

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
January 22, 2013
City Hall Conference Room

PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm, Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson, Council Members Jeff Austin, Roger Boughton, Jeremy Carolan, Judy Enright, and Steve King.

ABSENT: Council Member Michael Jordal.

STAFF PRESENT: Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann (7:30 p.m.), Assistant City Engineer Steven Lang (7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.), Police Chief Brian Krueger (7:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.), Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, and City Administrator Jim Hurm.

ALSO PRESENT: Public and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Item No. 1a. Parking restrictions – Hormel Historic Home area – Chief Krueger noted the Public Works Department sent out about twenty surveys for the parking issues around the Hormel Historic Home. Of those twenty surveys, seven people responded. Three of those wanted to keep the parking restrictions as is, three wanted to eliminate the parking restrictions altogether, and one wanted the parking time increased. Chief Krueger stated since the neighbors are all over the board, we would propose to leave the parking restriction at two hours from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Council Member Boughton questioned what restriction the apartment owners wanted. Chief Krueger stated she wanted the parking restriction eliminated.

After further discussion, council decided to keep the parking restriction as is. No further action needed.

Item No. 1b. Parking restrictions – Hospital area: 3rd Street NW and 8th Avenue – Mr. Lang noted a resident in the 800 block of 3rd Street NW had erected his own parking restriction signs, but the city told him that they had to be removed. The resident is now asking for the council to approve parking restrictions around his home as it is difficult for the snow plow and street sweeper to clean up his street with all of the cars that park there for an extended period of time. Both Public Works Director Jon Erichson and Chief Krueger recommend approval of this request.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member Carolan to recommend to Council the approval of the two hour restricted parking along the 800 block of 3rd Street NW. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 2. Coffee with the Council – Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated she would like to bring back the Coffee with the Council discussions, but this time have a set format for the discussion. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated maybe we could have a question and answer session for the last fifteen minutes of each session.

Council Member King stated he has never heard from a citizen that the council are out of touch or inaccessible. What we have seen is a few people that are vocal and have a gripe. No matter what the forum is, it won't be fruitful. Council Member King reiterated his stance that the Coffee with the Council is not necessary.

Mayor Stiehm stated we had small attendance at the sessions, and for the most part they were all dominated by just a few people.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated council attendance is not mandatory at the sessions, and she would like to focus on one specific topic a night, such as the different departments. Council Member Boughton stated it sends a strong message that we as council are approachable.

Council Member Enright stated if we do have the Coffee with the Councils again, then we need to set up some ground rules to eliminate the domination by a few people.

Council Member Carolan questioned if the sessions were productive. Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated for some people they were.

Mayor Stiehm stated a small minority of people dominate the meetings, and then the press writes about some huge controversy when it was really only three people.

Council Member Austin stated he sees both sides of the issue, as the public does contact us. It is a nice idea, but if we do it we need to at least have one topic to discuss and generate some interest from the public. We need to have ground rules otherwise we will have a citizen trying to dominate the session.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated in Albert Lea they have had four picnics over the year to connect with their residents. Maybe this is something we should do stated Council, Member-at-Large Anderson.

After further discussion, Council decided to discuss the topic again at the council retreat.

Item No. 3. Open discussion – Council Member Enright stated she had an LEC construction meeting today, and this is on a tight schedule. Bid documents have been sent out, and 52 contractors showed up today for a walk through and question and answer session. The County Board wants to approve bids at the February 19, 2013 meeting. The bids will be tallied by the February 12 meeting for which I would like Chief Krueger, Steven Lang, Jim Hurm, and Tom Dankert to attend to review the bids. The County is planning on recessing the regular meeting to go into a Building Committee meeting. The thought is that the City Council could have a work session at 5:00 on February 19 (before our council meeting) where Council Member Enright and staff can discuss the costs and the proposal with the rest of council. That way we could then add it on the Council agenda for February 19 for approval. No objections noted.

Therefore, there shall be a special work session at 5:00 on Tuesday February 19 to review the construction bids for the LEC remodel. From there, if council agrees to the costs, the item will be added to the council meeting on February 19 for official approval.

Item No. 3. Open discussion – A status update on the hiring of the Assistant City Engineer was requested. Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann stated they have reviewed the applicants and Mr. Lang has requested to interview six of the applicants. Those interviews will now be set up.

Item No. 4. Matters At Hand – No discussion.

Item No. 5. Closed session – Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King to close the meeting pursuant to M.S. § 13D.03 to update council on the current status of negotiations at 7:04 p.m. Carried 6-0.

See DVD of closed meeting.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King to re-open the closed meeting at 7:34 p.m. Carried 6-0.

Motion by Council Member Austin seconded by Council Member King to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Dankert