf](#)

[2025 515 Days Special Events Application.pdf](#)

[515 Days Event Maps 2025.pdf](#)

[Alliance Letter of Support - 515 Day City of Ames.pdf](#)

