

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
August 16, 2021
City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King, Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Oballa Oballa, Joyce Poshusta and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY: Council Member Michael Postma

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Jason Baskin

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and Police Chief David McKichan

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, City Clerk Ann Kasel, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Public Works Director Steven Lang

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Susan Danzl, Austin Daily Herald

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Liquor Regulations

City Clerk Ann Kasel discussed the liquor regulations in the City of Austin that are different than the State of Minnesota regulations. She stated Austin restricts number of on-sale licenses to one per entity but the State law does not have that restriction.

State law allows a City of Austin’s size to have 18 exclusive bars and unlimited restaurants and hotels but the City code limits it to 16 exclusive bars and a classification system based on property values for hotels and restaurants.

The City also does not allow a 2 a.m. bar closing time or 3.2 beer sales in convenience or grocery stores. The Council did not express interest in modifying those provisions of the City code.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, removing on-sale restrictions and the on-sale bar classification from the City code to align with State Statutes. Carried.

The matter will be on the September 7, 2021 Council meeting.

Item No. 2 – Proposed annexations

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated the City is proposed to annex five properties that are wholly within City limits. She stated since the properties are surrounded by City boundaries then the consent of the property owner and the township are not required. The property owners are Qualey, Hoy, Cunningham, Vossler and Murphy. Some of the properties have received notice from Mower County that they are not in compliance with the septic regulations and they need to connect to City services to become compliant.

She stated the property owners would be assessed for sewer services shortly after the annexation.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, recommending the annexation of the five parcels. Carried.

The matter will be on a future Council meeting.

Item No. 3 – I-90 Bridges Options

Public Works Director Steven Lang once again reviewed the options for the 14th Street NW bridge over Interstate 90. He stated recently MnDot had another meeting regarding the I-90 options stating all of the options are viable for the community.

He stated MnDot came up with an additional tight diamond option with one traffic signal adding that this would be the option most similar to the current situation.

Mr. Lang stated he felt the roundabout is the best option for the area.

The Council discussed the different options with the majority of the Council preferring the single point intersection.

Moved by Council Member Waller, seconded by Council Member Oballa, recommending a single point intersection for the I-90 and 4th Street bridge. Carried.

Item No. 4 – Waste Water Treatment Plant

Public Works Director Steven Lang provided an update for the Waste Water Treatment Plant with construction delayed to 2022 for additional bonding funds.

Mr. Lang stated the City has an agreement with Hormel Foods to pay for 50% of the design process which totaled \$3.636 million dollars.

He stated the City has been working with Hormel Foods for the cost split between the industrial and domestic plants. And working out the rates for the citizens for use of the domestic plant.

He stated \$4.6 million of the proposed improvements is domestic, \$11.7 million of the project is industrial and \$62.4 million is shared. SEH has estimated that 49% of the shared improvements are domestic and 51% industrial while Hormel believes that 70% are domestic and 30% are industrial improvements. He stated there are many factors how to allocate costs between the domestic and industrial plants and it is difficult to determine cost split. He stated the domestic has more flow but the industrial side has more ammonia to remove from the water. He stated our plant is very unique as to how things are shared among the plants and how to treat that water.

He stated the City exhausted the design budget already in this process because of the complications on the project and there is a lot of conversations to be had before the issues can be worked out.

City Administrator stated rates to residents will be increased to help cover the costs also. That rate study will be completed to determine the new rates.

For Council information only.

Item No. 5 - Administrative Report

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the Counselors of Real Estate will be in Austin for the housing study the first week in November.

Item No. 6 – Open Discussion

Mayor King stated he is open to going back to the remote model to zoom if they want to for meetings for safety due to the delta variant.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated if the CDC lowered the transmission level then the zoom would not be an option.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated the special budget work session will be on August 23rd at 4:30.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adjourning the meeting at 7:23 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk