

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
July 21, 2025
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Laura Helle, Michael Postma, Oballa Oballa and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Jason Baskin

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, City Attorney Craig Byram and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald and Community Members

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

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving the agenda as amended. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving Council minutes from July 7, 2025. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Lodging Establishment: Charming Family Home, Austin, MN
Right of Way: Crown Underground LLC, Prior Lake, MN
Right of Way: Concrete Solutions Inc. West Salem, WI
Mobile: La Michoacana Purepecha 3 LLC, Rochester, MN

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial Report
- c. Investment Report

Events:

Oaxaca Basketball Tournament on July 26, 2025
Eagles Benefit for Whiskers & Wags on August 16, 2025

Appointments:

Nancy Schnable as the City of Austin Film Liaison

Carried.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Mayor King opened the floor to discussion about the point-of-sale ordinance to Council members.

Council Member-at-Large Austin is not in favor of this ordinance. He does not like the idea of pushing out the effective date.

Council Member Fischer asked if someone were to purchase a home and later found out that there was a sewer problem, wouldn't they like to know about this issue at the point of sale, so they could factor the cost into their purchase?

Council Member Postma stated he would like time to delay the effective date until March.

Council Member Helle stated she is also in favor of pushing this out so City Staff and Council can work on getting this ordinance perfected. She stated they are putting this ordinance in effect to provide clean water to all members of the community. As they work towards improving this ordinance, she would like to engage with stakeholders.

Council Member Oballa stated he is in support of pushing this back, he would like to know when Council come back on March 1st what will this look like.

Mr. Lang would like to have meetings with different agencies this fall to get feedback, develop an FAQ, and provide feedback to Council.

Council Member Waller stated she is in favor of the ordinance and pushing the effective date back. She stated everyone needs to work together to ensure that all parties are protected. Everyone needs to come in with a level head to work together.

Mayor King stated there seems to be a consensus.

Molly Cass, realtor, stated she would like to have a committee to get together very quickly. She stated she doesn't want Council to think that realtors are not on board with this. She would like to be part of this committee. She would also like fees to be collected.

Tom Mork, realtor, stated there are going to be homes that will be missed. The point of sale ordinance will cause a hardship on people selling homes. He believes the City needs a financial plan on how they are going to help people pay for these repairs. He does agree with the need to look after the investments in the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Eric Brownlow, Southeast Minnesota Realtors Representative, stated he would like the Council to rescind the ordinance.

Council Member-at-Large Austin asked City Attorney Byram if home buyers and sellers would be on the hook for previous inspections.

City Attorney Byram reiterated this evening they are voting on this provision which would postpone the effect date of this ordinance until March of 2026.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Postma, for preparation of the ordinance. Carried 5-1. (Council Member-At-Large Austin - Nay)

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Waller, for the adoption of the point of sale ordinance. Carried 5-1. (Council Member-At-Large Austin Nay) Ordinance does not pass with a unanimous vote and will be carried to the August 4, 2025 Council Meeting.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated a resident is requesting a deferred assessment. The resident qualifies for the deferment and has been given extensive information about the deferment. Mr. Dankert recommends approval for the deferment at the location of 707 Oakland Ave W. Mr. Dankert request Council approval for the senior deferral.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving a request for a senior deferral. Carried. 6-0.

Police Chief McKichan presented an agreement for renewal of the school resource officers for the upcoming school year. The police department recommends extending this for the 2025-2026 school year.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving an agreement for school resource officers. Carried. 6-0.

Library Director Julie Clinefelter requested \$17,000 from the contingency fund to place RFID tags on the library's books. This will help the library comply with the new SELCO standards.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated they will be tagging books moving forward, they also need to do this to be part of SELCO. They will benefit greatly by being part of this program.

Council Member Postma expressed his frustration with SELCO and their need to impose these fees on libraries. He knows there are smaller library facilities that are grappling with these costs.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving a funding request for RFID tags at the Austin Public Library. Carried. 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested approval to move forward with a grant application for a new electric ice resurfacers. This grant is facilitated through the Mighty Ducks program and the grant amount is \$25,000, with matching City funds required.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving a Mighty Ducks grant application request. Carried. 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 816 11th Avenue SW, Armstrong Property. Carried.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated during the 8-month repair schedule at the Wastewater Treatment Plant, the City incurred additional construction inspection services from SEH for \$47,000. The contract includes language that allows the owner to offset these costs against future payments. The City still owes the contractor \$367,861.27 on the project and would propose that the \$47,000 be deducted from a future pay application. Mr. Lang requested Council approval of Change Order No. 2, comprised of an overall deduction of (\$47,000) from the original contract and the construction service amendment in the amount of \$47,000 for the inspection services. This project is fully funded by the Industrial budget.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving change order number 2 for the WWTP EQ/Digester. Carried. 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving funding for additional engineering services with SEH at the WWTP. Carried. 6-0.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Mandy Penrod 802 11th Ave NW had questions about the sump pump system inspection and had issue with compliance. She does not believe every home was inspected.

Mayor King stated approximately 95% of homeowners have been inspected.

Council Member Postma stated for the ordinance, a person would only be inspected if they sold their home.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Council Member Helle requested City Staff and the Public share ideas on where the City is overserving, as they have a budget crunch coming up. She wants to ensure they are still paying staff healthy wages and that a portion of their health insurance costs is covered. She thanked the Parks and Recreation staff for all the work on staffing the Municipal pool, which has been particularly challenging this summer. The City would like to hire more lifeguards, so if anyone is interested, please apply. She thanked Discover Austin for their participation in the RAGBRAI event this past weekend.

Council Member Postma stated for the first time, RAGBRAI, a bike ride across Iowa, made a pit stop in a city in Minnesota, and Discover Austin was part of that event, representing the City. He stated there are new attractions in Mower County, the Chert Quarry in Grand Meadow. The

Historical Society would have more information about this. The other attraction is Floatin' Goat Outfitters. A kayak rental business. This is a new business that can assist you with kayak rentals, allowing you to float for a few hours on our local rivers or bodies of water.

Mayor King stated a community like ours, which does not have a natural lake, is noteworthy for the impact we are having on our creeks and rivers. They are being made into recreational waterways, and he appreciates the work of the Cedar River Watershed District and Mower County Soil and Water for their efforts. He stated the three pillars that were selected this year; their plaques have been placed on the wall. He thanked City Clerk Brianne Wolf for her work on this project and the committee. He recognized former Council Member Dick Lang, who recently passed away. He was appreciative of all his previous years of service to the City of Austin. He sends condolences to the family of Mr. Lang.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, adjourning the meeting to August 4, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:14 p.m.

Approved: August 4, 2025

Mayor: _____

City Recorder: _____