

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
November 16, 2020
City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm.

MEMBERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Council Members Steve King, Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Joyce Poshusta and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, Library Director Julie Clinefelter and City Clerk Ann Kasel

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Jeanne Sheehan, Mark Nibaur, Tom Tylutki, Keven Maxa, Steve Greenman, Alex Bumgardner, Austin Daily Herald

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Right-of-Way Ordinance Discussion

Austin Utilities General Manager Mark Nibaur stated the Austin Utilities Board has some concerns about the proposed right-of-way ordinance and would like additional time to consider the ordinance. He stated it is moving very quickly and would like some additional compromise between the City and Utilities.

He stated the undergrounding process is very costly. He noted they had agreed to underground 70 percent of the utilities already but would like to complete a feasibility study for the cost of undergrounding the rest and the cost for abandoning unused utilities.

Mr. Nibaur reviewed some proposed costs which would add on another \$4.13 per meter, per month to a utility bill. He stated they would like until approximately June of 2021 to complete a study on the matter.

Council Member Helle suggested breaking the ordinance apart or adopting parts of the ordinance.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated he would not recommend breaking the ordinance apart and that timing is important because of a project planned in the right-of-way for 2021.

Tom Tylutki, employee with Austin Utilities, stated they have been working on placing utilities underground since a large wind storm in 1998. He stated the issue is the high cost of placing the feeder lines underground.

Mr. Lang stated he has worked with the City Attorney to modify the ordinance to create flexibility in the ordinance for Austin Utilities which would allow them to provide a plan or timeline when they would complete identified projects.

Austin Utilities Commissioner Jeanne Sheehan stated that she values the relationship with the City and what is good for the City is good for Austin Utilities' customers. She believes that it is a reasonable request to ask for additional time to complete a study on the issue.

Austin Utilities Commissioner Steve Greenman echoed Ms. Sheehan's comments and would like the City to work with the Utilities.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, to recommend approval of the proposed right-of-way ordinance without the undergrounding requirements. Carried 7-0.

The item will be on the December 7, 2020 Council Agenda.

Item No. 2 – Flood Mitigation Case Study

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City of Austin is well known for its flood mitigation program. He stated there was a case study completed on Austin and other communities and it is being used as a guide for others.

For Council information only; no additional Council action needed.

Item No. 3 – Administrative Report

No Report.

Item No. 4 – Open Discussion

Mayor Stiehm noted there will not be a Christmas dinner due to the Covid spike in cases.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he would like to revive the process for Mr. Clark's evaluation.

Mayor Stiehm asked Ms. Wiechmann for an update.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member King, adjourning the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk