

M I N U T E S
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
April 18, 2006
City Hall Conference Room
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Rietz, Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, Council Members Hecimovich (until 7:03 p.m.), Nordin, Dick Pacholl, Scott Pacholl, Baker (Until 6:55 p.m.), and McAlister

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Jim Hurm, Denny Maschka (5:30 to 6:00 p.m.), Paul Philipp, Police Detective Dave Schafer, and Tom Dankert

ALSO PRESENT: Public, Steve King, Ron Everett, Dick Nordin, KAAL TV-6, KAUS Radio, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald

The Mayor called the work session to order at 5:30 pm. and noted items #5 (closed session) will be removed from this agenda and added to a future agenda as a few council members need to leave by 7:00 or so tonight. Additionally, item #6 (transportation video) is available for everybody to view. This video shows how important transportation funding is to Minnesota.

Item #1 – Spamtown Belle– Dick Nordin requested Council fund the Spamtown Belle for the upcoming year. The boat is proposed to be used on the Mill Pond and would be a downtown attraction for people to visit. Mr. Nordin noted the boat is 36 feet long and weighs six tons. The boat was donated to the City of Austin back in 1999 by Bill Regner, a local owner of a machine shop. The boat was a victim of the budget crunch of a few years ago and has been dry-docked ever since at the Parks and Recreation garage.

Mr. Nordin stated that Park Maintenance Supervisor Tom Graff noted they could build a ramp for the boat launch for Mill Pond Park for little or no money. This way we do not need to hire a crane at \$2,000 to \$3,000 to lift the boat into the water. There could be some additional start up costs, but the Noon Kiwanis Club has pledged \$500 to help with the start-up costs. There are three to four pilots in the community that are licensed to operate the boat.

Mr. Nordin noted the last budget we had was for about \$14,900, but Mr. Nordin guaranteed that they could get the job done for under \$8,500.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated that it was expensive to move the boat, and that the ride fare does not cover the cost of operating the boat. Mayor Rietz noted a ramp will be built and that there would be no cost to move it. Council Member Dick Pacholl stated he would like us to sell the boat.

Council Member Baker stated that he has a problem spending money for this to give tours around a body of water that we are going to build a berm around. “This is not the direction I want to go,” stated Council Member Baker.

Further discussion ensued about licensing costs, costs to get the boat ready, and other restoration costs.

Motion by Council Member Nordin, seconded by Council Member McAlister, to recommend to council a budget of \$8,500 for the Spamtown Belle for 2006, funding to come from the Contingency line item. Carried 5-2 (Council Members Baker and Dick Pacholl – Nay). Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item 1a – ASCAP Agreement – City Administrator Hurm discussed the correspondence that we have been receiving from the American Society of Composers, Authors, & Publishers (ASCAP) regarding music that is being played at the arenas. ASCAP says that we should be paying for an annual license to play this music. The City Attorney, Park and Recreation Director and Mr. Hurm believe that we should also be paying for this. Mr. Hurm noted we would negotiate a payment, not to exceed \$1,000 per year.

Motion by Council Member Nordin, seconded by Council Member Scott Pacholl to authorize the payment to ASCAP for up to \$1,000, to come from the Contingency line item. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item #2 – Proposed Sex Offender Ordinance – Police Chief Paul Philipp discussed the citizen request for Austin to pass a sex offender ordinance that would restrict where sex offenders could live. Restrictions around daycares, schools, and parks has been approved in Iowa, but it is creating some problems. Chief Philipp noted children are everywhere, and his counterparts in Iowa have stated this ordinance is a law enforcement nightmare. Chief Philipp stated more is needed on education for our citizens and children, as there will always be sex offenders here. Additionally, 85% of sex offenders are family members or are known by the victims.

Steve King, Mower County Director of Correctional Services, stated that he spent six years at the State of Minnesota supervising sex offenders. Minnesota already has a good system in place. Mr. King implored Council to let the current system work, and noted the proposed ordinance would be a nightmare. There are 53 offenders living in Austin right now.

Council Member McAlister stated he did investigations in this area for thirteen years, and he can't ever remember it being a stranger. Council Member McAlister stated that he was bothered by this proposed ordinance from the get go.

After further discussion, Mayor Rietz questioned if any council members would like to go forward with the proposed ordinance. None noted.

Chief Philipp noted he would contact School District Superintendent Candace Raskin to see if she and her staff had any interest in doing some education on the subject. Council Member McAlister stated KSMQ may even be able to create a DVD for training purposes on the subject.

Item #3 – Austin Area Meth Task Force regarding pawnshops – Mayor Rietz apologized to Council for bringing this proposed pawnshop ordinance for another review regarding pawnshops as it is not her style. However State Senator Dan Sparks and Representative Jeanne Poppe are concerned that Austin may be an island as other communities in our area have passed the ordinance, and Austin may become a dumping ground for stolen merchandise, especially for those seeking to finance their meth addictions.

Ron Everett, owner of Ron's Pawn Shop noted if Council passes this ordinance, he could change to a second-hand shop and would not need to comply with any ordinance on the subject.

Phil Hafvenstein of the Minneapolis Police Department has run the Automated Pawn System (APS) for many years. Mr. Hafvenstein went through a Power Point Presentation on the advantages of using APS. Mr. Hafvenstein noted that 60% of the pawnshops in Minnesota are part of the APS system. The APS system links all of the information from the different pawnshops together in one database for all subscribers to review.

Mr. Hafvenstein also went through a Power Point Presentation showing examples of real life items that have been pawned that are on the system, showing how the system can be queried to look for specific items.

Council Member McAlister questioned if we would need a second-hand store ordinance. Mr. Hafvenstein stated we would probably need another ordinance to cover second-hand stores, but the local pawn shop will not be able to just become a second-hand store that easily. The state statute defines what a pawnbroker does.

Council Member McAlister stated that we should turn this over to Mr. Hoium to create the ordinances.

Mayor Rietz noted the APS system requires good input of data by the pawnbrokers. Mr. Hafvenstein stated the law is quite clear as to what is required to be reported. The APS system can be used with three or four, and maybe even more different software programs that the pawnbrokers would be required to purchase. The software runs around \$2,000; printers and a computer might cost you \$1,200; and if you wanted to add scanners and have a complete system, it might cost you \$4,000 total.

Chief Philipp stated our pawnshop owner has said he will not/cannot use a computer. Mr. Hafvenstein stated the software companies can help with the software, but not on how to run a computer.

Mayor Rietz noted this was for informational purposes only tonight, and we will talk about it again at another work session.

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 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services