

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**October 3, 2011**  
**City Hall Conference Room**  
**Immediately following council meeting**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Stiehm, Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson, Council Members Jeff Austin, Roger Boughton, Brian McAlister, Judy Enright, Marian Clennon, and Steve King

**ABSENT:** None.

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** Public, Austin Post Bulletin, and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

**Item No. 1. Green Community report – backup to follow**– Mr. Hoium discussed a necessary step to becoming a Green Community by recognizing our accomplishments to date. Mr. Hoium noted some of the accomplishments including 7,710 tree plantings since 1979, our yard waste program that has collected 6,000 cubic yards since 2010, and the geothermal systems installed at Packer Arena and the Mower County Justice Center.

Mayor Stiehm stated we need to get this committee going. Mr. Hurm stated the first meeting with the Green Initiative group is scheduled for October 12, and the goal is to have the council appoint the official committee in November.

Council Member Clennon stated another accomplishment was the Fire Department replacing all of their light switches with motion sensors.

This is for informational purposes only.

**Item No. 2. Mayo Clinic Health System’s parking request** – Mr. Erichson has been working with Mayo Clinic on their expansion and where to allow contractors to park during the construction phase of the project. Mr. Erichson is recommending allowing approximately 50 parking permits for the swimming pool lot to be given to Mayo Clinic so that the contractors would park there instead of on the street. This proposal would end by May 31 to allow adequate parking for our pool patrons. We would work on an alternate solution prior to the May 31, 2012 end date so there would still be adequate parking for the contractors.

Council Member Boughton questioned why they would need passes at the pool since it is not utilized much now anyway. Mr. Erichson stated this would allow us to track who the contractors were.

Council Member Clennon questioned where the contractors parked for the prior expansions. Mr. Erichson stated a majority probably was able to park on campus, but now the facility has expanded so much there is not a whole lot of room left. Mr. Erichson also stated they have parking stalls near Hormel Corporate South.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated it would be good to see the number of permits that are actually being used by the contractors at the pool lot.

Council Member Clennon asked about the construction at Hormel near 4<sup>th</sup> Street NE in her neighborhood. Council Member Clennon asked if they could park there for more than two hours as the winter will be a problem for snowplows to get through. Mr. Erichson stated we will have to look at it at that point. If there are no signs posted, then there is a 12-hour parking limit.

Council Member Enright stated we need the police to enforce the two-hour parking limits near the hospital.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Boughton to recommend to Council the approval of 50 parking permits at the pool lot to be distributed to Mayo Clinic. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

**Item No. 3. Request from Hormel Foundation to change street name** – Mr. Erichson stated he has a request from the Hormel Foundation to change the name of a street, or designate the street as Knowlton Avenue right in front of the corporate office. This is similar to the approval the City Council gave a number of years ago for the Spam Boulevard sign on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and Main Street. This would not change the official mailing address of GIS locations, but would be in honor of Mr. Knowlton only. Mr. Erichson noted the City of Austin has directly received over \$2.5 million in Hormel Foundation grants in the last ten years, so he has been very supportive of our city.

Council Member Clennon stated she is very concerned on setting a precedent by naming a street after people. We will end up having all of our streets named after people. Council Member Clennon noted her preference to not name streets after people.

Motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson to recommend to Council the approval of the naming of the street to Knowlton Avenue at 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> Street. Carried 6-1 (Council Member Clennon – Nay). Item will be added to the next council agenda.

**Item No. 3a. Other Item** – Mr. Erichson stated that with some slight modifications to the proposed flood wall in front of the Mill Pond, we could add some plaques or recognition of Austin residents that have had significant accomplishments in our community. Mayor Stiehm stated Anderson Memorials would like to donate one plaque per year to the project.

Council Member McAlister stated if we were to do this, we would need an independent board make the determination as to who would be worthy of the recognition. Council Member-at-Large Anderson agreed, noting some written criteria should also be established.

Motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member King to have staff proceed with the project. Carried 7-0. No further action necessary.

**Item No. 3b. Other Item** – Mr. Erichson handed out a memo clarifying some comments that were made by Matt Simonson at the September 19, 2011 council meeting.

**Item No. 4. Budget discussion** – Mr. Dankert further discussed the change in the state aid of Market Value Credit, noting that Austin has chosen to take a proactive approach to letting the citizens know that the impact of the tax levy on them would be an additional estimated 13% more taxes flowing into the city, even though our gross tax levy is decreasing. Mr. Hurm handed out an article from the last weekend's Post Bulletin discussing why the taxes will go up with the elimination of the Market Value Credit. Questions arose as to when the City will reap the full benefit of the Lansing area annexation.

Council Member Clennon stated that in the past we have always stated that the levy is going up, now all of a sudden we decide to reverse course and tell citizens what the increase in their taxes will be. Council Member Clennon stated if we would have promoted the tax levy being flat or going down 2% she would have rubber stamped this with her approval with no questions asked. But now we are concentrating on the percentage increase to the taxpayer. Council Member Austin stated that if we were promoting to the citizenry that we were reducing the tax levy and then they saw an increase in their property taxes from the City, we would have had total anarchy out there. Council Member Austin stated that because of the state's elimination of the Market Value Credit, we are being forced to get more tax dollars out of the locals. Council Member Austin stated if we took Council Member Clennon's approach we could look like heroes by touting a 3.85% tax levy decrease, but it would not be truthful for what the tax payers will be paying in 2012 (more).

Council Member Boughton stated that a number of years ago we looked at charging a fee for auto extrications and other fire calls. Based on the information he was given by the Fire Chief, we probably average 10 auto extrications per year. We can charge a rate based on the level of service required (\$250 to \$800 appears to be a state average) and generate another \$4,000 or so of revenue each year. Council Member Boughton stated this is not a lot of money, but it would be some additional revenue for our budget. Mr. Dankert stated this could be used to close the gap on the extra funds that we now need for the Joint LEC budget.

Motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson to recommend charging a fee for auto extrications. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Council Member Enright stated she is still concerned with LGA and future state aid reductions. Council Member Clennon stated we need more sharing with Mower County and others, and we need to ask for ideas and suggestions of others to reduce the impacts of future reductions.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we also talked about increasing the fines for a parking violation if ticketed during a snow emergency.

Council Member Enright stated she had met with Mr. Dankert regarding budgetary discussion and had responses back from him that explained her questions. Council Member Clennon questioned why all of the council did not see the questions or responses, as this may have helped them better understand the budget. Council Member Austin stated he frequently asked Mr. Dankert questions to gain personal knowledge of an issue, and that it did not necessarily need to be communicated to the entire council. Council Member Enright stated she did not send it to all council members since she “got in trouble” the last time for replying to all on an email and being accused of violating the open meeting law.

Council Member Enright stated we should explore partnering with the Humane Society on a building, since that capital cost is also in our budget. After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member Enright to explore options with the Humane Society on a joint facility. Carried 7-0. Mr. Hurm stated he would contact Police Chief Krueger on this issue for him to report back.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned what process we needed to use to increase the tickets. Council Member McAlister stated Mr. Hurm should ask Chief Krueger to bring a report back to council on this at the next meeting.

**Other Item** – It was requested that Mr. Hurm contact the City of Mankato to inquire how they paid for the citywide junk removal this year. Additionally, some cities have one recycling container that all recyclables are thrown into, and we should check with Mower County Recycling as to why we cannot do this. Mr. Hurm noted he would take care of these two items and will report back to council.

**Other Item** – Council Member Clennon questioned why we pay the health officer and what he does for us. Mr. Hurm noted the City and County each pay \$1,250 annually to Dr. Schindler for consultation with Mower County on health related issues. Council Member Boughton stated the city pays for this as we are also responsible for health related issues of our community, not just Mower County. Council Member Austin stated he is on the County Health Board, and Dr. Schindler does communicate to us as a Board during those meetings.

Mayor Stiehm requested that Mr. Hurm check on this and bring it back to the next work session.

Mr. Dankert noted that as far as the 2012 budget is concerned, we are only waiting on the capital improvement plan that Public Works has not yet completed and a meeting with the Joint LEC committee on their 2012 budget. Otherwise Mr. Dankert noted he has nothing else he plans on bringing up related to the 2012 budget unless Council specifically asks for some item(s) to be discussed. Mr. Dankert requested enough notice so that any pertinent department head that needed to be at the work session could be available.

**Item No. 5. - Administrative report** – None.

**Item No. 7a. – Matters In Hand** – Mr. Hurm noted we really have not been using this like it was intended, so if there are things council wants us to research and get back to them on, we should have a formal motion and second and then a roll call vote to add things to the list.

Motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member Enright to use Matters In Hand again. Carried 7-0.

No further action necessary.

Council Member King stated he would also like City Attorney Hoversten at the next work session to discuss the request by Craig Knippel and snow removal. Mr. Hurm noted he would let Mr. Hoversten know.

**Item No. 6. Open discussion** – Council Member Clennon stated the League of Minnesota Cities has a Land Use Incentive Program where if a quorum of the City Council and members of the Planning Commission and the City Planner would take a one-hour on-line course we could save some money if we ever have a claim against us for a land use violation. There is a maximum fee of \$180, so for this amount it may be a good idea to take the training. Council Member Boughton questioned if we ever had a land use claim. Mr. Dankert noted he was not aware of any. After further discussion, motion by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, seconded by Council Member Enright to add Land Use Claim training to the Matters In Hand. Carried 7-0.

Council Member Clennon stated she has still not heard anything on the rental ordinance. Council Member Enright stated another meeting is coming up. Motion by Council Member Clennon, seconded by Council Member Enright to add Rental Housing ordinance to the Matters In Hand. Carried 7-0.

Council Member Austin stated he talks to staff on a number of different issues for his own personal education. Council Member Austin stated we have been chastised several times for sending out mass emails, so every time I meet with a staff person I don't believe I need to report on that to everybody. Council Member Clennon stated she feels like every time she asks a question all council is copied on the email response.

Council Member McAlister thanked council for the last year, noting it is almost fun coming to meetings these days as the discussion and views have varying degrees of support and creates nice round table discussions.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned the status of union negotiations. Mr. Hurm stated all four have had no movement.

Council Member Boughton questioned what happens to unused budget dollars at year-end. Mr. Dankert stated these stay within the fund that had the budget, and if revenues exceed budget, and expenditures are lower than the budget, this will create fund balance for future years for Council to use. Austin has an informal policy of keeping between 42% and 48% of the expenditures in fund balance, so once we start approaching 50% in the past we have asked council to transfer the

funds to the Building Fund for a specific project (like a Library, ground for the Justice Center, etc.). These funds could also be used to balance out the budget if state aid is cut during the mid-year.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Tom Dankert