

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE CLOSED WORK SESSION
May 19, 2014
City Hall Conference Room

PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Stiehm (5:12 p.m.) Council Members Roger Boughton, Steve King, Jeremy Carolan, Michael Jordal, Judy Enright, Jeff Austin and Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson

ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, Assistant City Attorney John Beckmann and City Clerk Ann Kasel

ALSO PRESENT:

Tom Dankert opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to close the meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05, subd. 3 on the basis of attorney-client privilege. Carried.

See DVD of closed meeting.

Motion by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to open the closed session. Carried.

Moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Austin, to adjourn the work session meeting to attend the City Council meeting at 5:22 p.m. Carried.

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
May 19, 2014
City Hall Conference Room

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

ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Community Development Director Craig Hoium, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Library Director Ann Hokanson, MIS Director Don Tomlinson and City Clerk Ann Kasel

ALSO PRESENT: Kelly Lady, Austin Daily Herald, Post Bulletin, Marian Clennon, Marv Repinski, Richard Kiker,

Mayor Stiehm re-opened the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Website Upgrade Proposal

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and MIS Director Don Tomlinson presented the proposed website request for proposal (RFP) that was developed internally, with the help of Council Member Enright and some local website designers. The City's website is in need of a redesign and the goal of the process is to have someone design and create the website and then have City staff maintain it. It is targeted to have the website running by the end of the year.

Mr. Tomlinson stated there are a variety of ways the website could be hosted and maintained but the City would prefer to have the access to upload and modify pages internally.

Mr. Dankert stated the City would like local companies and individuals to bid on the design project. The Library uses Drupal Gardens for designing their website and that is also something that will be looked at.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson stated she would like the website to be user friendly.

Mr. Tomlinson stated the site would be designed using examples from other cities that are user friendly. The goal would be to combine a lot of different features for the ease of use of the citizen.

Council Member Enright requested a banner that would go across the home page to be for emergencies or important events and downloadable forms that could be filled out and sent back.

Council Member Carolan would like the proposal to be open to anyone who would like to try, especially local people.

Mr. Dankert stated that since this a professional service contract the City can choose from any proposal submitted and is not bound to take the lowest bidder. The contract will be awarded to the company or individual that can best meet the needs of the City.

Moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Austin, to move forward with the request for proposals for the City of Austin website. Carried.

The item will be placed on the June 2, 2014 Council meeting.

Item No. 2 – Solar Charging Station in a Municipal Lot

Kelly Lady, Marketing and Energy Services Manager at Austin Utilities, presented a proposal for the City's first public electric vehicle charging station. The station would be capable of charging two vehicles at once and is proposed to be located in the municipal parking lot at the corner of 1st Street and 3rd Avenue NW. This lot was chosen for the location because it is highly visible and would promote shopping and dining downtown. Currently, the first two stalls are leased to businesses but those businesses are willing to move their stalls to accommodate this request.

Ms. Lady provided a diagram of the proposed location stating the electrical usage for the charging station would be offset with solar power. The proposed solar panels meet the City's solar ordinance criteria. There would be a fee to use the charging station which has not been established at this time.

Mayor Stiehm asked how many vehicles the charging station would accommodate and how long would it take to charge the vehicles.

Ms. Lady stated up to two vehicles could be charged at one time and it will take approximately 2 hours to charge each vehicle.

Mayor Stiehm questioned if there is a demand for this type of service right now.

Ms. Lady stated the project is proposed to accommodate the anticipated demand for electric vehicle charging stations. She added that there is a business owner downtown that owns an electric vehicle.

Council Member Enright questioned if the parking enforcement officer would monitor the station.

Ms. Lady stated if there were non-electric vehicles parked in the stalls those vehicles would be ticketed.

Council Member Enright stated there is an electric vehicle charging station on the Riverland College Albert Lea Campus. That station does not have a fee for use.

Public Works Director Steven Lang added that the solar panels and posts will be located on top of the current transformer and will be approximately 10 feet in the air. All of the designated leased stalls in the municipal parking lot are adjacent to the sidewalk. He questioned if all of the stalls would be shifted down based on this proposal or if the lessees would be open to moving to a different spot.

