

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
November 6, 2006
City Hall Conference Room
7:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Philipp, Jon Erichson, Craig Hoium, Jim Hurm, and Tom Dankert

ALSO PRESENT: KAUS Radio, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald

Item #1 – Police and Fire Radio Needs – Police Chief Paul Philipp gave council some background on this project that started back in 2001. Once this project is completed, public safety throughout Mower County will be better off as we will now be able to better communicate with each other. Additionally, laptop computers will be installed into the squad cars to allow them to be more efficient. Our current LEC has components in the Dispatch area that are no longer serviceable as parts are no longer being made for them. This system as bid out, is a great one for our community.

Mayor Rietz questioned if the Justice Center does indeed move, what would happen. Chief Philipp stated that the only additional cost is the labor to move the equipment and to re-wire the components.

Council Member Baker questioned why only the Fire Department was only being charged 1% of a portion of the project. Mr. Dankert noted that the consultant had met with Fire Chief Dan Wilson and would only directly allocate those costs that are directly his, so those components or costs that he does not have a direct involvement with would not be allocated to him. Mr. Dankert noted the consultant did say the city could amend the amounts as there is a definite use by the Fire Department of some more of these components. Mr. Dankert noted Chief Wilson also stated he would pay for 100% of the building on 14th Street. Council Member Baker stated he would like to see more costs allocated out to the Fire PERA Fund.

Motion by Council Member Nordin, seconded by Council Member Hecimovich to recommend to council the approval of the city's estimated \$810,000 (plus minor change orders) of costs related to the radio needs project, funding to come from the Fire and Police PERA funds and to be re-allocated for the upcoming council meeting. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item #2 – Nature's Ridge Addition and the redevelopment of 12th Avenue NE – Public Works Director Jon Erichson discussed the proposed redevelopment of 12th Avenue NE where Nature's Ridge Addition is being planned. Mr. Erichson noted two retainage ponds are being

proposed to alleviate any concerns by the neighbors that this will add to the flooding problem in the area. 100% of the trail system will be paid for by the developers of the Nature's Ridge Addition. Mr. Erichson stated it appears we will not be receiving a federal grant for the upgrade of this street (12th Avenue) to an urban section. We are proposing to use the normal assessment policy whereby each side of the road will be assessed a portion of the costs, with the general tax levy picking up that amount that cannot be assessed. We hope to recover 50% of the cost (\$200,000) from assessments. The developers are waiving their right to appeal the assessments through 2010.

Council Member Dick Pacholl questioned the 50/50 split on assessments. Mr. Erichson stated this is the goal of council, but due to corner lot exceptions and the age of the existing street, we may only be able to assess 40% for example. Mr. Erichson stated it is not fair to have the developer pay all of the cost of the road, as the road is not safe as is. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned when the road was last reconstructed. Mr. Erichson stated about five years ago we proposed to reconstruct it, but it was not done, we just overlaid it and improved the drainage.

Council Member Scott Pacholl questioned who handles the trail maintenance, especially on the driveways. Mr. Erichson stated there are six driveways that cross the proposed trail. The City will have to maintain the entire trail.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated the developer should pay for 100% of the road, noting the citizens on the south side should not have to pay for this upgrade.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated this project needs to get done.

Mr. Erichson noted this discussion was for an update only and does not need any council action at this point.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned when the development may start. Mr. Erichson stated the plat may be finalized at the next meeting, and then maybe a groundbreaking later this year.

Item #3 – Feasibility report for sanitary sewer – Lansing Township – Mr. Erichson noted there is an information meeting at 5:30 on November 8 for the citizens in the affected area to discuss what the City of Austin could do to correct the sanitary sewer problem in the Lansing area. Mr. Erichson noted council authorized a feasibility study of the project based on the requests of some of the citizens in the area. This would require an annexation of the property, and the proposed system includes both a gravity system and a low pressure system. A lift station will also be needed. There are 139 occupied lots, and 66 vacant lots. The former Ramsey Golf Course and the Old Mill Restaurant are part of the proposed project. Mr. Erichson noted one advantage to being annexed into the City of Austin is that townships (like Lansing) typically do not have the expertise to operate a wastewater treatment plant. There is about \$50,000 of tax base that would shift over to the City of Austin (from Lansing Township) if this property is annexed into the City of Austin.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned the timeline for the township? Mr. Erichson stated Lansing Township has taken bids and extended the deadline for the contractor.

Nothing will be done this year, and the contract may have been extended into 2007. Mr. Erichson noted both Lansing Township and the City of Austin need to approve a vote for orderly annexation.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned how this compares to Austin Acres. Mr. Erichson stated in the early 1980's Austin Acres was not part of the city, however some of the parcels wanted into the city, while their neighbors wanted to stay out. In 1985 we agreed on an orderly annexation process where we agreed to annex the property in over a period of time. This was a very successful project. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned when the citizens would have to pay for the hook-up. Mr. Erichson stated they would need to pay with interest added, but we may be able to go a short period where they would not necessarily have to hook up right away, maybe five years.

Council Member McAlister stated it is exciting to see the city extending out that far. This also will add to the services that are needed by the city including police, fire, and streets. We need to think about the whole picture here.

Council Member Baker questioned what the comprehensive plan had for this area. Mr. Hoium noted it is planned as a residential area in our comprehensive plan.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned if there is capacity in Lansing for this project. Mr. Erichson stated if Lansing Township does the project, an additional storage pond will be needed.

No further action need on this issue, as it is for informational purposes only.

Item #4 – Other Items – Mr. Dankert noted in the budget work session previously that we are intending on calling a bond issue for which we have most of the cash in the Debt Service Fund. Interest cannot be earned above the rates of the bonds, so it does not make much sense to continue to pay them off annually. No council objections were noted.

Mr. Hurm noted we are finalizing the operating budget and capital improvement plan and should have them to council for further review on November 21.

With no other items, motion by Council Member Nordin, seconded by Council Member Hecimovich, to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m. Carried 7-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services