

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
October 1, 2007
City Hall Conference Room
5:55 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Fire Chief Dan Wilson, City Administrator Jim Hurm, and Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert.

ALSO PRESENT: John Garry (DCA), Frank Bridges (Historical Society), Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 5:55 p.m.

Item # 1: Fire Department Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) demonstration. Fire Chief Dan Wilson made a presentation to council on the PASS system that Council recently approved and purchased. Mr. Wilson had Mr. Dankert put on the SCBA while Chief Wilson operated the computer that tracks the activity of each SCBA. Chief Wilson showed council what happens in the event a firefighter does not move for a period of time as the alarm goes off and the computer indicates who is not moving. Safety features such as low oxygen and a button to push if the firefighter needs help were also reviewed. Chief Wilson noted Austin is one of four fire departments in the state of Minnesota with such a device. The PASS system adds to the safety of the firefighters.

Item # 2: Locomotive discussion. Mr. Hurm discussed a recent email from Jim Sucha outlining that Locomotive No. 1004 was actually donated to the citizens of Austin, and not necessarily the City of Austin. Mr. Hurm wanted to ensure Council still wanted to make a contribution to the Historical Society for the locomotive storage.

Council Member Hecimovich stated the City made a commitment and we should stand by it. Council Member Scott Pacholl stated we should do our own investigation to see if we truly do own the locomotive. Council Member Dick Pacholl noted his support to turn the locomotive over to the Historical Society.

No vote is needed tonight, as eventually the final agreement will be brought forward for Council to approve.

Item # 3: DCA Presentation. John Garry, new President of the DCA, discussed his family and educational history noting George Brophy has retired from the DCA effective September 30, 2007. Mr. Garry noted Mr. Brophy will be working on a project-by-project basis in the future. Mr. Garry noted the DCA Board has expanded to 29 members from the original 10 members,

with Brian McAlister being one of the board members along with Dick Lang from Mower County.

Mr. Garry noted the priorities of the DCA include greater coordination between the City/Port Authority/County/DCA. We also need to sell Austin to both insiders (where 80% of our growth will come from) and to outsiders (where 20% of our growth will come from). Mr. Garry noted his support for the one-stop-shop as the City has discussed in the past. Mr. Garry stated the DCA and Chamber of Commerce are also exploring a shared website for citizens and visitors to use.

Council Member Martin questioned if somebody wants to come to Austin, where should they be sent? Mr. Garry stated it depends on what they want to start-up as a business. It could be the DCA, Craig Hoium, or Sandy at the Chamber of Commerce. Council Member Hecimovich stated that is the problem that needs to get resolved under one structure, so that the public knows where to go.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson asked if the action plan the DCA is working on will show one person in charge of coordinating all of this. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated this has been the biggest beef he has had over the last seven years and it is getting old. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated he would like to see the plan for who is in charge. Mr. Garry said he does not have the authority to create what Council Member-at-Large Christopherson is asking for. The DCA has no control over the Chamber of Commerce or the City of Austin. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated this is what he wants to see.

Mr. Garry stated he will be trading notes with Jim Hurm and Craig Hoium in November and December. The goal is to have something, such as an action plan, created by January 2008.

Council Member McAlister stated this would be a “generic place” to go, so that none of the parties feel threatened by the plan. Council Member McAlister stated there will not be one person in charge. Council Member McAlister stated the drafting of business plans is also needed from the DCA.

Council Member Scott Pacholl stated he would like to see the website be able to email all parties when a question comes up, so that everybody stays within the loop.