Ms. Lady stated the individuals are open to moving to other stalls in the lot.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, approving Austin Utilities' proposal for an electric vehicle charging station in the downtown municipal parking lot. Carried.

The item will be placed on the June 2, 2014 Council meeting.

Item No. 3 – Spam Museum Parking Arrangement

Director of Public Works Steven Lang presented on the proposed Spam Museum parking plan. City staff has been working over the last few months to develop solutions to the parking issues. Mr. Lang identified some solutions to the anticipated challenges to parking.

To provide for RV and camper parking the City would swap 19 parking stalls on the east side of the Downtown bar parking lot for 19 stalls the County owns on the west side of 1st Street NE from 3rd Avenue to 4th Avenue. These new acquired stalls would be designated for RVs and campers.

Tour buses would have an unloading zone on 3rd Avenue next to the museum and would be able to park on the street or in the Sterling Drug lot.

Mr. Dankert noted that the grey area outlined is not the building footprint, it is the area of the property that is being transferred for the development.

An access easement from Mower County over 1st Street NE from 3rd Avenue to 4th Avenue would be established to improve traffic flow. The City would also reconstruct 3rd Avenue NE from Main Street to 1st Street as a one-way road and the road would be designated as a loading zone.

The City is also proposing to purchase the 36 stall old Library lot from Mower County for \$75,000. The lot is owned by the County as part of the Justice Center agreement but has limited use. The lot would be used as an overflow lot of all of the downtown businesses. The cost is very reasonable in Mr. Lang's opinion as it would cost much more to acquire land and develop a parking lot. The funds for this purchase are proposed to come from the contingency fund.

Mr. Dankert noted that Mower County has not officially approved this sale yet but will consider the matter soon.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson inquired if there would be lots of truck activity for deliveries to the Spam store.

Mr. Lang states he is not aware of the volume of deliveries to the business would anticipate that deliveries would come in off-peak hours.

Council Member Carolan questioned if there was any consideration for turning additional streets, namely Main Street, into one-ways to help with traffic flow.

Mr. Lang stated there was a push to turn Main Street into a pedestrian plaza in the 1970's however that would be very difficult to do now with all the traffic that already uses the First Street area. The additional traffic on other streets may cause a bigger problem. In addition, changing two-way roads into one-way roads is very difficult.

Council Member Boughton asked if Hormel has requested a specific number of parking stalls.

Mr. Lang stated there has been no formal request for parking.

Mr. Dankert stated the Spam Museum may add parking stalls near the building also and the parking requests may need to be reevaluated at the project commences. The goal of acquiring the "old Library lot" would be to encourage business owners and employees to use the lot for parking instead of taking up stalls on the street and in the main parking lots that consumers could potentially use.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member Boughton, seconded by Council Member King, to move forward with the proposed parking stall swap with Mower County, to purchase the old "Library Lot" from Mower County for \$75,000, and to reconstruct 3rd Avenue NE from Main Street to 1st Street as a one-way road. Carried.

The item will be placed on a future Council meeting once the agreements are finalized with Mower County.

Item No. 4 – Sign Retroreflectivity Policy

Director of Public Works Steven Lang presented on the proposed sign retroreflectivity policy which the City must adopt in order to meet State and Federal requirements. The policy would address sign maintenance and replacement to keep sign reflectivity at night above minimum levels through one of the following methods:

- Nighttime Visual Inspection by City employee
- Measured Sign Retroreflectivity with a \$10,000-\$15,000 device
- Expected Sign Life Replacement (typically 15 years)
- Blanket Sign Replacement
- Control Signs – replacing signs of same vintage

The City has already begun this process with manually documenting sign replacement in 2009; implementing Simple Signs, a sign inventory software in 2012; and budgeting to increase the inventory of signs, posts and materials in 2012 and 2013. The next step would be to implement a formal policy for the approximately 5,000 signs in the city. The goal of the policy would be to improve public safety.

