

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
February 19, 2008
City Hall Council Chambers
5:00 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Fire Chief Dan Wilson, Public Works Director Jon Erichson, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, City Administrator Hurm, and Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert.

ALSO PRESENT: Public, KAAL TV-6, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Item #1: Fire Department Labor Management Committee report: Mr. Hurm went through a joint letter that was signed by Mr. Hurm and Chris Grunewald from the Fire Department. The letter noted the following:

- The schedule agreed upon by the labor/management committee will be implemented as soon as practical (target on or before March 16). Three people will be scheduled to be on duty.
- Flexibility. The schedule can change over time as needs change.
- Contract negotiations regarding pay, benefits and other bargain able subjects must still take place. Any negotiated changes can be made retroactive to the appropriate date.
- The use of fire department personnel for some level of first responder duty will be studied and a recommendation to the council is targeted for sometime in March.
- All Fire Department personnel will be trained to a basic emergency response level. This basic level requires up to 48 hours of training. Training will begin the first week of March.

Mr. Hurm noted we will try to have two people on duty as much as possible, but with vacations, sick leave, and holidays, we may have the occasion when we will not have two there at all times.

Cy Smythe, labor negotiator for the City, stated the city's labor/management committee seems to be starting to work together now. The work schedules will not work unless there is commitment by all parties. This is a great first step.

Council Member Martin questioned how the results will be evaluated. Mr. Smythe stated Chief Wilson, City Administrator Hurm, and the firefighters should give council regular reports. Council Member Hecimovich stated we cannot micromanage these departments either.

Council Member Dick Pacholl thanked the negotiating committee for getting this resolved satisfactorily. This new proposal will give us 24 hour coverage within the community.

Council Member Austin also thanked the labor/management committee for cooperation and compromise.

Council Member McAlister stated he is the odd man out here. Council Member McAlister stated he hoped some benefit comes out of this, but council states we should not micromanage, yet that is exactly what we are doing here. This message is, let's get all of our friends and relatives to a council meeting to request change, as it appears to work. Council Member McAlister stated he is not convinced this was a great idea.

Council Member Martin stated he agrees with Council Member McAlister, but we need to stop dancing around the issue. Supervisors should treat everybody with respect. Council Member Martin stated he has heard this non-stop in the Fire Department. The bottom line is how are these people treated at the Fire Department?

Mr. Hurm stated the goal is to not have increases in the Fire Department budget either. Mr. Grunewald noted his agreement with that statement by Mr. Hurm.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated he did not believe we were setting a precedent by doing what we have done with the Fire Department. If this schedule does not work, then we can make a change to the program.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 p.m. so that the regular council meeting could be held.

The council work session was re-convened at 7:47 p.m.

Item #2: Flood program update. Mr. Erichson gave Council a quick update as to the status of our flood efforts by summarizing the following:

1. Current Projects:
 - a. Phase 8 (by Packer Arena) – This \$1 million project has been awarded to Hasselton Construction and should start in the spring.
 - b. Property Acquisition – 19 structures are scheduled for demolition through Dulas Excavating.
2. Sales Tax Update – Annual revenue appears to be in the range of \$900,000 to \$950,000 from the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST).
3. Construction Management Service Phase 8 – S.E.H. has a proposal coming forward for this project.
4. North Main Engineering Study – The total estimated cost of the North Main project is in the range of \$12 million. We wanted to get Phase 8 done first, and then do Phases 1-7 and 9-12. The design contract alone for this could reach \$1 million, but if we could get the entire plans done at once, then we can just pull it off of the shelf as funding becomes available. Council Member-at-Large Christopherson asked what the likelihood would be of this study changing, and then our \$1 million would be wasted. Mr. Erichson stated the goal is the plans would be adhered to, as we don't want to spend more money re-doing the plans.
5. 2008 State of Minnesota Bonding Bill Status - Mr. Erichson and Mr. Hurm have been meeting with Representatives Poppe and Brown and Senator Sparks, and all seem to be very supportive of our program. Legislation was introduced on February 19 for some funding for our project.

Council asked other questions, but no objections were noted on the current program.

Item #3: City Administrator's report. Mr. Hurm stated that he, Mr. Erichson, Council Members Hecimovich and Martin, and Mayor Stiehm are going to the Capitol on Wednesday as part of Coalition day at the Capital. Our issues to be discussed with legislators include flooding, TIF legislation for the railroad area, and Local Government Aid.

Mr. Hurm also reviewed a January 12, 2007 policy statement encouraging the State to review legislation as it relates to jail requirements and the Department of Corrections (DOC). Mr. Hurm noted that unless Council objects, we will dust this off and take it with us. Council Member Hecimovich stated that the Governor wants us to hold down costs at the city level, yet the DOC requires us to make changes (and costs us dollars) and they don't even have to follow the same rules. The State DOC is not even complying with their own rules.

There being no further business, motion by Council Member-at Large Christopherson, seconded by Council Member Dick Pacholl, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services