Item #4: Downtown Jail/Justice Center. Mr. Hurm stated staff has had their first meeting with representatives of Mower County on locating the jail in downtown Austin. Mr. Hurm stated the approach will be to look at both the financial and operational side of the facility in a downtown location, versus a green field site location. The report is expected to be done in six weeks. Mayor Stiehm noted he believes the County is taking a fair look at the downtown site now. Council Member Martin noted his disagreement as he attended the first meeting with Mower County. Council Member Martin stated the County still appears to be playing a game with the City. Mower County makes this sound like this is all new, but they should have worked with us along time ago. My sense, according to Council Member Martin, is that Mower County is just playing a game here.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned why the city was paying for one half of the cost of the study. He questioned that Mower County is reconsidering downtown, but the City is to pay for part of the study to try to save them some money. Council Member-at-Large

Christopherson stated that if we are paying half of the bill, then the architects better be responsible to us.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated that if Mower County does eventually move to the green field site, then hopefully they leave Dispatch downtown.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated a what-if scenario. What if Mower County saves \$10 million by moving downtown, and the Police Department and Dispatch stay as is. Will Mower County ask us to help pay for additional savings? Mayor Stiehm stated the County will surely ask for something from the City. Council Member McAlister stated we need additional rehabilitation downtown, so this could be used for that. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson noted his opposition, stating we are falling right into their trap. Council Member Scott Pacholl noted under the what-if scenario, that the City should not help out additionally. Council Member Martin agreed. Mayor Stiehm stated that we were going to spend the \$3.5 million or so anyway, and they are going to expect us to buy the land. If Council does not want to do this, then we need to know.

Council Member McAlister stated the question should not need to be answered until the study is done as we need to get a determination if it is even feasible. Council Member Austin stated Mower County is committing to buy land anyway, why should we pay for it. Council Member Scott Pacholl stated the original discussion (at Riverland College) revolved around the city acquiring the land for Mower County, and then we get reimbursed from Mower County for the cost. Council Member Hecimovich agreed, noting that the study needs to happen first and then a review of the cost analysis will happen. Mayor Stiehm noted we need to put this to rest for now.

Item 5: Budget Adjustment #4. Mr. Dankert stated the Library Board has passed a resolution authorizing the use of \$15,000 of fund balance to enhance their book budget. This was done as during discussions with the Library during budget time they wanted to increase their book expenditures. However, with limited funds available for the budgets, we noted that they have been slowly increasing the Library fund balance. Although the Library fund balance still is not enough to cash flow their operations for the entire year as is, the use of some of those funds appears appropriate. During 2006, the Library increased their fund balance by over \$24,000, so this \$15,000 budget adjustment would in essence come from unspent funds from 2006.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member Martin to recommend budget adjustment #4 to the City Council in the amount of \$15,000. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the October 15, 2007 council agenda.

Item 6: Administrator's Report. Mr. Hurm stated he has been working with the ACE's group regarding Austin being designated as a Cool City. Mr. Hurm noted he is looking at a concept much like Main Street Inc. with directors, teams, etc. Mr. Hurm noted he is envisioning an umbrella that has in it the City, Mower County, Welcome Center, Austin Utilities, Riverland Community College, Chamber of Commerce, Austin Public and Private Schools, Citizens, and our congressional delegations. Under the umbrella would be the following four "teams":

- Environmental legislation and coordination green team.
- Renewable energy green team.
- City initiative green team.
- Citizen/government partnership green teams.

The ultimate goal would be something like: Meet greenhouse gas emission targets set in the Minnesota Global Warming Act of 2007.

Council Member Hecimovich stated the Austin Utilities is encouraging the use of fluorescent light bulbs, but it is not the intention to “hammer” on the public to go green. Mr. Hurm agreed, noting hammering people is not the intent. The intent is to form groups and committees to see what can be done, and to see what other communities are doing.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson noted that we also need to look at how we dispose of these new “green” products that we may be using, like fluorescent light bulbs. It may actually cost more or do more harm to the environment later in life.

Council Member Scott Pacholl encouraged the city to put on its website information to encourage the citizens to become more green friendly. Mr. Hurm stated that could be done once we get some projects and ideas developed. Mayor Stiehm noted he is getting many comments from the citizens on this.

On another note, Council Member McAlister stated he thought we discussed not having food at work sessions. Mayor Stiehm noted he liked the idea of having something to eat. No objections noted to keep having food at the work sessions.

There being no further business, motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services