

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**September 7, 2021**  
**City Council Chambers**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Oballa Oballa (4:02 p.m.), Joyce Poshusta and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, City Attorney Craig Byram, City Attorney John Beckmann, City Clerk Ann Kasel

Mayor King opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

**Item No. 1 –**

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, to close the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05 Subd. 3(c)3 for the purpose of developing or considering offers or counteroffers for the purchase of parcel 34.460.0200; and to close the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05 Subd. 3 (b) – for discussion of a matter under attorney – client privilege; and to close the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05 Subd. 3(c)3 for the purpose of developing or considering offers or counteroffers for the purchase of parcels 34.001.0590 and 34.001.0580.

**See DVD of Closed Meeting**

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, to reopen the meeting at 4:30 p.m. to attend the regular Council meeting.

Mayor King reopened the work session at 6:39 p.m.

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

STAFF APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY:

Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, City Clerk Ann Kasel, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Public Works Director Steven Lang and Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann

OTHERS APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY:

Austin Daily Herald

OTHERS APPEARING  
IN PERSON:

Mark Harber

**Item No. 4 – ADA Transition Plan**

Public Works Director Steven Lang reviewed the City's draft ADA transition plan. He stated the City has adopted a schedule to make the right-of-way more accessible with the goal of being 80% compliant in 2050. He stated there is 125 miles of sidewalk in the community and 2,086 pedestrian ramps which are classified currently on their level of compliance. He stated the plan includes a public outreach group and website information. The next step to adopting the plan would be post the draft plan for 2 weeks and have the final Council review at the October 4, 2021 meeting.

There were no Council comments.

The item will be on the October 4, 2021 Council Agenda.

**Item No. 5a – Stop Sign Request – Oakland Estates**

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City received a request for three additional stop signs to be installed in the Oakland Estates Trailer Park. Mr. Lang stated the traffic volume is very light compared to other residential roadways and the speed limit in the park is 10 miles per hour. He stated there have been three reported accidents in the park since May of 2014 and none of them were intersection related. Based on this information, Mr. Lang recommended against the installation of stop signs in Oakland Estates.

Council Member-at-Large Austin asked if the City can turn over the streets to the trailer park.

Public Works Director stated that can be proposed but it is unlikely that they would want to take on the maintenance for the streets.

The Council agreed with Mr. Lang's recommendation.

**Item No. 5b – Stop Sign Removal Request – 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue & 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE**

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City has evaluated the need for a stop sign at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue & 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE as part of the recent street reconstruction project. He stated a westbound 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue stop sign at 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is not necessary and that a 2-way stop for north and south bound traffic would be sufficient on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Mr. Lang reviewed the accident data over the last 10 years and there were 5 incidents. None of the accidents were related to the stop sign. He added that since the road was closed for a period of time due to construction then reopened, it would be a good time to make the stop sign change.

The Council agreed with Mr. Lang's recommendation.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, to approve the removal of a stop sign at 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue & 2<sup>nd</sup> Street SE. Carried.

The item will be on the September 20, 2021 work session.

### **Item No. 6 – Council Chambers Audio Visual Upgrades**

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert stated the City received bids for the replacement and upgrade of the audio visual equipment in the Council Chambers. He stated the current equipment is over 10 years old, with the exception of the new microphones.

The new setup will include drop down microphones, streaming content to YouTube, new cameras, tvs, monitors and electronic components. The new system should make broadcasting easier with less technical difficulties.

The City received the following quotes:

Tierney Brothers	\$137,101.58
EPA Audio/Visual	\$150,772.54
Sound and Media Solutions	\$225,638.69

Mr. Dankert stated EPA is the current provider and they have included two television sets that need to come out to make it more of a comparison with Tierney Brothers. He noted that he had some concerns with Tierney Brothers unfamiliarity with some of the software the City uses along with issues to link to the internet for live streaming. For these reasons Mr. Dankert recommended accepting the proposal from EPA Audio/Visual with the elimination of two televisions. Funding would come from cable access cable access PEG fees (\$100,000) and General Fund balance/contingency (\$50,000). He noted that only a portion of the project is eligible for cable access PEG fees since some of the equipment would stream to the internet and not cable related.

Council Member Postma stated he was excited for the upgrades.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, recommending the approval of a proposal from EPA Audio/Visual for Council Chamber improvements. Carried.

The item will be placed on the September 20, 2021 Council meeting.

**Item No. 7 – 2022 Budget**

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert reviewed some proposed modifications to the 2022 budget:

- Increase Welcome Center funding from \$7,500 to \$8,000 – No Council objections.
- Increase Human Rights Commission funding from \$5,000 to \$6,500 – No Council objections.
- Increase Clerk supplies by \$3,000 – No Council objections.
- Decrease CATV Franchise \$25,000 – No Council objections.
- Dispatch discussion with joint LEC members – The 2022 budget includes \$892,000 but there could be a savings of \$43,000 if the Council doesn't fund it. Chief McKichan agreed that it does not need to be funded. – No Council objections.
- Tree Trimming discussion – Mr. Dankert stated it appears that there are more trees being trimmed when the trimming is done in-house versus contracting the service out.

Parks and Recreation Director stated “tree lifting” where branches are trimmed to allow for trucks is not being completed with the contractor.

Mr. Dankert stated this topic may set a goal for the tree trimmers if it goes in house.

Council Member Poshusta stated that she has spoken to the Park and Rec staff and the system of contracting it out is not working. She added that emerald ash borer is a reason to keep it in-house.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he feels that the City gets good value by having the service in-house.

Mr. Dankert noted that the Supervisor's time is not being taken into account to oversee the contractor.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated emerald ash borer is more of a reason to contract that service out than keep it in-house.

Council Member Postma stated he would like to track employees' time to more accurately see what time is dedicated to the trees. He added that he thought it was important to plant new trees also.

The Council expressed interest in having the tree trimming return to in-house.

Mr. Dankert noted that the proposed budget and tax levy must be set at the next Council meeting and the levy cannot change after September 30<sup>th</sup>. The Council stated they would be comfortable with 6.8% tax levy increase. Mr. Dankert stated the levy will be \$7,940,000.

Mark Harber stated he doesn't support increasing taxes every year. He stated he supports the tax abatement program and has personally benefitted from the program. He stated the decisions since passing the tax abatement program have not been wise. He added that businesses are just recovering from COVID.

The Council supported the 6.8% tax levy with Council Member Baskin being against the levy at that percentage.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, recommending approval of the 2022 tax levy increase at approximately 6.8%. Carried.

**Item No. 8 - Administrative Report**

None.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adjourning the meeting at 7:47 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ann M. Kasel  
City Clerk