

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**May 20, 2013**  
**City Hall Conference Room**

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

**ABSENT:** None.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Police Chief Brian Krueger, Community Development Director Craig Hoium, Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, and City Administrator Jim Hurm.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m.

**Item No. 1. City of Austin Energy Usage Policy, and City of Austin Waste Reduction & Recycling Policy** – Mr. Hurm discussed a proposed one-page policy that we have been asked to approve from the Sustainability Task Force. This policy sets forth in writing some of the City of Austin's efforts to reduce energy usage and also help in reducing costs. Ms. Underwood noted much of this policy was created from reviewing similar policies in other governments.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, seconded by Council Member Austin to recommend to Council the approval of said proposed policy. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

**Item No. 3a. Open discussion – Conversations with the Council** – Council Members Enright and Boughton attended the May 18 meeting at the Library with citizens. Council Member Enright reported a total of 11 citizens showed up and it was a very good meeting. Council Member Enright discussed the following topics that arose from the citizens:

- A request to the media (Austin Daily Herald) to start putting government contacts back in the newspaper at least once per week, like they used to do. Additionally, it would be helpful if the media would do a better job reporting on the work session items that will be coming up at future council meetings. Council Member Boughton added that putting the agendas in the newspaper would be helpful to citizens. Council Member King reiterated his prior stance on the Conversations with the Council, in that 11 people do not represent a majority of the feelings of our citizenry. Additionally, Council Member Jordal stated that he thought the media did a very thorough job of the last work session in their newspaper, and maybe the citizenry is not seeing all of this information in the newspaper.
- The City should not micromanage the Fire Department.
- The trees by the Library on the Mill Pond trail need to be cut back and the scrub removed from the areas that are hard to see. Additionally, when are the security cameras going to be installed? Chief Krueger stated they are working with the camera company for the

security cameras. Ms. Underwood stated when the ground dries out we will be in the area removing some of the scrub and trees to open up the area more.

- The Police Department needs to enforce more of our ordinances on exhibition driving, speeding, and noise. Chief Krueger stated his officers have the discretion to ticket or not ticket based on the circumstances. Many of these issues need to be witnessed by the Police Department, or a citizen must fill out and sign a complaint and then show up to court at the hearing date. Most citizens do not want to do this, which then leaves it to the officer to have to witness the incident. Chief Krueger stated usually the vehicle in question is gone by the time the Police Department gets there. Chief Krueger stated a speeding ticket is \$125, a noise violation is \$145, and an exhibition driving ticket is \$100.
- Emergency Management Plan progress? Chief Krueger handed out a federal booklet on emergency management and also noted Mower County has a comprehensive Plan. Chief Krueger noted he is working on the City of Austin plan.
- Garage sale signs are still a problem. Council Member Enright stated they can only be at two locations (top of Skinners Hill and at Packer Arena) according to the City ordinance. Chief Krueger stated we only have four officers on duty sometimes, and this is not a high priority. Council Member Enright stated we should be reviewing some of our key ordinances to see if we should even have them anymore. Council Member Carolan stated he attends a lot of garage sales, noting the Police Department is not staffed to handle this and maybe this is an ordinance we should review again.
- Junk and leaves at some residences. Mr. Hoium noted he would review these specific addresses. Additionally, Council Member Enright questioned how many parcels within a given block can be rental. Mr. Hoium stated there is no restriction on this. Council Member Enright questioned how many families can be in a single family home. Mr. Hoium stated the immediate family, or five family members.
- Complaints regarding Precision Signs business. Mr. Hoium stated he would discuss this with Mr. Boyer.
- Junk in the alleys. Council Member Enright requested that the City do more “sweeps” in the alleys and get the citizens to clean these up much like they are required to clean up other junk violations. Mr. Hoium stated Doug Mauer does go through these areas on occasion when he has free time.
- One citizen said the snowplowing was horrible this year. Council Member Enright stated the other citizens stated they thought the snowplowing was great for this heavy winter.
- Parking lot issues at Oak Park Mall. Council Member Enright stated this is a constant complaint of citizens. Mr. Hoium stated he has been playing phone tag with the mall owner (Marty) since he sent the letter noting it was an ordinance violation to not fix the hard surfaced area. Council Member Carolan questioned what would happen if it is not fixed. Mr. Hoium stated it is a misdemeanor to violate our code of ordinances. Mr. Hoium stated he would follow up on this with the mall owner.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated the next Conversations with the Council will be on June 15.

Council Member King requested that these issues not be brought back to a work session, but instead be taken directly to the staff involved and let them handle the complaints. Council Member Boughton and Mayor Stiehm noted their agreement.

**Item No. 3b. Open discussion - support of Community Events** – Council Member Carolan requested more City support for events such as 5K run's, charity walks, etc. to show our support for such events.

**Item No. 2. Administrative report** – Mr. Hurm noted the Fire Civil Service will be working on hiring a new Fire Chief. In the interim, each Commander will be in charge that day, but Commander Lovik will be considered “in charge” for budget and other matters that needs to be handled. Council Member King noted his desire for internal candidates to step forward to run the department.

Mr. Hurm also stated the City Clerk will be leaving us soon, and we have looked at modifying the job description. Mr. Dankert noted the city clerk in many cities takes the minutes and attends the meetings, like the administrative assistant now does. One of the thoughts was to now have our city clerk do this task, freeing up time for the administrative assistant to cover the front window and help other departments with work. We are also proposing at moving some people around on the main floor, and having the city clerk sit right inside the Administration Office and moving the administrative assistant to the current city clerk's desk. This will allow for better backup of the front counter between the assistant city clerk and the administrative assistant. Finding a candidate with some election experience will be a big plus for this position, and Mr. Dankert and other staff have already heard from potential candidates for the job. Mayor Stiehm asked who would hire the position. Mr. Hurm stated they will report to Mr. Dankert, but Human Resources Director Wiechmann, Mr. Dankert and I will be involved in the hiring. Mr. Dankert noted we have worked with retiring City Clerk Lucy Johnson to come up with the new job description and duties. No objections noted from Council.

**Item No. 3c. Open discussion – Hardy Geranium** – Council Member King stated the Hardy Geranium located at 100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SE has been having constant water problems since the viaduct was removed when the Oakland Avenue bridges were removed. Ms. Trimble (owner) has had an engineering firm look at the issue and has proposed a \$8,830 beaver system to remove the water as it flows in. Council Member King stated former Public Works Director Jon Erichson looked at the issue years ago, as did the Austin Utilities and they have both determined it is not a sewer or water utility issue. Council Member King stated he would like to invite Ms. Trimble to a work session so council could hear from her and see if there is some way we can work together on this.

Council Member Austin stated we offered to buy her out years ago, and she has rejected all of those offers. Council Member Austin questioned if this was good public policy as there may now be others that will claim their water damage has been caused by our flood projects.

Mr. Hurm requested that public Works Director Steven Lang have the opportunity to review it at a staff level first. Council Member Austin agreed that staff should review the issue first.

**Item No. 3d. Open discussion – 2 UAW contracts** – Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned if we would have a closed meeting to discuss the two UAW contracts that were removed from the agenda this evening. Mr. Dankert noted the issue is wording in the contract for which the UAW head needs to discuss further with his group. Until we get the signature pages, we do not want to bring the contract forward for council approval.

**Item No. 4 Matters In Hand** – No discussion.

Motion by Council Member King seconded by Council Member Austin to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Tom Dankert