

M I N U T E S
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
May 3, 2010
City Hall Conference Room
7:35 p.m. (Immediately following council meeting)

PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm, Council Member-at-Large Anderson, Council Members Austin, McAlister, King, Clennon, and Pacholl.

ABSENT: Council Member Martin.

STAFF PRESENT: Community Development Director Craig Hoium, Public Works Director Jon Erichson, Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert and City Administrator Jim Hurm.

ALSO PRESENT: Mandi-Lighthizer-Schmidt (United Way), Bonnie Rietz, John O'Rourke, and John Gray (Hormel Foundation), Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 7:35 pm.

Item #1. – United Way presentation on community need for daycare facility: Mandi Lighthizer-Schmidt gave a PowerPoint presentation to council on education-based childcare within Mower County. Ms. Schmidt noted we are two-parent working families these days, and it is getting harder for companies to recruit and retain employees if they don't have facilities for their children to be in that are safe and that provide educational advancement. This is part of the communities' economic development and our 2010 survey indicated a huge need for this type of service.

Ms. Schmidt noted she is not asking for any money out of the city's budget, only the preferred site of the facility which would be located adjacent to the City's Northwest Park. The recent survey indicated a need for which the United Way would like to provide a facility to add 74 additional slots into our area for education-based childcare. Ms. Schmidt noted we would be back in 60-90 days with a more formal proposal, but for now this is information/update for council.

Council Member McAlister stated he can live with the land aspect of this discussion, however using the city's staff time to construct this does not rank high on his list of city priorities that staff needs to deal with right now. Council Member McAlister stated he is not in favor of being the landlord as the operations may not be cost neutral to the city. Council Member McAlister questioned why this is not being done in conjunction with the school district, and if it does happen how do you choose a provider for this service?

Council Member Austin stated this is different from the aspect of what we have provided to the seniors of our community. We are responsible for the Senior Center and have been for some time. Additionally, Council Member Austin stated the facts and figures may be questionable regarding the real need for the community. This appears to be a private sector issue, stated Council Member Austin. Daycare is expensive, but I don't see why the City needs to be

involved as the private sector should step up with resolving the issue, stated Council Member Austin.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we have an aging population in Austin. If we want to retain the younger workers, then we need to be willing to think outside of the box on this issue. Council Member-at-Large Anderson requested that we as council keep an open mind on the issue.

Council Member Pacholl stated this was brought up a few years back. The same questions were asked. Also, has the County been approached on this as they license the daycare providers, so maybe they should be more involved? If this is truly education-based, then why is the school not involved with this? If the City were to own the land, who would own the building, questioned Council Member Pacholl. Council Member Pacholl stated he understands that we may have a daycare problem in our community but we need these questions answered.

Council Member Clennon stated the City needs something to keep our citizens in town. Young families will stay if they have these sorts of things to rely on.

Council Member Austin stated the assisted living facilities have popped up all over the place through the private sector. Council Member Austin noted he is not against the potential need, but that the City should not be involved with this issue.

Mayor Stiehm added that private companies have not stepped forward on fixing the issue as this is needed. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated the KinderCare type private facilities have looked at the area but they cannot make it work for the rates that our area can afford to pay.

Mayor Stiehm stated it appears the Hormel Foundation is willing to step forward to help fund the facility.

Council Member King stated this is a community asset and that we need to pick up for those that can't provide for themselves. Council Member King stated we should look at assets like this.

Bonnie Rietz stated the need is definitely there and this is the right thing to do for our community. Young families need this care and it keeps people in Austin, plus the Hormel Foundation is willing to build the building. Ms. Schmidt noted the building is not to exceed \$3 million in cost.

John O'Rourke stated others have looked at our area, but have ultimately decided against a building as the rates can't be sustained in this area.

John Gray noted this is a positive thing for our community, and the Hormel Foundation has committed \$2 million and are working on partners for the other \$1 million needed for construction. This is curriculum based education, but not by the schools. We do need the city land for this, and it would be an asset to our community. Council Member King agreed, noting if we take the biases out, this makes us a better community. Council Member McAlister noted he is not arguing the need, but more to ensure we are the proper landlord for such a venture.

No action needed as this is for informational purposes now.

Item #2. – WWTP Permit – Lagoon flood study: Mr. Erichson discussed the upcoming permit issues related to our wastewater treatment plant. Mr. Erichson stated the permit application process has started and will continue throughout 2010. After meeting with the MPCA, there will be a requirement in our permit to conduct an evaluation of our excess flow lagoons. These lagoons are used to provide storage for wastewater flow during peak flow conditions. The study process is anticipated to cost \$40,000 and we would propose these funds come out of the treatment plant fund balance. Based on the results of the study, we may be required to upgrade the lagoons to bring them into compliance.

After further review, motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to recommend to council to fund the \$40,000 lagoon study out of the wastewater treatment plant fund balances on hand. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item #3. – 2010 Mosquito spraying program discussion: Mr. Erichson noted it is that time of the year again to determine if we want to spray for mosquitoes. With the budget issues the State of Minnesota is facing and the trickle down effect to local governments, Mr. Erichson questioned if council still supports the \$12,500 that is currently budgeted to spray for the mosquitoes. Mr. Erichson noted 2009 was a dry year, so we only sprayed twice as the last contractor we had did not make you commit to all of the spraying if it was not needed.

Motion by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Pacholl, to leave the \$12,500 budget as is for mosquito spraying. Carried 5-1 (Council Member Clennon – Nay). No further action needed as this is already in the budget for 2010.

Item #4. – Administrative Report: None.

Adjournment: Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert