

**CITY COUNCIL  
COMMUNICATION:**

**03-283**

**AGENDA:**

JUNE 23, 2003

**SUBJECT:**

AMENDMENTS TO  
CHAPTER 102,  
ARTICLE XIII.  
MOVING OF HOUSES  
AND HEAVY  
EQUIPMENT

**TYPE:**

**RESOLUTION**  
ORDINANCE  
RECEIVE/FILE

**SUBMITTED BY:**

WILLIAM STOWE  
PUBLIC WORKS  
DIRECTOR

JEB BREWER  
CITY ENGINEER

JIM GRANT  
COMMUNITY  
DEVELOPMENT  
DIRECTOR

**ITEM 75**

**OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER  
CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA**

**SYNOPSIS —**

The amendments clarify evaluation criteria for issuing a house moving permit and increase the amount of notice for recognized neighborhoods and residents along the house moving route. In addition, the amendments make the ordinance consistent with the City's current policy on risk management and insurance requirements.

**FISCAL IMPACT —**

None.

**RECOMMENDATION —**

**Approval.**

**BACKGROUND —**

After a recent house move that was initiated because of work on I-235, the residents of the Woodland Heights Neighborhood expressed concern about the impact that moving a large house had on the neighborhood's street trees. They were also concerned that the City did not require neighborhood residents be notified about a house move so that they could prepare in case there was an interruption in electricity or an inability to have access to their home for a short while. The Neighborhood Revitalization Board (NRB) asked staff to review the ordinance and propose amendments that would enhance efforts of neighborhood revitalization and protect the urban forest.

The amendments proposed should accomplish the goals of the NRB while also not adding onerous requirements to the already difficult job of moving a house or building.

The amendments increase the amount of time necessary for the City to issue a house-moving permit in order to increase the amount of notice provided to neighbors and to allow City staff to evaluate the route. The ordinance requires two forms of notice:

- When the application for a house-moving permit is submitted, the Community Development Staff will notify the appropriate recognized neighborhoods of the proposed house move. The

notice will include the existing address of the house, the proposed route and the new site for the house. Included in the notice will be the name and number of the owner of the structure to be moved or a representative of the house moving company that residents can contact for additional information.

- The house mover is also required to provide written notice to each residence or commercial property along the planned route at least 7 days prior to the planned move. The printed notices must identify the proposed date, time and route of the move, the size of the structure to be moved and any anticipated affects of the move, such as interruption of electricity. Door hangers would satisfy this requirement.

The amendments also require that the house moving permit application include verification that the designated route will accommodate the structure to be moved. Damages due to any measurements that differ from those submitted will be the responsibility of the house mover.

Under the amendments either the Director of Public Works or the City Engineer may deny a moving permit if they believe that it will create an undue hazard or negatively impact the City's infrastructure. Language has been added to insure that the urban forest is considered a part of the City's infrastructure and that protection of trees is evaluated before a permit is issued. Staff will also give special consideration, if a house or building is historically or architecturally significant.

The amendments as proposed do not include additional architectural design requirements as a part of the review process. The City currently has minimal design requirements for issuing a building permit, except within the City's local historic districts. The City cannot legally place additional design restrictions on a house move or on new construction or renovation building permits.

Due to the increased time and notice provisions, the house mover and/or neighborhood organizations and neighborhood residents will have time to discuss the proposed house move prior to the move and have questions answered.

The amendments were approved by the Neighborhood Revitalization Board at its May 7, 2003 meeting. The Community Development Department provided all neighborhood organizations with written notice of the May 7, 2003 meeting. The amendments were presented to the Historic Preservation Commission at its May 21, 2003 meeting. Members of the Historic Preservation Commission had no concerns about the amendments presented. Members did express concern about the lack of design guidelines for both moved houses and new construction in neighborhoods that are eligible to be local historic districts.

