

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
May 15, 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 and Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, Craig Popenhagen

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

Item No. 1 – 2022 Audit Review

Craig Popenhagen from CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP presented the 2022 audit report. Mr. Popenhagen stated the City received a clean audit opinion on the financial statements. He stated City has unassigned fund balance of 58%, which is above the informal policy of 42-48%. 2022 general fund expenditures were at 95% and revenues came in at 100% of the budget. He reviewed the revenues and expenditures for the City stating both were within budget and noted the City is run very efficiently.

Mr. Popenhagen stated that Mr. Dankert drafts the Comprehensive Financial Report and the City has received the certificate of excellence for 37 years in a row.

Council discussed fund balance and budgeting for the future.

The item will be on the June 5, 2023 Council Agenda for approval.

Item No. 2 – Housing Discussion

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace provided a report on the housing situation in Austin. She stated the City has aging housing and the tax base is losing \$14,000,000 in value every year. Ninety percent of the existing housing was built prior to 1980.

She stated there have been advances in new housing including 42 townhomes at Fox Pointe, 82 units at Flats on 21st, 91 units at Mill on Main and 40 units at 1st and 3rd. There have also been

61 new single-family homes built since 2016. Even with the gains, there are an average of 5 home demolished every year.

Ms. Wallace stated the Building Department is focusing on housing and nuisance enforcement to maintain housing preservation efforts. She proposed raising the vacant fee from \$120 to \$500 to encourage sale or rental; increasing the maximum fines for housing and nuisance code repeat offenders; adding an additional full time staff person to increase capacity for nuisance enforcement and creating a task force to develop strategies to assist home owners with the most financial need.

The Council discussed the options for improving housing in Austin.

Council Member Helle asked how much time the inspector spends on housing enforcement now.

Ms. Wallace stated it is approximately 15% of his time on complaints.

Council Member Baker stated the HRA has more tools to solve more problems and why wouldn't the HRA manage this function.

Ms. Wallace stated that option could be explored.

Council Member Baker noted the City needs a housing strategy and the funding for another employee could be used to improve housing stock.

The Council stated they would like to hear from the HRA and have options for moving forward to correct housing.

After additional discussion, the Council would like to discuss this at the June 5, 2023 with additional options for housing solutions.

Item No. 3 - Administrative Report

None.

Item No. 4 – Open Discussion

Council Member Helle stated the Whitewater meeting will be at the YMCA at 5:30 on Wednesday, June 17th.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adjourning the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel, City Clerk