

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
September 5, 2023
City Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Laura Helle

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and Police Captain Todd Clennon, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Chief Jim McCoy, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann and City Clerk Ann Kasel

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, KAUS Radio, An Le

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Item No. 1 – 2024 Budget Discussion

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert continued the budget discussion from the August 21, 2023 work session. He stated the proposed tax levy must be set by September 30, 2023. Mr. Dankert sent out surveys to Council to gauge their priorities and reviewed the results from the six Council members that returned it. He stated the Council previously approved 2023-2025 bargain contracts and approved two new police officers in the amount of \$240,000 for the 2024 budget.

Mr. Dankert reviewed the department budgets from page 4 and noted that the Council did not recommend any changes.

He reviewed staffing levels and requested Council motions on individual items to determine the tax levy.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baker, to remove additional fire inspector from the 2024 proposed budget. Carried 5-1 with Council Member Fischer voting nay.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Baker, to remove the additional nature center staff from the 2024 proposed budget. Carried 4-2 with Council Members Fischer and Postma voting nay.

The Council stated they would like to keep the paid on-call firefighter increased pay in the proposed 2024 budget.

Mr. Dankert stated the remaining staff requested by departments are not currently in the budget and the Council stated they would like the requests to remain out of the budget.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to direct Chief McCoy to apply for a 3 year grant for 3 firefighters with the caveat that if the grant was received the City would fund the positions after the grant period. Carried 4-2 with Council Members Baker and Council Member-at-Large Austin voting nay.

Mr. Dankert reviewed the capital outlay portion of the budget. He stated the Council proposed a variety of different options for cuts in the budget. The Council considered each proposal individually.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Baker, to remove playground surface updates in the amount of \$130,000 from the 2024 budget. Carried 6-0.

The Council decided to keep the downtown master plan in the 2024 budget.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, to reduce the amount for iPad replacement from \$6,000 to \$3,000. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to remove the human resources market study in the amount of \$20,000 from the 2024 budget. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to remove the outdoor fitness item in the amount of \$50,000 from the 2024 budget. Carried.

One Council Member suggested closing the municipal pool. The Council did not support that idea. The Council also decided to keep the Senior Center carpet, LIDAR mapping and street sign replacements in the 2024 budget.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, to take the funding for the I-90 sound wall out of fund balance. Motion failed 3-4 with Council Members Poshusta, Fischer and Council Member-at-Large Austin voting Nay and Mayor King breaking the tie.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to freeze the proposed outside agency contributions for the 2024 budget. Carried.

Mr. Dankert reviewed the department budget requests for reductions.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, to reduce the awards for the Pillars of the City from 3 to 2 per year. Carried.

The Council also agreed on the following reductions:

- Reduce council travel by \$1,400

- Reduce police explorer supplies by \$400

Reduce Building Dept communications by \$500
Reduce Nature Center office supplies by \$1,000
Reduce Nature Center memberships by \$400
Reduce Isaak Walton cleaning by \$1,000
Reduce Riverside arena professional services by \$1,140
Reduce Library travel by \$1,500

With the changes noted above, Mr. Dankert stated the tax levy was reduced from 11.18% to 6.99%. Mr. Dankert proposed to increase contingency from \$206,000 to \$450,000. Which would bring the tax levy to 9.93%, which is above the range that most Council stated they were comfortable with.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Baker to remove the \$450,000 of contingency for 2024. Motion failed 3-4 with Council Members Postma, Poshusta and Fischer voting nay and Mayor King voting nay to break the tie.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, recommending setting the tax levy at 9.93%. Carried 4-3 with Council Members Baker, Baskin and Council Member-at-Large Austin voting nay and Mayor King breaking the tie voting yea. Carried.

The item will be on the September 15, 2023 Council Agenda.

Item No. 2 – I-90 Traffic Control and Detour

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated MnDOT is planning on beginning construction on the I-90 crossovers in anticipation of the upcoming bridge replacement work. He noted the schedule for the replacements over the next few years stating there will need to be a detour through town when the 4th Street NW bridge is demolished. He reviewed the different options for the detours.

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

Item No. 3 – Stop Sign Request

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated he received a request for a stop sign to be installed for west bound traffic on the service road at Oakland Avenue West and 22nd Street NW. He recommended the installation of the sign to increase awareness to look in all directions at the intersections.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, recommending the placement of a stop sign on the service road at Oakland Avenue West and 22nd Street NW. Carried.

The item will be on the September 18, 2023 Council agenda.

Item No. 4 – Sick Leave for Fitness

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated the sick leave for fitness program has been in place since 2004 where employees can exchange their sick leave for fitness purposes, up to \$1,000. She proposed increasing that maximum amount per year to \$2,000.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, increasing the maximum amount of the sick leave for fitness program from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Carried.

The item will be on the September 18, 2023 Council Agenda.

Item No. 5 - Administrative Report

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the due diligence period for the purchase of the Herald building expiring on September 12th and he requested guidance from Council.

Item No. 6 – Open Discussion

None.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk