

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
April 17, 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, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Park and Rec Director Dave Merrill, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum and City Clerk Ann Kasel

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, KAUS Radio, Honorary Council Member Denver Ritz, Public

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:02 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Noise Wall Vote

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City recently held an informational meeting with the residents impacted by the proposed noise wall. He noted that he received votes from the individuals on the project and he has reflected that information on the spreadsheet presented to Council.

Council Member Helle stated it doesn't seem there is consensus in the neighborhood as to the direction of the project. She stated the City has participated by funding the study which was approximately \$11,000 and she does not support contributing 5% of the total project cost.

Council Member Baker noted there are 11 properties that are most impacted by the proposed wall and there are 4 yes votes with the City paying a portion of the project. He stated he would like to move it ahead to the 90% grant / 5% City / 5% homeowner cost allocation. He stated if there are 7 yes votes for this allocation then he would be supportive of the project moving forward.

Council Member Baskin stated he struggles to put public dollars into a project that impacts a very small number of people. He also stated he is concerned about setting precedence for the project.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he feels the City is investing in the neighborhood and feels it's for the good of the City.

Council Member Postma stated he did not hear much enthusiasm for the wall at the public meeting.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to move forward with the noise wall project with a 90% grant / 5% City / 5% homeowner cost allocation as long as there are at least 7 property owners in favor of the project. Carried 4-3 with Council Members Fischer, Helle and Postma voting nay.

The item will be on the May 1, 2023 Council agenda.

Item No. 2 - LED Street Light Conversion

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City has partnered with Austin Utilities in recent years to replace all the street lights in town with LED lighting. He stated the majority of the lights have been replaced and the project is seeing a \$60,000 yearly savings in lighting costs. This savings is after the 3 ½ year payback on the initial investment.

For Council information only; no action needed at this time.

Item No. 3 – Nitrogen Reduction Strategy

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City is part of a nitrogen reduction group which is going to reduce the State's total nitrogen discharge by 45% by the year 2040. The City's waste water treatment plant is a high contributor of nitrogen when compared to other municipal treatment plants. He stated the plant expansion project will reduce the amount of nitrogen as it is designed. He also stated the plant was designed to accommodate future piping additions which would further reduce the nitrogen levels. If the requirement from the State came even lower then chemicals would need to be added to the water.

Mr. Lang stated he would report back with a cost estimate for future piping.

For Council information only; no action needed at this time.

Item No. 4 – Hydrant and Stormwater Fee Discussion

The Council discussed the fire hydrant and stormwater fee that is on utility bills.

Council Member Baker noted there is a small group of residents that don't benefit from the fire hydrants.

Fire Chief Jim McCoy noted that all the water that is used for firefighting comes from a hydrant.

No additional Council action taken.

Item No. 5 – Parks Master Plan Update

Parks and Recreation Director Dave Merrill provided an update to the Parks Master Plan stating there will be a public open house on April 20th from 4-8 pm at the Ruby Rupner Auditorium. MSA will present the plan and it will be an open house style of meeting. He stated the final report will be presented in August. He stated there will be another survey for the cost allocation.

Item No. 6 - Administrative Report

None.

Item No. 7 – Open Discussion

Council Member-at-Large Austin noted the future local option sales tax may need to go to Park projects.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adjourning the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk