

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

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: Public Works Director Jon Erichson, Fire Chief Mickey Healey, Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood, Police Chief Brian Krueger, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, and City Administrator Jim Hurm.

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

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Item No. 1. Budget discussion (no topics have been requested in advance) – Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned what the additional cost is going to be if the voter ID amendment is passed by the voters in the upcoming election. Council Member Clennon noted this cost is not yet known according to the committee meetings she is involved with as until the voters approve of the measure, the legislature cannot make the rules to follow on it. Mr. Hurm noted he thought we had presented something on this earlier from the League of Minnesota Cities study. Mr. Hurm noted he would report back to council on this.

Item No. 1. Budget discussion (no topics have been requested in advance) – Council Member Clennon stated she would once again like to bring up the \$400 monthly car allowance that is paid to four employees. Council Member Clennon stated she would like to stop this payment and lease two cars that everybody could use going to conferences instead of paying this monthly allowance.

Mayor Stiehm questioned Council if they wanted to discuss this again, noting the issue had been discussed in the past and the labor agreements and contracts have been signed through a negotiation process with the affected employees. Council Member Austin stated we are money ahead paying the car allowance and not having to pay for repairs and maintenance on the vehicles. No other council members had any discussion on this.

No further action necessary.

Item No. 2. Five-year Capital Improvement Plan – Mr. Dankert began the discussion on the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) by noting we are proposing to spend \$102.7 million over the next five years on capital projects within the City of Austin.

Pages 5-7 - Chief Krueger discussed the Police Department noting we have the annual purchase of police vehicles (3 per year) at about 100,000 miles. Additionally we have unmarked cars that are bought every four years or so to keep the fleet at six unmarked cars, plus a CSO vehicle that amasses over 150,000 miles every three years. Chief Krueger noted the storage building will be pushed off into 2013, and some needed equipment will be bought in 2013/2014 out of reserved funds. The LEC remodel was discussed along with the animal shelter, with Mr. Dankert noting additional funding will have to be provided in order to meet what we believe the new estimates are for these facilities. Chief Krueger stated we will need a new K9 in early 2013 as Ghost was recently put down for health reasons. Finally, Chief Krueger stated new medical bags will be purchased in 2013 that are easier to transport for the officers.

Council Member Clennon questioned the computers in the squad cars, noting we will surely need to replace those in the next five years. Chief Krueger stated he will add that to the CIP. Chief Krueger stated we may also need to cover \$95,000 of consoles for the new LEC center, but that will be reviewed by the County first and then added to the LEC construction budget.

Council Member Clennon questioned the mileage on the cars. Chief Krueger stated he has instituted a mandatory 10% mileage reduction for all vehicles requiring them to not drive as often but rather to be in a stationary location. Additionally, the new Interceptors are getting 4-4.5 miles per gallon better fuel efficiency; however, rising gas prices may push this budget up.

Council Member Clennon questioned why the Police Department does not call other departments like the Fire Department when they have community issues. Chief Krueger stated they do defer some calls to the Fire Department when their staff is busy. Chief Healey agreed noting this year there have probably been 60 calls the Fire Department has taken for the Police Department as they have been busy.

Pages 8-9 – Chief Healey discussed the CIP and the Fire Department noting most of his cost is in the fire trucks themselves. Additionally the turn-out gear purchasing will be complete in 2013. The concrete replacement will be evaluated each year and has now been moved back a number of years.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned if the City could donate the old turn-out gear to Nicaragua again. Chief Healey stated that would be the goal again as some third world countries do not have the high standards the United States has for fire gear.

Pages 10-11 – Mr. Dankert discussed the Library capital noting their need for carpet in 2013 and eventual painting will allow us to keep the Library in top shape for the public. Additionally, there are some dollars set aside for tables and chairs and some new computers in 2014.

Pages 12-13 – Ms. Underwood noted the Nature Center asks for most of their capital through the Hormel Foundation, but this may need to be re-evaluated as the Hormel Foundation now helps out with the membership fee. Ms. Underwood stated either tax dollars or the Friends of the Nature Center may be called on in the future to fund capital improvements at the Nature Center.

Pages 14-15 – Mr. Dankert discussed Administration noting there is budget set forward for new chairs, carpet replacement, public works equipment, and computers. Mr. Dankert noted we set

aside \$20,000 per year for computers and associated equipment. Usually we rotate computers down from high end users to lower end users and eventually to the Youth Activity Center.

Pages 50-54 – Ms. Underwood reviewed the Parks and Recreation requests, noting the guard stands at the pool need to be replaced. Additionally, we annually spend \$25,000 on park and path maintenance, and there are also projects scheduled on the pavilions and bathrooms in the next five years. The pool is painted every two to three years, and the diving well heater will need to be replaced within the next five years as well. A pond is being discussed down at Todd Park as well as pay lockers at the pool to reduce staffing needs. Finally, Ms. Underwood noted we have two pieces of equipment scheduled to be purchased in 2013 for around \$110,000.

Council Member Enright questioned the status of the 2012 capital item of tuck pointing Shirley Theel Park shelter. Ms. Underwood stated Randy Hofner is working on getting two bids for this project and we still hope to have it done yet this year.

Pages 16-20 – Mr. Erichson reviewed the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) noting we are going to be spending \$3+ million on lagoon's in the very near future as well as what is listed (hopefully in 2012 the project starts). Mr. Erichson reviewed the proposed improvements noting we will go through millions of dollars in the next five years to make the necessary WWTP improvements. Mr. Erichson stated we are working with Hormel on their waste treatment process as there may be more or less waste coming from them based on how they have evaluated their internal processes for disposing of the waste.

Pages 21-23 – Mr. Erichson stated the Central Garage owns all of the equipment and then the different departments rent the equipment for their own use. This allows us to buy one air compressor instead of one for each department. Mr. Erichson noted a wash bay is proposed for 2013 for the newly constructed Central Garage. Council Member Enright questioned where the trucks were currently washed. Mr. Erichson noted they go all of the way across town to the WWTP where we still have our old wash bay facility. Mr. Erichson stated we are looking at sharing an oiler with Mower County, and the \$750,000 addition to the Central Garage facility is only needed if Parks and Recreation move into our facility from their location at Todd Park.

Pages 24-25 – Mr. Erichson stated the Waste Transfer Station has very little in capital over the next five years as we just got done with some major remodeling at the facility. User fees cover the cost of the operations and capital replacement.

Pages 26-28 – Mr. Erichson stated the airport has had major renovations over the years and we have been pretty successful at getting matching grants all the way up to 90% grants for further capital improvements to the facility.

Pages 29-32 – Mr. Erichson reviewed the non-MSA streets, noting these are not supported by the state gas tax. These are local projects paid for with local dollars and assessments in order to fund the construction. Council Member Clennon stated her street is now moved back five years on the CIP yet it is in terrible shape. Mr. Erichson stated we evaluate streets on an annual basis and while parts of her street are in bad shape, other areas are in better shape, so maybe only a patch job would be needed. Mr. Erichson also stated it would be nice to require garbage haulers to not enter alleys as they take a big toll on these. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated we

should move forward with an ordinance to require garbage cans be picked up on the streets and not the alleyways.

Pages 33-35 – Mr. Erichson discussed the MSA streets that are funded with approximately \$1 million of state gas tax money each year, noting we also assess all of these property owners under the same assessment policy as non-MSA residents. Mr. Erichson stated this assessment policy eliminates the favoritism for one street of homeowners versus another.

Pages 36-38 – Mr. Erichson discussed the trail system throughout Austin, noting we have a big project coming up for which we have requested funding from the Hormel Foundation to help finance our 20% local share. Mr. Erichson stated if they do not fund this, local dollars would be needed to construct the trail link at the Nature Center.

Pages 39-42 – Mr. Erichson noted there are sanitary sewer projects throughout the city in connection with the street projects. We are seeing low infiltration this year at the treatment plant as it has been so dry.

Pages 43-45 – Mr. Erichson discussed the Miscellaneous Street projects noting the LED technology is changing ever so fast that we are still evaluating this newer technology.

Pages 46-49 – Mr. Erichson noted Miscellaneous Other Projects include a sidewalk review program like we once administered. Mr. Erichson stated this is highly labor intensive and concentrates on different quadrants each year to walk all of the sidewalks and mark for repairs and assessments to property owners. Council Member Clennon asked about the North Main Parking lot. Council Member Clennon questioned why all of the tax payers should pay for a parking lot for these private businesses when they can pay for their own lot. Mr. Erichson stated this is a hub of commercial activity in the area and they are getting squeezed as there is not enough room for parking. This was just a thought that could be moved back until after the flood project is done to see how much additional parking would be needed. Council Member Clennon stated in Owatonna, the businesses in their downtown have to buy their own land for parking.

Further discussion ensued on the industrial sign out by the truck stop, noting it is in bad shape and needs to be repaired and updated. Mr. Hurm stated he would bring something back to council on this at a future work session.

Pages 55-58 – Mr. Erichson discussed the Strom Water Utility District (SWUD) noting these projects are paid for via the user fee. Mr. Erichson noted they will be working on the Ellis Ditch in conjunction with the new 5th-6th grade school.

Pages 59 – No discussion on the Senior Center.

Pages 60-62 – Mr. Erichson briefly touched on the flood mitigation efforts noting he met this week with the representatives of the \$5 million Commerce Department grant. Mr. Erichson stated we are getting close to having the Sinclair Station issue resolved, and then the project construction can start.

Page 63-64 – Mr. Erichson noted they are having weekly meetings on the Hormel Institute expansion and ground breaking should occur in 2013.

Mr. Dankert stated the Building Fund on page 67 is now free and clear for 2014 and beyond as the Justice Center dirt cost has now all been paid. This will allow council to help fund some Vision 2020 projects or make other capital improvements within the community over the next five years.

Mr. Dankert noted he would make the above noted changes and that others may occur until we get to the final meeting in December.

Item No. 3. – Administrative Report – None.

Item No. 4. Open Discussion – iPads – Council Member Clennon questioned the status of the iPads and going paperless for council meetings. Mr. Dankert noted we are waiting for one quote from a company to install wireless inside of City Hall. Mr. Dankert noted we have the quotes for the iPads (different speeds) and we also have the state contract for a wireless card if Council did not have wireless internet at home or wanted to use the cards instead of installing wireless at City Hall. Mr. Dankert noted we should have this information back for the next work session. Mr. Dankert noted if the goal is to save cost by not printing paper, that was not going to happen. The initial purchase of the iPads and installation of the wireless network in City Hall will be expensive, much more expense than printing out 100 pages of an agenda and having them delivered to your house. The annual Verizon wireless card for the iPad will run over \$7,000 per year if council stays with the direction that we are truly paperless and staff also have iPads.

Mr. Dankert noted his goal is to report on this at the next work session, and that Mr. Hurm is gathering information from other cities on going paperless.

Item No. 4. Open Discussion – City of Albert Lea – Council Member Clennon questioned the status of the Mayor and City Administrator's meeting with Albert Lea on coordination efforts. Mayor Stiehm stated he has met with their mayor on a few occasions on different subjects. Mr. Hurm noted he has had no specific discussions with their city manager either. Mayor Stiehm stated they have spoken about integrating different things, but nothing specifically has happened. Council Member Clennon stated we need to learn from each other as both cities may have something to offer the other city.

Item No. 5. Matters In Hand – No discussion.

Motion by Council Member Boughton seconded by Council Member King to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert