

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
December 19, 2011
City Hall Conference Room

PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm, Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson, Council Members Jeff Austin, Roger Boughton, Brian McAlister, Steve King, and Marian Clennon.

ABSENT: Council Member Enright.

STAFF PRESENT: Public Works Director Jon Erichson, Assistant City Engineer Steven Lang, Fire Chief Mickey Healey, Police Chief Brian Krueger, Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood, Library Director Ann Hokanson, Administrative Assistant Jeanne Howatt, Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert, and City Administrator Jim Hurm.

ALSO PRESENT: Austin Post Bulletin and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Item No. 1. Performance Measurement Survey– Ms. Howatt updated the council on the results of the Performance Measurement Survey handled by the League of Minnesota Cities. Ms. Howatt noted that according to the League, there were only a few cities that had a higher response rate than Austin did. Additionally, Ms. Howatt noted this only cost us around \$140 for advertising in the newspaper. Approximately 115 people responded, and for the most part the results were either “excellent” or “good” in all of the areas.

This is for informational purposes only.

Item No. 2. Consideration of filling Street Department and Library vacant positions budgeted for 2012 – Mr. Hurm noted both positions were in the budget for the 2012 year, but a council member mentioned at the last meeting that we really need to look at these positions.

Ms. Hokanson stated the Children’s Librarian has been vacant for some time now, and the need in the community is only growing for this. There are no internal staff that can handle this appropriately so we need to find somebody on the outside. Ms. Hokanson noted staff reductions have eliminated 110 hours per week of staff time, leaving us with only 280 hours per week. Ms. Hokanson reiterated that the Library cannot do the service we have been providing without the additional help.

Council Member Boughton questioned if this would be a new hire then. Ms. Hokanson stated it would.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated if we do not get this position filled, we will not be saving dollars in the long run as the people we are hurting would use this service, and we would be irresponsible to not hire it now.

Council Member King agreed, noting that 50% of the community is living in poverty, and that means many children are living in poverty. Council Member King noted his support for the position. Council Member Austin stated he agreed and that this is an investment into our future.

Council Member McAlister stated he did not necessarily disagree with the comments that have been made. However, we just went through the 2012 budget with attempts to nickel and dime it in reductions and new fees. People are where our costs are, which is about \$60,000 per new employee. Council Member McAlister stated any serious cuts will have to come from people, and the legislature can do some real damage in the next several weeks with our state aid. Council Member McAlister stated he is not in favor of replacing anybody until the legislature finishes their work.

Council Member Clennon questioned if the Children's Librarian would work with the schools so as to not duplicate their work. Ms. Hokanson stated this position will more fully help children realize what the Library has to offer better, and we will be more able to get to our target market.

Mr. Erichson stated his street department had two vacancies effective January of 2011. The council elected to fill one of those positions with a temporary filling for 2011. As part of the 2012 budget, one of the positions has been eliminated to balance the budget. The other position has been maintained in the budget to go to full-time, from temporary. This will add the benefit level onto this position.

Council Member Austin stated the surveys have come back giving us great remarks, and there is a lot not getting done, and the filling of the Children's Librarian position will fill a need in the community.

Mayor Stiehm added that both positions have been included in the 2012 budget and he would like to see the positions filled.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member King to recommend to Council the hiring of the full-time Children's Librarian. Carried 4-2 (Council Members McAlister and Clennon – Nay). Item will be added onto the next council agenda.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member King to recommend to Council the hiring of the full-time Street Department employee. Carried 4-2 (Council Members McAlister and Clennon – Nay). Item will be added onto the next council agenda.

Item No. 3. G&R Truck Wash – Mr. Erichson discussed his 12/16/11 memo regarding G&R Truck Wash. Mr. Erichson gave some background regarding late payments and rolling the strong waste bills into a promissory note. Mr. Erichson stated they have been making timely payments on the promissory note, however they continue to fall farther and farther behind on the new monthly strong waste charges. Mr. Erichson stated we have been having limited results in securing payment from G&R Truck Wash. Mr. Erichson noted the City could terminate this agreement and disconnect G&R from the sewer system or consider amending the promissory note. Mr. Erichson stated that G&R Truck Wash owner Garth Carlson will be out of the country

until mid January. Mr. Erichson requested we hold a public hearing at a February council meeting to give Mr. Carlson a chance to respond.

Council Member Boughton questioned if terminating the agreement meant he was out of business. Mr. Erichson stated yes, as his sewer line would be disconnected.

Mayor Stiehm stated we have made several concessions to this company already.

Council Member McAlister questioned if there would be some local issues if we shut them down. Mr. Erichson stated there would be local issues as this is the only remaining truck wash in the city.

After further discussion, it was the consensus to offer Mr. Carlson a hearing at a meeting in February. No objections noted.

