

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
March 16, 2026
City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Laura Helle, Paul Fischer, Jason Baskin, Rebecca Waller and Council Member-at-Large Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Oballa Oballa and Council Member Michael Postma

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Police Chief David McKichan, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Parks, Recreation, & Forestry Director Jason Sehon, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald

Mayor Steve King opened the meeting at 6:42 p.m.

Item #1 Austin Bruins Contract Discussion – Jason Sehon

Parks, Recreation and Forestry Director Jason Sehon presented the draft Austin Bruins contract to Council. Mr. Sehon noted the current agreement is set to terminate on May 17, 2026.

Mr. Sehon reviewed the main changes to the proposed lease agreement:

- The lease term would increase from three years to five years.
- Responsibility for the cost of replacing ice would alternate every three years after the Bruins season concludes. Under the proposal, the City would pay in 2027, and the Bruins would pay in 2030.
- For Friday home games, the Bruins would receive locker room access one hour earlier than under the previous agreement.
- For Saturday home games, the Bruins would receive locker room and ice access at 4:00 p.m., allowing for a 6:00 p.m. game time instead of the previous 7:05 p.m. start.
- The hourly rental rate for ice time beyond designated game blocks would increase by 5 percent, consistent with rate increases applied to other arena users.
- The City would provide a 25 percent lease reduction in exchange for the Bruins committing at least \$110,000 in capital improvements to Riverside Arena over the five-year lease term.
- The established rate of \$145.00 per hour for the additional one hour extension to each game block (increasing each game block from four hours to five hours) would be waived for the duration of the lease.

- Hourly rates for Bruins Summer Camps will be set at a rate of \$116 per hour.
- They shall maintain workers' compensation insurance.
- New language would require public address and video board announcements reminding fans to clean up after games.
- Updated language would require the Bruins to provide security.
- A termination clause was added, which was not included in the previous agreement.

Mr. Sehon stated they discussed additional improvement items with the Bruins and these items were considered during negotiations but are not fully defined in the lease itself:

- The Bruins agreed to purchase materials and cover installation costs for new kick plates when the ice is removed in 2027.
- Both parties discussed removing the ice every summer but ultimately agreed to continue removing it every three years.
- The City does not propose additional charges for the Bruins' year-round use of office space, locker rooms, storage, utilities, trash removal, concessions, or advertising rights under the new agreement.
- Staff noted that arena utility costs have increased in recent years, and those increases were considered when establishing the annual 5 percent rent increase.
- Staff also noted that the City currently provides approximately six seasonal employees per Bruins home game, and those staffing costs exceed \$11,000 annually. After discussion, both parties agreed the City would continue providing custodial support.

Council Member Baskin thanked Mr. Sehon for his ongoing work getting an agreement in place. He believes this is smart approach as he feels the Bruins are an asset to the community.

Council Member Helle stated there has been a lot of communication to get this agreement to where it is now and she appreciates the work being done and is in support of the Bruins.

Council Member-at-Large Austin thanked all involved with their work on this agreement.

Public Works Director Steven Lang asked the Council for clarification. He stated there is a \$75,000 reduction in the lease agreement, and that the Bruins are committing to \$110,000 in improvements. Mr. Lang asked for clarification on whether Council wished to approve the improvement commitment as a flat amount or requested additional detail on proposed projects. Mr. Lang stated specific projects could be developed over the term of the lease in coordination with the Bruins. He stated additional funding beyond the Bruins' contribution may be necessary to complete certain improvements and could be requested later through tax levy support or Hormel Foundation grants. He would like to know whether the Council would like to leave this open-ended and have staff work with the Bruins to develop ideas. He would like to ensure they are comfortable with whatever ideas they move forward with.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated Mr. Sehon stated earlier they would move forward the lease agreement and then work with the Bruins to identify what projects they would like to start working on. He would be comfortable with this.

Council Member Baskin stated he would be comfortable with this idea as well. He would be in favor of staff working with the Bruins to develop ideas.

Council Member Helle is in agreement. She understands there may be additional costs in the future and acknowledges Mr. Lang's concerns for future expenses.

Council Member Baskin stated they would like to empower staff to make smart and strategic decisions.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin to place this item on the April 6, 2026, Council agenda.

Item #2 – Wastewater Treatment Plant Change Order Update #11 – Steven Lang

Public Works Director Steven Lang informed the Council of tariff-related cost impacts on project equipment imported during a temporary tariff period. Two items incurred tariffs due to timing; one just after tariffs were imposed and another just before they were lifted. Mr. Lang stated the work change directive will include these tariff costs. He recommends reimbursing the contractor, noting the City has already paid some of these expenses and will track potential reimbursement opportunities if tariffs are refunded in the future, though recovery is uncertain.

Council Member Baskin believes they will be able to obtain a reimbursement from the tariffs in the future. He would like to wait to reimburse the contractor the \$3,800 for the tariffs.

Mr. Lang stated he will check with the City Attorney on the legality of the withholding the payment for tariffs.

Mr. Lang reviewed the changes identified in Change Order #11:

- Increased costs for Wastewater Treatment Plant computer system upgrades (from ~\$30,000 to ~\$93,000).
- Total change order increase in the amount of \$120,592. \$62,943 cost increase to Domestic budget and a \$57,649 cost increase to Industrial budget.
- Project status: \$3.7 million in change orders to date on a \$100 million project (approx. 3.72% overrun), remaining within the 5% contingency.
- Total projected project cost (including engineering): \$109,605,506.72, split roughly evenly between domestic and industrial funding.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Fischer to place this item on the April 6, 2026, Council meeting.

Item #3 – Administrative Report

None

Item #4 – Open Discussion

None

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Waller, to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 PM. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brianne D. Wolf, City Clerk