Council Member Enright noted that there can be too many signs and then it seems like the public doesn't pay attention to them. She asked if the City makes all the signs or if they are purchased.

Mr. Lang stated the City makes specialized signs and purchases generic signs in bulk. He recommended the City adopt a policy to complete nighttime visual inspections of the sign inventory instead of purchasing a device to measure or doing a blanket replacement policy. The signs would be viewed on main and secondary roads on a yearly basis and then in each side road on a rotating quadrant basis. A City staff person would drive a viewer around to take a visual inspection of the signs. This process is estimated to take approximately 6 hours per year and would be paid out of the Public Works budget.

Moved by Council Member Enright, seconded by Council Member King, to move forward with adopting a sign retroreflectivity policy. Carried.

The policy will be brought to Council once finalized by Mr. Lang.

Item No. 5 – Sewer Availability Charge Update

Director of Public Works Steven Lang provided the Council an update on the sewer availability charge policy currently being worked on. The policy would impose a sewer connection charge that is paid at the time of the permit application. Before the permit is issued, Staff would confirm that one of the following conditions exists:

- a. The lot has been assessed for the most of the sanitary sewer construction adjacent to the property; or
- b. Special assessments are pending for the cost of the sanitary sewer construction adjacent to the property; or
- c. A lump sum cost equal to the assessment has been paid to the City for the cost of the sanitary sewer construction adjacent to the property; or
- d. The cost of the sanitary sewer construction has been paid to the City by a developer as part of creation of the lot.
- e. If none of the above conditions are met, no permit to connect to the sanitary sewer will be issued unless the applicants pays the connection fee.

The connection fee would be determined by the City Engineer based on the cost to furnish the service as compared with others throughout the City and would be broken down based on the following:

- a. Sewer Access Charge – the cost to connect to the existing infrastructure and receive the benefit of the downstream sanitary sewer system, lift stations and waste water treatment plant.
- b. Sewer Lateral Development Charge – the cost as determined by the Engineer to extend from a point on the existing sanitary sewer collection system to service the lot or development with sewer main.
- c. Sewer Service Charge – the cost as determined by the Engineer to extend a dedicated sewer service from the sewer main to within 10 feet of the property line of a designated lot.

The connection fee would be reviewed annually to determine if adjustments are necessary. The fee would be set by resolution annually.

Mr. Lang stated the Waste Water Treatment Plant is a very valuable resource and is worth approximately \$75 million dollars. The lift stations and sewer mains are worth approximately \$34 million.

Council Member Boughton asked if this would be applicable to the Lansing sewer project.

Mr. Lang stated this policy might be applied to homeowners in the Lansing area.

Council Member Austin added that this would also be applicable to anyone building a house in the City and connecting to the system.

Mr. Lang stated the cost to hook into the system would depend on what services are being provided by the City.

Council Member Jordal asked if any other communities are using this type of policy.

Mr. Lang replied that many metro communities are using a sewer availability charge.

Council Member Boughton questioned if grants would still be an option for projects.

Mr. Lang stated that grants are an option as the grants are awarded on the need of the homes not how the work is being paid for.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson asked if the fee would be different for a residential versus a commercial property.

Mr. Lang stated that the fee would be one set number for any connection based on the average costs of construction.

Mr. Dankert stated the charge would be paid up front at the time of the permit application.

Council Member Carolan asked if then the City would not be assessing properties for sewer.

Mr. Lang confirmed that the City would not assess properties for sewer projects and the hookup fee would be the only option.

Richard Kiker, 602 30th Avenue NE, asked what the residents of the Lansing would do to hook up to the City sewer.

Mr. Lang stated that the Lansing assessments have been dropped at this time.

Mr. Dankert added that the assessments are invalidated and the City is moving forward. The City was given the option to reassess or look at another method.

Council Member Carolan asked how the compliant septic systems would be handled and would the homeowners be given the opportunity to use their septic system.

Mr. Lang stated that would depend on how the orderly annexation agreement is drafted. Those provisions would be spelled out in that agreement.

Council Member Enright asked if Mr. Lang had an estimate of what the hookup fee would be.

