

**MINUTES**  
**COMMON COUNCIL WORKSESSION**  
**FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2001**  
**4:30 P.M.**  
**RUBY RUPNER AUDITORIUM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Rietz, Council Member-at-Large Chaffee, Council Members Goodnature, Jorgenson, Christopherson, Poppe, Nordin, and Lang.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Patrick McGarvey, David Hoversten, Jon Erichson and Tom Dankert at 4:30 p.m. Denny Maschka, Chris McArdle, Dan Wilson, Kermit Mahan Jerry McCarthy, and Paul Philipp at 5:30 p.m.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Shabbar Saiffee with FEMA and the Austin Post Bulletin

Mayor Rietz welcomed all in attendance and thanked them all for being able to attend this weekends worksession. Mayor Rietz also discussed the recent article in the League of Minnesota Cities magazine regarding highly effective councils. Mayor Rietz requested the city have a worksession in the near future to discuss the article and how it relates to the City of Austin.

Council Member Jorgenson noted her agreement with Mayor Rietz in that the current city council and committee structure are set up well to address the different needs and specific issues of the community. Council Member Lang agreed.

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert discussed the current status of the funds within the City of Austin. Mr. Dankert noted the state recommends cities keep roughly 50% of their next years expenditures in fund balance, between undesignated and designated for cash flows. Mr. Dankert noted we are on pace for another good year, which will allow us to designate some of our fund balance towards the valuation disagreement that Hormel Foods Corporation has filed against Mower County. The city may be liable to refund three years of the city share of tax payments made by the Hormel Foods Corporation, and governmental accounting standards may require us to designate funds for this purpose. Mr. Dankert reviewed all of the funds the city currently has, answering the questions that arose. Council Member Pete Christopherson questioned how much cash and investments the city currently has. Mr. Dankert noted it was roughly \$40,000,000 as the city recently took possession of the \$4.2 million bond proceeds for the Equalization Tank project at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Council Member Lang noted his desire to replenish the Police and Fire PERA funds instead of spending any of the principal.

City Engineer Jon Erichson discussed the street assessment policy and the city's options in the future. Mr. Erichson noted the city has had very few objections in the last five years, except for the 1999 assessments to which twenty individuals are still objecting. Mr. Erichson discussed the recent court loss by the city regarding the assessment to Larry Hansen. He indicated that the City could hold the improvement and assessment hearings together prior to the award of a construction contract. If appeals are filed, we would deal with them first before a contract is let. Depending upon the outcome of appeals to the court, a project would either proceed or be abandoned before a construction contract is let. Mr. Erichson also discussed his capital projects for 2001.

Dinner Break.

HRA Director Kermit Mahan introduced Shabbar Saiffee from FEMA. Mr. Saiffee discussed the FEMA project he is working on here in Austin to review flood history's etc. Mr. Saiffee noted he would be back to Austin in a week to wrap up his project. This study will not necessarily result in immediate federal funds to Austin for a buyout program but may help cause FEMA to be proactive for buyouts rather than reactive.

Park and Rec Director Denny Maschka discussed the goals of the Park and Rec Department. The Riverland Ball Diamonds, Riverside Arena project, and County Arena project have significant funds committed towards them, but the future of the County Arena project affects all of the projects. Mr. Maschka discussed the aquatics workshop, Nature Center expansion, and observatory replacement as goals for 2001. Also, replacing the windows at the Interpretive Center at the Nature Center, adding a park in the southwest area and Lone Oak addition, finishing the Community Park pavilion, and planting boulevard trees, among other things as the goals for 2001.

Council Member Lang questioned the riverbank clean-up efforts in the past few years. Mr. Maschka noted he usually uses "Sentence to Serve" personnel for these tasks.

Council Member Goodnature questioned if scooters could be a problem in downtown Austin in the near future. Police Chief Paul Philipp noted the current ordinance outlawing skateboards also was adequate to cover scooters.

Mr. Maschka did note the bridge on the north side of Todd Park may need replacing, but the County insists this is a city bridge and the County is not responsible for its maintenance. Mayor Rietz asked Mr. Maschka to bring this forward at a future joint City/County meeting.

Library Director Chris McArdle discussed some of the accomplishments of the 2000 year. Ms. McArdle noted the Bookmobile issue is resolved as the Bookmobile will be removed from the road effective July 1, 2001. Also, the sculpture paid for from the Wienke Estate has gone over very well. Ms. McArdle noted they have sent over \$10,000 worth of outstanding fines to a collection agency in order to try to collect some of the delinquent dollars. Ms. McArdle did note the conversion of the Library Bookmobile garage into a technology lab is being discussed, as the City of Austin is one of three finalists for a grant from the Bill Gates Foundation to create these labs. Funds for a conversion are available from the 1995 Capital Campaign.

Ms. McArdle noted some of the goals for 2001 included the termination of the Bookmobile service and selling of the vehicle, among other items.

Council Member Lang noted he would be very impressed if the Library could collect the books back instead of the fine money.

Council Member-at-Large Chaffee questioned if the patrons could check out additional books if they had an outstanding fine or delinquency. Ms. McArdle noted the entire SELCO system prevented any books from being checked out at any SELCO affiliated library for the delinquent cardholder.

Chief Philipp noted his departments interest in the old Bookmobile for conversion to a mobile emergency command center.

Council Member Nordin noted the Floral Club has requested a seat on the Library Board.

Chief Philipp discussed the recent upgrading of the computer software to the PCENFORS system. Things are currently working well, noting any minor problems that they have incurred have been fixed in a relatively short time period. Chief Philipp noted the regional dispatch center in Owatonna is still not ready for more entities to buy into the system. Also, with the growing number of meth labs in the area, Chief Philipp noted he would like to have a special unit trained to handle the chemicals, as opposed to calling Minneapolis for their clean-up teams. The COPS grants have still not been funded on the federal level, so the Police Department will have to wait to see the future of their staffing additions. Chief Philipp did note the qualified pool of applicants has diminished in past years with the greater demands in the job markets, this may hamper his departments efforts to find qualified people at the existing bargaining unit entry salary level. Chief Philipp also noted he needs a storage facility for the bicycles, and that the new Central Garage could solve his needs if a storage room would be made available to his department.

Fire Chief Dan Wilson noted the goals of the Fire Department have not changed, just the objective to reach the goal has changed. The goals for the Fire Department come from the accreditation manual. Chief Wilson discussed his outline of goals, including training programs and a burn facility. One issue Chief Wilson wanted all to be aware of is the issue with Gold Cross Ambulance. The ambulance service is getting their revenue cut by new Medicare laws that could decrease their funding 25%. In order to keep a quality advanced life support ambulance service, some help from the city may be needed including moving the ambulance service to the fire station.

Council Member Poppe noted the goals should also include the current concerns in the Fire Department. Council Member Poppe noted the council needs to support both the Fire Chief and the fire fighting personnel and to work together.

Council Member Goodnature asked if Gold Cross was no longer going to provide the ambulance service. Chief Wilson noted that Gold Cross will not say that they will discontinue service. The issue is how will they be funded. Mr. McGarvey noted we are aware of this reduced Medicare funding issue.

Council Member Goodnature noted he sees two issues at the Fire Department:

1. Staffing (both full time and paid on-call).
2. Gold Cross ambulance service.

Chief Wilson noted the Fire Departments conflict is staffing, how many full-time fire fighters and their schedule.

Council Member Christopherson noted there is no conflict between the full-time and paid on-call staff, the problem is with the communication at the Fire Department.

HRA Director Kermit Mahan discussed some future housing projects, noting the process is underway to remove fifteen dilapidated homes in the northeast, plus three tax forfeiture sites within the city. The goal is to build new homes on these sites, probably without garages. Council Member-at-Large Chaffee noted his desire to have garages with the new homes, otherwise the complaints may start rolling in. Mr. Mahan noted he would follow the councils wishes on the garages.

Mr. Mahan also noted the former Bud and Bob's store is currently under destruction. The railroad yard property is in process with environmental studies being completed, with the hope of being able to sell lots in the fall. The Chauncey Apartments currently has only nine openings, and Murphy's Creek has a scheduled ground breaking in the Spring. The HRA is trying to get the Governor, Jesse Ventura, to partake in the groundbreaking ceremony. Mr. Mahan noted the first phase of the airport land buyout has gone extremely well. Among other things, Mr. Mahan also noted the Twin Towers

will have some new parking in 2001 as a couple of the buildings north of the facility (Doors and Floors, H & S) have been purchased and will be demolished.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 until Saturday morning.

**MINUTES**  
**COMMON COUNCIL WORKSESSION**  
**SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2001**  
**8:00 A.M.**  
**RUBY RUPNER AUDITORIUM**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Rietz, Council Member-at-Large Chaffee, Council Members Goodnature, Jorgenson, Christopherson, Poppe, Nordin, and Lang.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Patrick McGarvey, Craig Hoium, Jon Erichson, and Tom Dankert

Council Member-at-Large Chaffee opened up the meeting by noting he was going to run for the 5<sup>th</sup> District County Commissioner seat that Gary Nemitz recently resigned from. Council Member-at-Large Chaffee requested the support of his fellow council members in the upcoming endeavor. Council Member Lang noted Council Member-at-Large Chaffee would make an excellent 5<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner and has his support fully.

Community Development Director Craig Hoium discussed the accomplishments from 2000, including the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hoium noted the northwest and southwest area's have some development issues coming forward, including the need for a transportation plan. Council Member-at-Large Chaffee noted Dick Lickteig would be willing to sell a strip of land for any future road needs. City Engineer Jon Erichson noted the city wouldn't buy the land, he would require the land be dedicated to the city for a street. Mr. Erichson also noted Mr. Lickteig is hesitant on paying somebody for a storm water management plan, which needs to be done before the land should be developed.

Council Member Jorgenson questioned how many acres Mr. Lickteig had. Mr. Erichson noted Mr. Lickteig had literally hundreds, maybe 500 to 600 acres.

Mayor Rietz questioned if the Planning Commission has a workshop planned on the future needs. Mr. Hoium noted there is a worksession to discuss the transportation needs. Council Member Lang noted the Comprehensive Plan should be looked at frequently, not every ten years. Mr. Hoium noted the new census data will be added to the Comprehensive Plan when it is available. Mr. McGarvey stated the city should have specific comprehensive plans ready for transportation, water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer management that are supportive of the new Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

DCA Director George Brophy suggested having the Austin Board of Realtors together to discuss what land is available for development. A smaller worksession could be scheduled between Hormel, Austin Medical Center, and other large employers to help them find housing for their new employees.

Council Member Goodnature questioned what type of software was being used to track or forecast response times to newly developed area's. Mr. Hoium was not aware of any software being used for this purpose.

Mr. McGarvey asked if the Lickteig addition was already annexed. Mr. Erichson noted it was, noting the city has a friendly agreement with both Austin and Lansing Townships that we only annex in land that is needed.

Mr. Hoiium discussed the other items from 2000 including Historic Preservation, the Wold Building, and the current problem with the citations he issues with the Mower County Attorney's office.

Mr. Hoiium noted for 2001 the city should look at a joint powers agreement to do some trail systems outside of the city limits, to hook up with the other trails that are outside of town. Additional industrial sites are needed, including infrastructure to the Cook Farm site.

Mr. Brophy discussed the accomplishments of the DCA in 2000 and goals for 2001. Mr. Brophy thanked the city for their support, but did note the DCA was in a risky business. Mr. Brophy did note the success of APC, with the oversight of Mike McCoy from the DCA board. Mr. Brophy suggested the city put together some sort of long-term plan to fund the needed improvements to the Cook farm site.

Mr. Dankert discussed the Finance Department goals, noting an annual goal of maximizing investment earnings, presenting a resident friendly budget process, and achieving the certificate award for our annual report. New goals for 2001 include completing the health insurance bidding process, assist in labor contract negotiations, archive more timesheets, and assist staff in preparing a 5 year capital improvement plan.

Council Member Jorgenson noted that getting the health insurance costs under control should be a top priority.

Mr. McGarvey discussed the future of Austin, and referred to having the growth and diversity of Austin as being one of the council goals for 2001. Mr. McGarvey discussed his goals for 2001 including the negotiations of the 2002 labor contracts. The former Wold Building was discussed and the siding that was recently put on the facility. Council Member Lang requested the council to look at the building as this is not what he had in mind for renovating the facility. Mr. McGarvey discussed the TIF #10 projects that are in process and what the goals for 2001 were within the district, especially in Block 19 and with the former Lecakis building on Fourth Avenue NE.

The Mayor and Council then decided to discuss their goals for 2001. Items were suggested by all present and listed on a work paper. After much discussion, the following items were listed as the goals for 2001, in no particular order:

- Advance the making of infrastructure improvements that support industrial development objectives.
- Support initiatives and services for the changing community in the areas of housing, transportation, and Apex Austin.
- Prepare a Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan that addresses the Wastewater Treatment Plant, airport, parks, arena, pedestrian trails, 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and adjacent area streets, and other capital projects that Council supports.
- Address workforce needs including City of Austin personnel, health insurance provision/costs and funding, and community workforce needs.
- Initiate steps that address the effectiveness of preventing flood damages.
- Address public safety in the area of police, fire, dispatch, and ambulance.
- Improve the public image of Austin with emphasis on utilization of the Internet website.
- Continue enhancements in the downtown, especially along North Main Street.
- Emphasize intergovernmental communication.
- Be active and involved on issues before the state legislature that have impact on the City of Austin.

Lunch was served to Mayor/Council, city staff present, plus Craig Oscarson, Len Miller, and Dave Hillier from Mower County.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director of Administrative Services