

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
August 6, 2007
City Hall Conference Room
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm, Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, Council Members McAlister, Hecimovich, Austin, Dick Pacholl, and Scott Pacholl.

ABSENT: Council Member Martin.

STAFF PRESENT: Parks and Recreation Director Denny Maschka, Community Development Director Craig Hoium, City Administrator Jim Hurm, and Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert.

ALSO PRESENT: Public, Becky Russell (Austin Youth Soccer), Mario Garcia (Hispanic Soccer League), Frank Bridges and Barb Lewis from Mower County Historical Society, John O'Rourke from the Hormel Foundation, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Item # 1: Soccer Field Proposal. City Administrator Jim Hurm discussed the request from the last Parks and Recreation Board meeting to add some additional soccer fields within the community. Parks and Recreation Director Denny Maschka stated the three soccer fields we have at Todd Park in addition to the few others we have scattered around the community are heavily used right now. Mr. Maschka noted the first choice was to acquire additional land north of Todd Park for some additional fields, but the cost became prohibitive. After further review with the Engineering Department, it appears we can add three more fields at Todd Park without disturbing many trees. The Park and Rec Department has requested funding from the Hormel Foundation in the amount of \$250,000 (\$50,000 each year for five years), plus they are proposing to use \$50,000 out of the Capital Improvement Program (allocated to the Bandshell Park area) to repair the existing three fields.

Becky Russell stated there are approximately 140 youths in youth soccer, another 150 at the YMCA program, plus another 50 or so participants through Park and Recreation. The current fields are in bad shape, and the organization would like to have all of the fields together. If we do not acquire land, then that all of the cost can be used in upgrading the fields, not buying land. Mario Garcia noted there are approximately 350 people involved in the Hispanic soccer leagues. Becky Russell and Mario noted their combined pledge of \$20,000 to help with the project.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned what would happen if the Hormel Foundation does not approve of the funding for the soccer fields. Council Member Hecimovich noted Mr. Dankert should create a Plan B scenario. Mr. Dankert noted the only option for Plan B would be an increased tax levy or an allocation out of the Building Fund. Mr. Dankert noted the Building Fund has been "off limits" by Council until the Justice Center debate comes to closure and we know what our costs are for that project. However, Council could amend the Capital Improvement Plan at any time and fund the soccer fields if they so choose.

Council Member McAlister stated he does not have a big problem with this as long as the grant pays for most of it. How about the extended road and parking lot costs, plus the staffing to maintain? Mr. Maschka noted the estimated cost includes road, parking, bathrooms, and a concession area. The only added staff requested as part of the 2008 does not impact this request, and he would not need additional staff once the soccer fields are built.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated this is a good project and we should support the program.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned if wetlands need to be mitigated. Mr. Maschka noted there are no affected wetlands in the proposed development area.

After further discussion, no objections were noted in the proposed project or the funding.

Item # 2: Comprehensive Plan Bid Review. Mr. Hoiium presented a proposal from Yaggy Colby to do a comprehensive plan update for the City of Austin. The proposal is broken out into four areas, as follows:

1. Northwest arterial commercial district. This is the area west of Target and other properties north of 18th Avenue NW. Estimated cost is \$8,600.
2. Southwest residential district and transportation plan. This area is mainly low density housing at this time, but should some additional high density housing be allowed? More parks and a master transportation plan to handle the projected growth in the SW corner of Austin are needed to be reviewed. The estimated cost is \$13,600.
3. Southeast railroad yard area. This area is south of the proposed overpass removal in the easterly portion of the central business district. The estimated cost is \$7,250.
4. Park plan review. This would encompass a review of the park system and make proposals for the many acres of flood land that we will now be buying and removing structures from. The estimated cost is \$12,500.

Mr. Hurm noted funding has been set aside between the City, Port Authority, and HRA to fund the projects, and we are proposing to do numbers 1 and 4 in 2007, and budget for numbers 2 and 3 in 2008.

After further discussion, motion was made by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member Scott Pacholl, to recommend to Council the approval of the Yaggy Colby proposal to be funded in two phases. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item # 3: Locomotive – City Property. Mr. Hurm discussed the research that has been done by Frank Bridges at the Mower County Historical Society. Mr. Bridges brought documentation that showed that the locomotive was donated to the City of Austin by the Old Milwaukee Railroad.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated this is a historical item and this makes more sense to request funding from the Hormel Foundation than some lights in the Mill Pond. Council Member Dick Pacholl stated his preference to request these funds from the Hormel Foundation.

Mr. Bridges stated this was a “colossal oversight” by both the City and the Historical Society. Mr. Bridges noted this belongs to the City, but the Historical Society has been maintaining it,

and now would like a lump sum payment of \$15,000 to cover back expenses, plus another \$1,500 annually for ongoing maintenance.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated this locomotive is supposed to be on public display and questioned if it will be removed from the enclosed shed for display. Mayor Stiehm questioned if we could just donate it to Mower County.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned if the \$1,500 annually would be enough, and if there were any rust issues with the locomotive. Mr. Bridges noted he thinks the funding would be adequate, and the train is in good shape.

Council Member Dick Pacholl questioned what Mr. Dankert thought of the funding. Mr. Dankert noted he doesn't believe we should have any responsibility for the funding of this locomotive, but if Council does feel somewhat obligated to do something, I would recommend a one time check be sent to the Historical Society and that no ongoing funds be remitted. This would be considered another agency for which we have detailed discussions annually as to who gets what funding. Councils come and go and Mr. Dankert noted he would prefer to just write one check and get it taken care of.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned who insured the locomotive. Mr. Dankert noted it was not on the city's insurance roster. Barb Lewis, president of the Historical Society, noted it was insured by them.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated we should donate it to the Historical Society. Council Member Austin stated the original agreement with the Milwaukee Railroad is not enforceable as they have long gone out of existence.

Council Member McAlister noted his agreement with Mr. Dankert to come up with some agreement in a one time funding, and have Mr. Hoversten draft such agreement to transfer responsibility of the locomotive to the Historical Society.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated the Council has many options. He stated some options, noting that he doesn't agree with all of the options: we could sell it for salvage; do nothing and not pay anything; or make some payment, to be fair, and then move on.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated in his mind, the Historical Society "owns" this piece of equipment and accepted responsibility to maintain it when it was moved to the current location. Mr. Bridges disagreed, noting having possession does not translate into ownership.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member McAlister, seconded by Council Member Hecimovich to request City Attorney Hoversten, City Administrator Hurm, and Director of Administrative Services Dankert reach an agreement to transfer ownership of the locomotive to the Historical Society for a lump sum payment of \$20,000. Carried 6-0. Once the City Attorney drafts such agreement, the agreement will be added to a future council agenda.

Item #4: Hormel Foundation grant requests. Mr. Hurm noted the requests from staff have come in for the Hormel Foundation. Council Members and the Mayor listed their preference of funding, noting the highest priority with an '8', and the lowest priority with a '1'. The results are as follows:

		Council Members							
		TS	BM	JA	DP	SP	PC	NH	Total
a.	Main Street funding, \$115,000	8	8	8	4	8	5	8	49
b.	Smoke Detectors, \$3,000	6	6	4	8	5	8	6	43
c.	Soccer Fields, \$50,000/year	7	5	7	7	7	7	7	47
d.	Trail Link, \$20,000	5	7	6	5	6	3	5	37
e.	Fountains, \$32,000	3	4	5	1	2	2	2	19
f.	Lawn Mower at RCC, \$27,500	2	3	2	3	4	6	4	24
g.	Snowmobile, \$10,600	1	2	3	6	3	4	3	22
h.	Hybrid Vehicle at NC, \$27,489	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	11

Mr. Hurm noted Council Member Martin may include his preferences when he gets back.

The Dialysis Route and Work Route for AMCAT is included for informational purposes only, but will be requested out of a separate pool of funds.

Item #5: Settlement Agreement with Charter Communications regarding audit. Mr.

Dankert discussed the audit performed by Moss & Barnett of Charter Communications as part of the cable television franchise agreement. Mr. Dankert noted Charter Communications and he have worked out an agreement for a payment of \$5,000 from Charter Communications in return for the City signing the settlement agreement. Mr. Dankert noted that if we want to pursue the issue of launch fees being subject to the franchise agreement, we would need to hire Moss & Barnett to bring the case to court. This would cost us thousands of more dollars with no assurance that we will be victorious.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, to recommend to Council the approval of the settlement agreement with Charter Communications in return for the payment of \$5,000. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to a future council agenda.

Item #6: Status of Council goals. Mr. Hurm gave council an update as to the status of the goals that were established earlier in the year. Mr. Hurm noted the following:

- Floodplain Mitigation – Mr. Erichson states we are 90% complete with the Phase VIII design.
- Police Department location – We are working with Mower County on this and at 3:00 on Tuesday we may have more information.
- Revision of the Charter – Mr. Hurm noted we expect a report from the League in September as to the status of this.
- Succession Planning – not much is being done yet on this goal.
- Economic Development – Mr. Hurm noted we are looking at revisions to the comprehensive plan. Additionally, the DCA is working with a prospect for the Cook Farm spec building, and centralizing the economic development activities is a continual meeting process. The bio-science corridor designation is being worked on with representatives of the Hormel Institute and the DCA and the Main Street program is going full steam ahead as can be seen in downtown Austin.

Other Item. Mayor Stiehm stated we may need to re-look at an old ordinance on housing that was reviewed and not ultimately approved as it relates to rental property. This was looked at several years ago, and the issue has come up again and may need to be addressed.

There being no further business, motion by Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, seconded by Council Member Austin, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services