

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**July 1, 2013**  
**City Hall Conference Room**

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

**ABSENT:** Council Member Roger Boughton.

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

**ALSO PRESENT:** John Gray (Vision 2020) and Austin Daily Herald.

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

**Item No. 1 Review of animal shelter – estimated budget for proceeding with development**

Mr. Hoium handed out a memo discussing the expected costs related to the new animal control facility that is being built on the same parcel as the Humane Society building. Mr. Hoium outlined the estimated costs at around \$370,200 for a fully concrete block building versus an estimated \$361,200 for a poured concrete floor and up five foot on the wall, with the rest being wood framed.

Council Member Carolan questioned why we did not build a joint facility with the Humane Society. Chief Krueger stated Austin's Humane Society is a no-kill facility, which will not work if we have to put some dangerous animals down. Chief Krueger stated this building and its square footage should be very adequate for the animal control facility.

Council Member Enright questioned if the block building would last longer. Mr. Hoium stated it would as this is a Cadillac design, and there will be options for add-on's of in-floor heating, air-to-air exchangers, etc. if it can remain within the \$370,000 budget council earlier approved as part of the 5 Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King to allow staff to proceed. Carried 6-0. Council has already approved of the project, so no further action will be needed by council until the bids come in for the new facility.

**Other Item. Mower County grant** – Chief Krueger stated Mower County has received a \$95,000 grant that is earmarked for radio equipment. Chief Krueger stated they will be purchasing some radios for the squad cars (marked and unmarked) through this state grant.

**Item No. 2. Blazing Star Trail bonding request** – Mr. Hoium requested council support for applying for some funding through the state bonding process for \$500,000 for the next segment of the Blazing Star Trail. The City is required to pass a resolution in support of such. The

Blazing Star Trail joint powers agreement is between the cities of Austin, Albert Lea, Hayward, and the counties of Mower and Freeborn.

After further discussion, motion by Council Member Enright, seconded by Council Member Austin to recommend to Council the approval of the grant request for \$500,000 for the Blazing Star Trail. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

**Item No. 3. Vision 2020 Gateway to Austin progress update** – Mr. Gray of the Vision 2020 Gateway to Austin committee gave council an update of their recent endeavors. Mr. Gray stated our original goal was to build an iconic gateway on the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW and 14 Street NW bridges. However, we have determined that this is not feasible due to the lay of the land and the cost of buying out houses. Our second goal is to beautify the landscaping as you head east from the Oakland Avenue West exit, all the way to the 28<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. Goal number three is to create a visitors center right off of the interstate highway, and goal number four is to add more signage.

Mr. Gray stated members of the committee have visited with MnDOT in Rochester last year, and are working on setting up a visit with Craig Lenz at MnDOT. Additionally, the group visited MnDOT in Oakdale a few weeks ago. MnDOT came down recently to drive the interstate to understand our goal of showing off our “front yard”. This Oakdale meeting was well received and they are going to work with us to create an aesthetic development program for the I90 corridor. However, MnDOT needs the City’s authorization to allow MnDOT to work with the committee members on this program. The committee members are as follows:

- Steven Lang, City of Austin
- Kim Underwood, City of Austin
- Jon Erichson, Austin HRA
- Mike Ankeny, Mower County
- Mike Hanson, Mower County
- John Gray, Vision 2020
- Kelly Lady, Austin Utilities
- Randy Berg, Vision 2020

Mayor Stiehm questioned the status of the new visitation center. Mr. Gray stated it is still alive right now, but it is on hold until the Oak Park Mall situation is clearer, and the bridge projects are completed.

Motion by Council Member Enright, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson to recommend to council the approval of MnDOT working with the committee noted above on an aesthetic development program. Carried 6-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

**Item No. 4. Administrative Report** – Mr. Hurm updated council that the City Attorney will be working on trying to collect the unpaid \$100,000 loan from Ellumilite for the City, much like they are doing with trying to collect unpaid rent for the Port Authority. Council Member Austin stated these funds originated from revolving loan funds granted to us years ago by the State of Minnesota, so there was no real impact on the local tax payers for trying to help a new company succeed.

Additionally, Mr. Hurm stated a pay study is being done for the following positions:

- Police Captain David McKichan

- Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood
- MIS Administrator Don Tomlinson
- Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann

This is for informational purposes only.

**Item No. 5. Open discussion – Jeanne Poppe letter** – Council Member-at-Large Anderson requested a recent letter from State Representative Jeanne Poppe be placed on the city's website outlining the successes of the recent legislative session. No objections noted.

**Item No. 5. Open discussion – Conversations with the Council** – Council Member Enright noted that the bermed area down by the east side lake wall cannot be officially designated as a park, but the neighbors would like some signage or extra police patrols to get people from staying back in this area late at night. Chief Krueger stated he will remind officers to do some additional drive-by's in this area.

**Item No. 5. Open discussion – Evaluations** – Council Member Enright questioned the status of the evaluations. Mayor Stiehm stated Mr. Hurm has until September 1 to get them done for the department heads.

**Item No. 6 Matters In Hand** – No discussion.

Motion by Council Member King seconded by Council Member Austin to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Tom Dankert