Item No. 4. – Update on flood control – Mr. Erichson stated with the school referendum passing (to build another school near Ellis for 5th and 6th graders) and the need for us to do some maintenance work on the Ellis ditch, now might be the opportunity to work with the other public entities to limit some additional flood water from entering town. Mr. Erichson stated the ditch originally flowed towards the bowling alley, but at some point in time it was re-routed back into the city. Mower County is also looking at a drainage study, so now might be a good time to work on getting this water re-routed back to where it once originally flowed.

This is for informational purposes only at this point.

Item No. 5. – Options for Riverside Arena boiler repair and consideration of use of Contingency – Mr. Erichson stated we needed some emergency boiler repairs a few weeks ago to the cost of \$10,000. This just does enough to get heat into the building, and more extensive repairs will be needed in the summer time once the ice is out. However, Mr. Erichson stated we do not know the extent of those repairs until the boiler can be shut down and examined more thoroughly. Mr. Erichson estimated we have a minimum of \$12,500 of additional repairs needed but will still require an overall replacement of the boiler in the next five years. Mr. Erichson stated another option would be to replace the entire heating system at the arena for an estimated cost of \$150,000 to \$175,000. The overall replacement will make it more efficient and hence lower the utility bills and would be a permanent solution. Mr. Erichson stated he would like to review these options again in 2012 once the boiler is shut down, and he would then bring back a recommendation to Council.

Council Member Boughton questioned what his recommendation would be. Mr. Erichson stated assuming Riverside Arena will be operating well into the future (despite budget concerns) then he would recommend replacing the boiler.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Boughton, to cover the estimated \$10,000 of boiler repairs in 2011 out of the Contingency line item. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 6. – LEC remodel backup – Mr. Hurm discussed the city LEC Committee reps and their thought to appoint Council Member Enright as a representative to help make decisions on

the LEC remodeling project. Council Member Enright, plus Chief Krueger and Public Works Director Jon Erichson would add valuable insight into finishing the project within budget. Chief Krueger updated council by stating that the Sheriff's office and the Police Department are in almost complete agreement as to the space issues and needs of each department. Chief Krueger stated they are now waiting on Mower County to get the architect lined up. This project will expand the dispatch area and allow for better cooling of their computer equipment. The locker room will also increase to allow all of the employees of the Police Department and Sheriff's Department to have their own locker, plus some spare lockers in the event either employer adds positions.

Council Member McAlister stated the dispatch area is awful and the rest of the building is shabby looking. Council Member McAlister urged all of the council to tour the current facility to see how it looks.

Council Member Clennon questioned if Mower County had people on the remodel committee. Chief Krueger stated there were other employees, but he did not know who those were other than Deputy Mark May, Sheriff Terese Amazi, and County Coordinator Craig Oscarson.

This is for informational purposes only at this time.

Item No. 8. – Review Fire Department Vehicle Use Policy – Chief Healey presented his proposed changes to the existing policy regarding use of the fire vehicles. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we should be flexible with our equipment and staff to help out the other governments in our community, and this discretion should be left up to the Fire Chief. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we should not require the Fire Chief to come to a council meeting every time they want to use the truck for a public event.

Council Member McAlister questioned if this policy had also been reviewed by the staff at the Fire Department, as the original policy we are now amending came because of issues that the fire fighters had with the vehicle use. Fire Chief Healey stated he has reviewed this with his staff and they are in agreement of the new policy.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member Clennon to recommend to council the proposed change to the policy outlining authorized uses for Fire Department vehicles. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 7. – Draft Retreat Agenda – Mr. Hurm stated that at the past work session, Council made it clear that they would like more time for discussion. However, Mr. Hurm stated staff has proposed some questions to Council so that they may be better prepared for the meeting (such as, What do you want to hear from us? and What would you like to know more about within our department?). Council Member Boughton handed out some sample questions that he would like to hear from staff on.

Council Member McAlister stated he liked the general discussion questions that Council Member Boughton had read aloud. Council Member Clennon stated she would like to have discussion on Vision 2020, and can we do anything with this.

Council Member Austin stated we should all formulate questions and send to Mr. Hurm (then to the department heads) as they may need some time to research our questions. Additionally, Council Member-at-Large Anderson noted we should discuss Sandy Forstner's comments at the Truth In Taxation hearing regarding a task force of Chamber members giving their opinion on our budget.

Council Member Clennon questioned if 15 minutes of staff time per department is enough if we have all of these questions.

After further discussion, Mayor Stiehm requested all of the council questions be forwarded by the next council meeting so we can see where we stand for questions and time.

Item No. 9. Administrative Report – None.

Item No. 11. Matters In Hand – Mayor Stiehm stated he has spoken with Jeff Anderson of Anderson Memorials regarding a donation they would make annually of plaques for our flood wall.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we need some rules for businesses and residents regarding setbacks that are the same for both. This is in regards to the Brolsma gazebo issue that Council faced earlier this year. Mayor Stiehm stated we should talk with Mr. Hoium on this. Mayor Stiehm stated this should be added to the next council agenda for discussion before we add it to Matters In Hand.

Item No. 10. Open discussion – None.

Motion by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Austin to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert