

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
March 21, 2022
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Jason Baskin, Oballa Oballa, Michael Postma, 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, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, City Attorney Craig Byram, Park Supervisor Randy Hofner, Nature Center Director Luke Reese, Greg Bell and City Clerk Ann Kasel

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, Austin Packer Dance Team, Coach Kayla Seller, Joe Sunderman, Kim Underwood, Helen Jahr, Gretchen Ramlo

Mayor King called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving the agenda as amended with an updated resolution for item 12b. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving Council minutes from March 7, 2022. Carried.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Mayor King recognized the Austin Packer Dance Team for their first-place finish at state. Coach Kayla Sellers thanked the town for their support.

Mayor King recognized Joe Sunderman and Don Tomlinson for their years of service with the City and congratulated them on their retirements. Joe Sunderman thanked the City for the opportunity and is looking forward to retirement.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

Exempt Gambling (bingo): Mower County Veteran's Council on July 3 & 4, 2022
Exempt Gambling (raffle): United Catholic Schools Foundation on June 17, 2022
Mobile Food: La Borinqua, Albert Lea
Mobile Food: Solem Concessions, Inc., 19192 540th Avenue
Right of Way: Consolidated Communications Enterprise Services, Inc., Mattoon, IL
Right of Way: Senrick Custom Homes, Rochester

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of bills.
- b. Investment Report.

Events:

Stepping Out for Autism Walk and 5K on May 1, 2022

Carried.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace reviewed an annexation request from Tom and Heidi Anderson. They own 2702 4th Drive SW and have petitioned the City to be annexed for access to City sewer. The resolution would need to be approved by the City and the Township and will be brought into the City as R-1 zoning.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution approving an annexation in Austin Township for Tom and Heidi Anderson. Carried 7-0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 21st Avenue NE (8th Drive NE to 14th Street NE), Project 22-101. The amount to be assessed is \$111,865.15 at 3.75% for 15 years. Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-101. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-101. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 9th Street NW (10th Avenue NW to 12th Avenue NW) and 10th Street NW (8th Avenue NW to 13th Avenue NW), Project 22-102. The amount to be assessed is \$252,390.65 at 3.75% for 15 years. Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-102. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-102. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 3rd Avenue NE (Oakland Place NE to 19th Street NE), Project 22-103. The amount to be assessed is \$226,047.79 at 3.75% for 15 years. Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-103. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-103. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 3rd Street NE (16th Avenue NE to 18th Avenue NE), Project 22-104. The amount to be assessed is \$145,940.29 at 3.75% for 15 years. Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-104. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-104. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 5th Avenue SW (27th Street SW to 19th Street SW) and 16th Street SW (16th Avenue SW to 19th Avenue SW), Project 22-106.

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-106. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-106. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for street improvement assessments for 7th Avenue SW (23rd Street SW to 14th Street SW), 11th Avenue SW (10th Avenue SW to 18th Street SW) and 23rd Street SW (9th Avenue SW to Dead End), Project 22-107. Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum stated the specific details of each project were presented at the February 22, 2022 improvement hearings and notices were mailed to each property owner with the exact assessment amount and payment options.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adopting a resolution declaring the cost of Project 22-107. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting resolution adopting the assessment roll for Project 22-107. Carried 7-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS (continued)

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated the City of Austin switched from a self-insured program to a PEIP program in 2019. He stated as part of the HRA/HSA plan, the City is required to contribute \$750 for single coverage or \$1,500 for family coverage annually to an account. City staff recently discovered that the contributions were being paid out of the employee's premiums, thereby overcharging the employees. Mr. Dankert proposed that the City refund the overcharged amount to the employees and adopt a new resolution with the corrected insurance premiums.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adopting a resolution approving modified 2022 insurance rates. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting a resolution approving a health insurance reimbursement to employees from 2019-2021. Carried 7-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council approve 2021 budget carryovers into the 2022 budget year. He stated the items were not purchased in 2021 and would

go into the 2022 purchase year. Also on the resolution is the funding for the health insurance premium refunds as discussed earlier for 2022 City contributions.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution approving budget adjustment number 2. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, appointing Camden Harp to the Planning Commission, term expiring 12/31/22. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, granting the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 711 6th Avenue SE, Nelson Property. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, granting the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 204 12th Street SE, Beddow Property. Carried.

Mayor King started off the discussion on the need for an interim Park and Rec director. He stated due to personnel issues, the name of the person proposed as the interim director by the Park and Rec Board should not be mentioned. He stated he would not take public comment since the discussion is not a public hearing and the Council discussion should focus on if there is a need for an interim director.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated the Park and Rec board is in charge of the department and if they feel the need to appoint an interim director then the Council should allow it. He questioned if the City Administrator has the authority to appoint himself the interim director and if that causes conflict with labor grievances.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, to allow testimony on the matter from the Park and Rec board and public. Carried 7-0.

City Attorney Craig Byram stated the City Administrator has authority under the charter to appoint himself as the interim director, subject to the Council's approval.

Council Member Waller stated an interim director is needed because the hiring is not going to be a 4 week timeline as projected. She stated the board would like more time to review the candidates to find the right individual for the job.

Council Member Baskin asked what has changed since the meeting with Kevin and the administration department, why couldn't Craig Clark handle those decisions and what decisions are going to be made by interim director.

Council Member-at-Large Austin noted the plan set forth by administration was never presented to the Park and Rec board. He also stated he didn't see how Mr. Clark would have enough time to take on the interim director position.

Council Member Fischer stated he doesn't see the need for the interim director in the month of March.

Council Member Postma stated he is hopeful that the position will be filled soon and there won't be a need for a interim director. However, he stated if the process drags on for an extended amount of time then he would see a greater need for the position.

Council Member-at-Large Austin noted he would like to interview internal and external candidates for the position and would like to take time to choose a quality candidate.

Council Member Baskin stated he is not opposed to interim director if the vacancy is not filled quickly.

Mayor King stated the culture of communication needs to be better in the Park and Rec department.

Helen Jahr, Chair of the Park and Rec Board, 406 8th Place NW, stated there was no communication from Kevin as to who was going to be the point person after Kevin's departure. The Board was hoping Craig Clark and Mayor King would show up to Kevin's last board meeting for communication on the subject. She also stated she contacted HR Director Trish Wiechmann to ask for past precedence when former director Denny Maschka passed away. At that time, Kim Underwood was appointed by the Park and Rec board and confirmed by the Council as an interim director.

Gretchen Ramlo, 1908 Oak Tree Lane, Unit 8, stated Park and Rec is going into the busiest time of the year with summer programming and needs to have a point person in charge.

Kim Underwood, 88308 258th Street, stated March is a very busy time of year planning for summer activities and a team of people is needed to get things done. Someone is needed to serve as the point of contact for staff and the board.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member Waller, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to approve the appointment of an interim Park and Rec director as stated at the March 11, 2022 Park and Rec board meeting. Motion failed 3-4 with Council Member Oballa abstaining and Mayor King breaking the tie. Council Members Baskin, Postma, Fischer and Mayor King voted nay.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Maxine Tasker stated she would like the Council to make an exception to have chickens in her home.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated chickens are not allowed in the City.

Police Chief David McKichan stated exceptions to the laws cannot be made.

Meg Bartz, 206 12th Street SE stated she came in late on the meeting and was wondering about the disposition on 204 12th Street SE for junk removal.

Mayor King stated the Council initiated action to clean up the property.

Greg Bell, 1004 10th Street NW, inquired what the status of the tree trimmer hiring is.

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated tree trimmers and reclassified as park maintenance.

Mr. Bell asked why the former positions weren't reinstated since they are in the contract.

Mayor King stated administration would have a meeting with Mr. Bell.

Council Member Poshusta stated she has talked to the employees and they don't know what they are supposed to be doing.

REPORTS

Council Member Baskin stated he was disappointed with both Park and Rec conversations tonight.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated communication needs to improve in administration.

Council Member Waller stated she is disappointed in the Council's decision. She stated she wanted to improve communication in the department.

Council Member Postma is looking forward to a fresh start with a new director in Park and Rec.

Mayor King stated there needs to be some significant leadership in Park and Rec.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated there may be a grant coming for Creekside Business Park.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adjourning the meeting to April 4, 2022. Carried.

Adjourned: 7:16 p.m.

Approved: April 4, 2022

Mayor: _____

City Recorder: _____