

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
July 21, 2008
City Hall Council Chambers
7:30 p.m.

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Jim Hurm and Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert.

ALSO PRESENT: John O'Rourke, Jerry Anfinson, and Bonnie Rietz from The Hormel Foundation (Foundation), Viril Layton and Jack Dunlop from the Mower County Senior Center, Kathy Qual from ARC Mower County (ARC), Marian Clennon, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Item No. 1: Senior Center – proposed project. Mr. Anfinson greeted council and noted that Chairperson Dick Knowlton could not be here tonight but that he wished to greet the council and thank them for their support of the Hormel Institute expansion. Mr. Anfinson noted the \$5 million expansion turned into a \$30 million expansion when the project was all completed, and the City responded magnificently when we approached them for some financial help and road improvements. Mr. Anfinson, treasurer of the Foundation, discussed with Council a proposed project which the Foundation would like the City to contribute to complete the project. ARC is currently subleasing space in the Senior Center for activities; however, more space is needed to avoid scheduling conflicts with the Senior Center. With that in mind, the Foundation has had plans drawn up with the assistance of Jon Erichson for an approximately 5,000-square-foot addition to the existing facility plus some interior improvements to the current facility. The estimated \$661,760 cost would be paid for by the Foundation and we are hoping the Senior Center could raise some of their own funds to help pay for the project. With the expansion the entire facility would still be owned by the City, but we would ask that you also pick up the additional operating costs of the facility once it is completed (estimated at \$17,625 annually). Mr. Anfinson stated the Foundation has not officially voted on the project yet, but it appears to have considerable support and will be brought up at their August 19 meeting for official action.

Council Member McAlister questioned what expenses the Senior Center pays directly themselves. Jack Dunlop noted the employee salaries, supplies, computer operations, programming, etc. are all costs the Senior Center covers out of their dues, etc. We have approximately 1,100 members, noted Mr. Dunlop.

Council Member McAlister noted his main concern is that Mower County will not cover any of the additional expenses for the addition that will be subleased to ARC. Council Member

McAlister questioned if ARC has the capability to contribute to the operations cost as we may be in a position to have to nickel and dime every expense due to tight budget constraints. Mr. Anfinson stated quite frankly he did not have the heart to ask ARC for a contribution, as these people cannot advocate for themselves, we have to advocate for them. We are asking the Senior Center to raise \$50,000 themselves for the project, however.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned who owned the former Country Kitchen that ARC used. Kathy Qual noted the YMCA owned it and leased it to ARC for \$1, plus ARC paid all of the maintenance costs. During the flood of 2004 ARC lost everything including the 3,600 square feet of operating space. ARC has had to cut many of our programs as they lacked sufficient space for such things at the Senior Center, noted Ms. Qual.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned if there were any operational grants that ARC could apply for. Ms. Qual stated they get funding through the United Way, through fund raisers, and through some memberships. The United Way funds are supposed to be used for programming and not utilities costs, however.

Viril Layton suggested that to make things work, the Senior Center could pay the City the \$700 monthly rent that ARC currently pays them, and this would help offset the increased operational costs.

Council Member Dick Pacholl stated it makes sense to use the land we already own for this project, hence saving some costs.

Mr. Dunlop noted scheduling conflicts are some of the biggest issues. We have something going on almost every night at the Senior Center.

After additional discussion, motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member Dick Pacholl to recommend to Council the approval of the project to add on and remodel the Senior Center. Carried 6-1. Council Member Martin – Nay. Lease amendment/project approval will be added to the September 2, 2008 council meeting as the Foundation will not be officially voting on the project until August 19.

Item No. 2a: Administrator's Report – Newsletter. Mr. Hum questioned Council if they were interested in a fall newsletter for 2008. Mower County has indicated to the School District that they are not interested, so the cost would be split 50/50 between the City and School instead of splitting it into thirds. Mr. Hurm noted we will be over budget if we do this, but wanted to gauge council support.

Council Member Hecimovich stated that we have already done one newsletter, and we will do another joint newsletter in November, so he questioned why we would want to be part of another newsletter in September. Council Member McAlister agreed with Council Member Hecimovich. Additionally we don't get any feedback from the public on the newsletters.

After additional discussion, motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Christopherson, to not participate in a fall newsletter. Carried 7-0. No further action needed.

Item No. 2b: Administrator's Report – Cool Cities report. Mr. Hum went through the action plan noting the AMCAT building and City Hall will be reviewed by some retired engineers to see if there are energy conservation tips that can be implemented.

Council Member Hecimovich asked if ACES is involved with the Austin Utilities at all. Mr. Hurm stated they were, in fact Kelly Lady of the Austin Utilities is at most of the ACES meetings. Mr. Hurm questioned if Council agreed with or objected to any of the topics that were listed in his memo dated July 17, 2008. No objections noted.

Council Member Hecimovich stated we need to have city vehicles shut off when they are not being used so as to conserve fuel. Council Member Martin stated we need to install a device called the “tattle tale” that will tell us what is going on with each vehicle.

Mr. Hurm questioned if it made sense to Council to do some energy audits at a cost of \$600 which would be shared with the Utilities through a rebate. The city's portion of the cost could come from the Contingency line item. No objections noted.

Item No. 2c: Administrator's Report – Architectural drawings of exterior of the jail/judicial center. Mr. Hum noted this item will not be discussed as the architect never got the drawings over to us.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson questioned the status of the buyouts. Mr. Hurm noted three properties have closed or are closing soon.

Council Member Hecimovich questioned if Anytime Fitness would be relocating. Mayor Stiehm said there is one county commissioner who is against expanding to the Anytime Fitness building location unless and until further expansion is needed for the jail/justice center (though he does want the City to acquire the property).

Item No. 2d: Administrator's Report – Other Item – IAFF mediation. Mr. Hurm noted this morning that staff was in Minneapolis for a mediation hearing and some movement has been made. This is for informational purposes only.

Item No. 2e: Administrator's Report – Other Item – LMC and the Police Department. Mr. Hurm noted they have had a request from the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) to help provide police for the upcoming Republican National Convention in the Twin Cities. Mr. Hurm noted Chief Philipp is reviewing the issue and may bring something back to help them out. It appears all of the costs will be reimbursed to the city.

Council Member-at-Large Christopherson stated we need to ensure our streets are covered first.

No objections were noted on reviewing the request.

Item #3. Longevity bonus pay – Mayor Stiehm stated Mower County gives out gift certificates/savings bonds for employees when they reach certain milestones (10th, 20th, 30th anniversary) and Mayor Stiehm questioned if Council would like to do such a program.

Council Member Martin noted employees are recognized here with high wages and high benefits as is. After further discussion, none of the council voiced their support for such a program.

Item #4. City Administrator's evaluation– Motion by Council Member Hecimovich, seconded by Council Member Austin to close the meeting under Minnesota Statute 13D.05 subdivision 3 for the evaluation of the City Administrator. Meeting was closed at 8:36 p.m.

See tape of closed meeting (tape not given to Tom Dankert).

There being no further business, motion by Council Member Martin, seconded by Council Member Dick Pacholl, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 10:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert
Director of Administrative Services