Mr. Lang stated he would need to review past projects to determine that amount.

For informational purposes only, no Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 6 – Setting Date of Public Works Project Tour

Director of Public Works Steven Lang proposed June 16, 2014 for the Public Works project tour. The tour would take place after the Council meeting and there would be no formal work session.

Item No. 7 – Budget Review for Public Works

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert continued the annual budget review process for Public Works with Council to go through expenditure and revenue for the department for the 2015 budget. He reviewed various revenue and expenditure line item categories for the departments. Mr. Dankert discussed the color coding system whereby items that were colored had some limited ability by Council to make changes due to contractual obligations, state/federal requirements, etc. In 2014, revenue for Public Works is projected to be \$754,819 and expenses are projected at \$3,765,571.

Different Council Members asked various questions regarding line items in each budget with staff answering them as they arose.

The information is provided as a general overview to prepare for the 2015 budget process which will be started at the June 2, 2014 work session.

For informational purposes only, no Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 8 – Cable TV Franchise Agreement

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert presented on the expiring cable TV franchise agreement. The Cable TV committee met on May 6, 2014 and recommended hiring Brian Grogan with Moss & Barnett out of Minneapolis to negotiate the franchise agreement with Charter Communications. Mr. Grogan has negotiated the last two franchise agreements for the City and has many years of experience in dealing with cable television providers. The current agreement expires on December 14, 2014. Mr. Grogan's fee for services is proposed at \$12,500 to \$18,500 and is requested from general fund contingency. Mr. Grogan noted in the Cable TV committee meeting that it has become increasingly difficult to negotiate with Charter.

The City would like Charter to add a public access HD channel for a better picture of the Council meetings with a simulcast in an analog signal so all citizens can view the broadcast, regardless of the type of their television.

Council Member Enright asked how much in revenue the City receives from the agreement.

Mr. Dankert stated the City received about \$260,000 in franchise fees plus about \$15,000 in PEG fees. The franchise fees can go in the general fund but the PEG fees can only be used to get the meetings broadcasted to citizens.

Council Member Boughton questioned why the City would want to extend the agreement out ten years.

Mr. Dankert stated the longer term would eliminate the need to renegotiate the contract every few years and having to pay an attorney to do so.

Council Member Enright questioned how much is left in general fund contingency.

Mr. Dankert stated there is approximately \$30,000 left in general fund contingency.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson asked if the City should raise the PEG fees as they are much lower than other cities.

Council Member Jordal stated raising the fees should be based on the needs of the City only as that specific fee is directly added to each cable bill.

Council Member Enright questioned if the number of cable users have decreased.

Mr. Dankert stated the number of users has been pretty steady.

Moved by Council Member Enright, seconded by Council Member King, for the approval of a contract with Brian Grogan with Moss & Barnett for negotiating services with Charter Communications for the cable TV franchise agreement. Carried.

The item will be placed on the June 2, 2014 Council meeting.

Item No. 9- Administrative Report

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert provided an update on the 2014 Council goals.

Mr. Dankert also stated that the TV replacement in the Council chambers will not take place until the contract with Charter Communications is approved because one of the requested items is an upgrade to a digital HD channel and therefore the expense of additional hardware would not be necessary.

Item No. 10 – Open Discussion

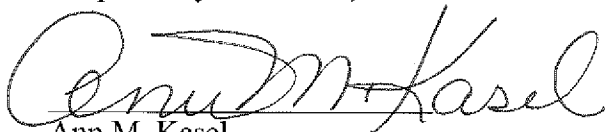
Mayor Stiehm stated that Community Development Director Craig Hoium is retiring and will be cutting back to part time hours next month. Mr. Dankert added that Mr. Hoium is very willing to work with the City in the job transition.

Council Member King would like to invite Vicky Trimble of the Hardy Geranium to a work session as she is experiencing water in her store basement again. Mr. Lang stated he would provide backup as to the previous work sessions with Ms. Trimble.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson suggested that special guests in the work session or Council meetings be introduced to the Council.

Moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ann M. Kasel".

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk