

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
January 3, 2023
City Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and Police Chief David McKichan
Public Works Director Steven Lang, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Park and Rec Director Dave Merrill, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann and City Clerk Ann Kasel

APPEARING IN PERSON: Chris Grev, Cece Kroc, Lindsey Hernandez

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Accelerate Austin Funding Request

City Administrator Craig Clark introduced Lindsey Hernandez, who is the new leader of Impact Austin.

Lindsey Hernandez recapped the proposal and requested \$5,000 from 2023 contingency for the continued implementation of the Velocity Group's report. The total fee for the project is \$100,000 and will be divided amongst other community stake holders. There will be work sessions and virtual speakers.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving \$5,000 from 2023 contingency funding for the Velocity Group's proposal. Carried.

The item will be on the January 17, 2023 Council Agenda.

Item No. 2 - 2023 Assessment Rates

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum presented the 2023 assessment rates stating it is the City's goal to assess adjacent property owners 50% of the costs of street projects and in 2022 the City assessed 28.8% of the project costs. He proposed increasing the assessment rates for urban and commercial streets 7% as in past years. Therefore, the rate for 2022 will increase from \$56.18 per lineal foot to \$60.11 per lineal foot for residential street reconstruction and \$80.22 per lineal foot to \$85.84 per lineal foot for commercial properties. Other rates would also be increased slightly. He noted that construction rates are increasing at a greater rate than the City has

increased the assessment rates. He stated that the City guarantees that the road will last 35 years and the City has policies in place for different types of properties.

Council Member Baskin asked if the increase should be higher for the assessments.

Mr. Wenum noted that different communities fund their assessment projects in different ways. Some communities assess 100% of the costs to the projects after the project is complete while others include the assessment amount in the tax levy. Some cities use franchise fees on utility bills.

The Council expressed interest in researching other options for the assessment project.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, recommending approval of 2023 assessment rates with a 7% increase. Carried.

The item will be on the January 17, 2023 Council agenda.

Item No. 3 – Boards and Commissions Appointments

The Council reviewed the proposed boards and commissions appointments that were on the December 19th agenda and were continued to the January 3, 2023 work session. The majority of the appointments moved to the Council meeting earlier in the evening. The remaining appointments were:

Ed Schmitt to the Parks and Recreation Board – term through December 31, 2026

Tom Stiehm to the Parks and Recreation Board – term through December 31, 2026

Mayor King reviewed the process as to how boards and commissions are appointed. He stated he looks at the applications and talks to the candidates. He stated he works with Ed Schmitt and felt that he would be a good candidate for the board. He also stated former Mayor Tom Stiehm expressed interest in the board. He stated he is looking for solid, community minded individuals for all the boards and commissions. He noted the Charter states that the task of the Mayor is to place individuals on boards and commissions.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he is the former Council liaison to the board and stated he formerly worked with the department head and the Mayor to fill appointments. He also noted the Park Board and the Council spent a weekend in a mediation session and would like some of the solutions from that mediation to be used in this circumstance.

Mayor King noted he didn't receive any feedback from the department head prior to the appointment and was following the same procedure.

Council Member Baker suggested that the Mayor appoint one member and the Park Board appoint one member to meet in the middle.

Council Member Fischer stated he would like to trust the Mayor's judgment on the matter.

Council Member Poshusta stated if nothing is being done wrong then she has to go with it.

Council Member Baskin stated he felt it's not a bad thing to meet halfway on any issue.

Parks and Recreation Director Dave Merrill stated there are nine active applications for the two positions. He stated the Park and Rec Department provides a wide variety of services and having individuals with diverse backgrounds serve the community well. He noted that the Park and Rec board wanted to make a recommendation to the Mayor for the appointments.

Park and Rec Board Member Cece Kroc stated she appreciates the Council but the last year has been very dysfunctional and that is concerning as a taxpayer. She felt that good City employees may be leaving because of that dysfunction.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, to recommend approval of the appointment of Ed Schmitt and Tom Stiehm to the Park and Rec Board. Carried 5-2 with Council Member Baker and Council Member-at-Large Austin voting nay.

The item will be on the January 17, 2023 agenda.

Item No. 4 – Council Boards and Commissions Appointments

The Council reviewed the proposed Council boards and commissions appointments. Council Member-at-Large Austin noted he would like to be on an additional board and was appointed to the Library Board.

AUSTIN/MOWER COUNTY HOMEOWNERSHIP BOARD

Meets January, May, October – 5:30, City Hall Conference Room

1. Jeff Austin
2. Paul Fischer

BLAZING STAR TRAIL JOINT POWERS BOARD

No set meeting times

1. Joyce Poshusta
2. Steve King
3. Jeff Austin

CABLE TV COMMITTEE

No set meeting times

1. Steve King

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD

Meets first Tuesday – 8:00 am, Chamber of Commerce

1. Craig Clark

CITY/COUNTY HEALTH BOARD (County Appointment)

Meets at least three times per year, Health and Human Services

1. Steve King

COMMUNITY EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meets every other month at 3:00 pm

1. Geoff Baker

CULTURE AND ARTS

1. Laura Helle

DISCOVER AUSTIN, MINNESOTA

Meets the fourth Tuesday of the month – 1:00 pm, various business locations

1. Mike Postma

DCA BOARD

Meets the third Tuesday in February, May, August and November – 11:30 am, Town Center Conference Room

1. Jason Baskin

FAMILY CONNECTIONS

Meets as needed, ARC-Mower County

1. Steve King

HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD

Meets the third Thursday of the month – 4:30 pm, HRA

1. Laura Helle, First Ward
2. Mike Postma, Second Ward
3. Paul Fischer, Third Ward

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

1. Joyce Poshusta

LEC COMMITTEE

No set meeting times

1. Mayor King
2. Jeff Austin
3. Craig Clark
4. David McKichan
5. Jim McCoy

LIBRARY BOARD

Meets the second Monday of the month – 4:30 pm, library

1. Jeff Austin

MOWER COUNTY WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Two times per year - daytime

1. Steve King

ONE WATERSHED ONE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

1. Steve King

PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

Meets the first Wednesday of the month – 5:15 pm, Park & Rec office

1. Laura Helle

PORT AUTHORITY OF AUSTIN

Meets fourth Wednesday of the month in January, April, July, October (plus special meetings as needed) – 4:30 pm, Council Chambers

1. Jason Baskin
2. Jeff Austin

SALVATION ARMY BOARD

1. Paul Fischer

SENIOR CENTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS

No set meeting time – Mower County Senior Center

1. Paul Fischer

SMART Transit Advisory Committee

Meets quarterly, various times.

1. Joyce Poshusta

YELLOW RIBBON COMMITTEE

1. Joyce Poshusta

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, recommending approval of 2023 Council boards and commissions. Carried.

The item will be on the January 17, 2023 Council Agenda.

Item No. 5 - Administrative Report

None

Item No. 6 – Open Discussion

None.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, adjourning the meeting at 7:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk