

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
January 23, 2006
City Hall Conference Room
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Rietz, Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, Council Members Hecimovich, Dick Pacholl, Scott Pacholl, Baker, and McAlister

ABSENT: Council Member Nordin

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Hurm, Jon Erichson, Craig Hoium, Steven Lang, and Tom Dankert

ALSO PRESENT: John Fisher, Brad Wasnak, and Rocky Kuehne from S.E.H., Arlen Schamber, Wayne Gorman, Representative Jeanne Poppe, Senator Dan Sparks, KAUS Radio, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald

The Mayor called the work session to order at 5:30 pm.

Item #1 – North Main Flood Study – Public Works Director Jon Erichson noted this flood study was authorized by council six months ago and tonight is a meeting to review the first draft of the study. Mr. Erichson noted this study only covers from the 4th Avenue NE bridge (by City Hall) north to I-90. Mr. Erichson stated we are only looking at this area at this time for two reasons. One being this area has never been studied, and secondly this area has become an economically viable area of our community with high tax values on the structures. Mr. Erichson stated he is looking for a sales tax approval to get the funds to pay for this project.

Mr. Wasnak of S.E.H. presented a map showing the flood areas of the community that they studied. Mr. Wasnak stated that water storage area will be lost with their proposed flood walls, but the overall volume will be coming downstream quicker, but it won't back up the water flow. Mr. Wasnak stated the flood barrier needs to be three feet above the 100 year flood elevation. Mr. Wasnak stated that if the barrier is constructed, and gets the Army Corp of Engineer's certification, then property owners in the affected parcels would no longer be required to purchase flood insurance. Mr. Wasnak discussed the different types of barriers that are being proposed for this area, including earthen barriers, removable panels, and permanent floodwalls.

Mr. Kuehne stated they walked the entire route of this area. Mr. Kuehne discussed the project in the different phases, noting there would be twelve phases all together. Buyouts will be needed for Pizza Hut, the apartment complex along the river, and maybe another residential parcel or two.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated he has heard that the problem with the flood problem is the three rivers that connect at one point, creating a funnel and backing up water. Mr. Erichson stated the scope of this study does not pertain to that area, but the County Road 28 south of the Wastewater Treatment Plant handled the volume of water during the flood of 2004.

Council asked several more questions and heard responses from Mr. Erichson, Mr. Kuehne, and Mr. Wasnak. Council Member Hecimovich questioned how much staff time would it take to install the removable panels along the west side of Mill Pond. Mr. Wasnak stated they could get some estimates as East Grand Forks has this system, but Mr. Wasnak estimated eight to twelve hours for a 1000 foot section, eight feet high. Mr. Erichson noted this is one of his concerns as Austin's floods usually are flash floods, so we don't have a whole lot of time.

Mr. Wasnak discussed the interior drainage that would not be able to get to the river right away behind the flood walls. Lower areas would be created as holding ponds that eventually could be pumped back into the river when it recedes.

Mayor Rietz questioned how long it would take from start to finish getting the project completed. Mr. Wasnak stated it would be close to two full construction seasons to get this project completed. The cost estimate, according to Mr. Wasnak is \$8.8 million for the west side, and \$1.66 million for the east side of the Mill Pond.

Mr. Erichson stated he would like to bring this to the February 7, 2006 council work session after council has had some time to think about it. Mr. Erichson stated recent studies show sales tax of ½ of 1% would equate to \$700,000 or so per year. We are hoping to get some of this cost covered through the bonding bill from the State of Minnesota this year.

Mayor Rietz questioned if council was interested in moving this proposal forward; no objections were noted.

Mayor Rietz questioned if the City wants to split a sales tax proposal with Mower County. Nobody was in favor of going in with Mower County on a joint sales tax.

There being no further business, Council Member Scott Pacholl moved to adjourn the work session, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Christopherson. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 6:58 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services