

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
January 17, 2012
City Hall Conference Room

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann, Public Works Director Jon Erichson, Assistant City Engineer Steven Lang, Police Chief Brian Krueger, 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 6:25 p.m.

Item No. 1. Closed Session - Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Enright to close the meeting for labor negotiating strategy pursuant to M.S. § 13D.03. Carried 7-0.

See DVD of closed session.

Meeting re-opened at 7:00 p.m.

Other Item – Ms. Wiechmann discussed the evaluations of City Administrator Jim Hurm. Ms. Wiechmann noted they were the same format as last years' evaluations, and she requested them back in her office by January 27, 2012.

Council Member Boughton requested an electronic version be mailed out to council as well.

Item No. 2. Schedule tour of LEC with Chief Krueger– Chief Krueger invited Council to come and walk through the existing LEC to see the condition of the building, and to get an idea of what and where the proposed remodeled space will be. After further discussion, Council noted they would meet at the LEC lobby on January 24 at 3:30 (before the council retreat).

Other Item – Mr. Hurm noted that a meeting occurred today regarding the Humane Society and a new building. Chief Krueger stated they are reviewing a joint venture with the animal pound and the Humane Society. The proposed buildings would be located on the same location, and a number of sites are going to be reviewed.

Council Member Boughton questioned if they are looking at one site or two for the two facilities. Chief Krueger stated if the structure is greater than 9,000 square feet then a sprinkler system has to be added at significant cost. The Humane Society alone wants 9,000 square feet. Chief

Krueger also outlined a philosophical difference the two entities are dealing with, the issue of the Humane Society being a no-kill facility while the animal control facility is required by law, at times, to destroy animals.

This is for informational purposes and more details will come once we are closer on a location site.

Item No. 3. Ellis School – 6th Avenue vacation – Mr. Erichson stated that the new 5-6th grade school will be located on the site of the current ball fields at Ellis Middle School. The proposed site plan will require us to vacate the 6th Avenue road to the school for them to use as part of their internal transportation system. Mr. Erichson stated we would no longer have to maintain the road (which is in dire need of repair at a cost of around \$300,000), the City would retain the easements, and the vacation would then accommodate the school expansion.

This is for informational purposes only as once the site plan is finalized the council will have to take official action to vacate the property.

Item No. 4. Amending ordinance Austin City Code §3.30 – MPCA requirements – Mr. Erichson stated he is working with the MPCA as they are now requiring stronger ordinances to deal with wastewater treatment plants. Mr. Erichson noted the backup in the work session agenda (changes in red) are the result of final negotiations with the MPCA. If Council agrees to such, we would send it back to MPCA to get their final approval. Once approved by the MPCA, we will be required to strengthen our Individual Control Mechanism (ICM) agreements with those entities that discharge strong waste. Mr. Erichson noted the proposed ordinance change is the minimum required by the MPCA, nothing more, and is the result of several negotiations with the MPCA.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member Enright, to recommend to Council the approval of the proposed ordinance, subject to MPCA approval. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to a future council agenda once the MPCA has responded to the final proposed draft ordinance.

Item No. 5. – Replacement of street superintendent – Mr. Erichson discussed his memo regarding the impending retirement of Street Superintendent Steve Moe. Mr. Erichson discussed his memo, noting Assistant Street Superintendent Joe Sunderman is the candidate that he would like to promote to the street superintendent position. Mr. Erichson outlined Mr. Sunderman's qualifications and work history noting that Joe has been Mr. Moe's assistant for 15 plus years and understands the streets better than anybody. Mr. Erichson further noted that they would then open up the assistant street superintendent's job to the public and internal candidates to fill.

Mr. Hurm noted the general policy has been to open up these positions to all, but due to the background of Joe Sunderman and his inter workings within the City, Mr. Sunderman is a natural replacement for Steve Moe.

Council Member Enright asked who does the interviewing for the new assistant street superintendent. Mr. Erichson stated it is typically Ms. Wiechmann from Human Resources, Steven Lang, and me from the Public Works Department.

Council Member Clennon stated she is not comfortable changing what we have done for the hiring process. We took applications for the police chief and the parks and recreation director, yet these two positions had natural transition opportunities. Mr. Hurm stated he feels the same way 95% of the time, but in this case we have a unique position and a unique individual that knows the position better than all others. Mr. Erichson added that with our succession planning, we provide training and an investment in our employees to get them to the next level.

Council Member McAlister stated he understands where Council Member Clennon is coming from, and when looking at department heads we should look at the application process. However, in this case it is an internal position who has done a great job for the city.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member McAlister to recommend to Council the approval of Joe Sunderman being promoted to street superintendent, and to start the application process to fill the assistant street superintendent position (Joe Sunderman's old position). Carried 6-1 (Council Member Clennon – Nay). Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 6. – City vehicle usage policy for all city vehicles – Mr. Hurm described the existing policy and separate policy for Fire Department vehicle use. Mr. Hurm recommended the existing policy stay in place for non-Fire Department vehicles, except to remove reference to the Finance Committee that no longer exists. Mr. Hurm stated the Fire Department vehicle use policy as amended by Fire Chief Healey a few weeks ago.

Council Member Boughton questioned the use of vehicle 306 for the fire chief and allowing its use for personal needs (school runs, basketball games, grocery store, etc). Mr. Hurm stated this is in there in the event Chief Healey needs to respond from wherever he is at. If he does have to respond, his family would need to find another ride home. Mr. Hurm stated the vehicle use should only be if he is available to respond also (so if he is not available to respond to an emergency due to vacation, out of town, etc. the city vehicle should not be used). Council Member Austin stated this is not a good practice to have employees hauling their family around in city vehicles.

Council Member Clennon stated we should not exclude the seat belt use provision that states an employee is not required to always buckle up. Mr. Hurm stated he would meet with the city attorney and do some research to see if the state statutes allow examples for not wearing the seat belts (like getting in and out of your truck while viewing a road construction project on a closed road).

Council Member Clennon stated she would like to propose to get rid of the Fire Department vehicle use policy. Council Member Austin said we are not here to micromanage the departments. The taking home of a city vehicle should be up to the department head. Council Member Clennon stated we should start with a unified policy, one for all departments. Council Member Austin stated the Fire Department is more likely to be called for the use of a specialized piece of equipment.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member King, to recommend to Council the adoption of the two revised vehicle use policies. Carried 5-2 (Council Member Clennon, Council Member-at-Large Anderson – Nay).

Item No. 7. – Administrative Report – Mower County CIP – None.

Item No. 8. – Open Discussion – Zero Based Budgeting Council Member Boughton handed out a discussion topic for the council retreat on January 23 and 24th. The topic is Zero Based Budgeting and would rely on each council member plus a member of the Chamber of Commerce to meet with the different department heads. Council Member Enright looked up the issue on her phone noting all departments would start out with zero dollars and would have to justify every line item expense. No consideration would be given to revenues and expenditures from prior years; in essence you start the budget cycle from scratch, Council Member Enright noted.

Mayor Stiehm noted some of the Council complaints came as ideas were submitted the last week before the budget was approved. Council Member Clennon stated the employees had ideas last time and every one of them was shot down, but maybe we need to hear from them again.

Council Member Enright suggested we just create one of two great parks that families want to go to, and eliminate the other parks or close some of them down.

Council Member Boughton stated we need to look at other humane societies.

Mayor Stiehm stated it sounds like a few council members want to beat some other budgeting ideas around. Mayor Stiehm stated he would like to hear from other cities that do zero based budgeting first.

Mr. Hurm stated he would check with the League of Minnesota Cities to see which ones do zero based budgeting.

Item No. 8. – Open Discussion – Supermajority - Council Member-at-Large Anderson discussed a letter she received regarding supermajorities and the legislature.

Item No. 8. – Open Discussion – G&R Truck Wash - Council Member Enright requested some updated backup information on the G & R Truck Wash situation as part of their hearing on February 6.

Item No. 9. Matters In Hand –Mayor Stiehm noted we are working on the Humane Society and animal control facility issue. The flood wall needs some discussion as to who should be on such a recognition committee.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King to adjourn the meeting at 8:12 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert