

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
April 20, 2015
City Hall Council Chambers

PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Stiehm, Council Members Steve King, Michael Jordal, Judy Enright, Jeff Austin, David Hagen and Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson

ABSENT: Council Member Jeremy Carolan

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood

ALSO PRESENT: Tanya Medgaarden, Matt Cano, Tedd Maxfield, Jeff Anderson, Austin Daily Herald, Public

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Community Recreation Center Discussion

Mayor Stiehm noted he met with City Administrator Craig Clark and would like the Council to define what, if any, involvement the City will have in the Community Recreation Center.

Recreation Center Committee Chairs Tanya Medgaarden and Matt Cano provided a background of the Vision 2020 process from the initial idea process and recreation center survey. There were a variety of needs identified through the survey that the committee would like to provide in the center.

Mayor Stiehm noted the City would like to see a teen center and activities for kids. He stated he would like more of a plan from Vision 2020 so the City can identify what level of participation they will partake in. He noted that what he is hearing from the citizens is not exactly what is in the survey.

Council Member Austin sees a need for the center but would like to know what the cost to the citizens of Austin will be, what services would be provided for that price and if the citizens of Austin willing to have a tax increase for it.

Mr. Cano stated the goal is to make it more than just a YMCA and that the citizens acknowledge it as a community recreation center.

Mayor Stiehm stated to make it a true community recreation center it needs to serve citizens above and beyond YMCA services.

City Administrator Craig Clark noted the City could use a teen center, aquatic center, space for community events, indoor playground and walking track with all of these things at a reduced fee or free to the public.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson asked what the nominal fee would be for the public areas.

Ms. Medgaarden stated the fees are yet to be determined. Certain areas would be open for free to the public.

Mayor Stiehm noted the City is being asked to pay for the City to run their certain areas but not to pay for the entire operation of the facility. He asked what would happen if the YMCA did not meet their membership levels.

Ms. Medgaarden stated membership levels are difficult to predict but the projections through the feasibility study appear to show the YMCA as sustainable.

Council Member King has heard concerns about the facility “just being another YMCA.” He stated he has heard this often and it is very concerning to him. He added the demographics of Austin are poor and questioned if the Hormel Foundation plans to provide ongoing support for the facility’s operational costs.

Mr. Cano stated the committee is going to make sure the facility is sustainable. He added that people might have a negative opinion of the YMCA due to the conditions at the current YMCA.

Ms. Medgaarden added that building a new YMCA facility was one of Vision 2020’s top ideas but it didn’t get selected due to the desire to have the facility serve the community as a whole, not just YMCA members.

Council Member Hagen stated it is a difficult project with lots of issues to still be ironed out. He added that the project has been ongoing for four years without significant progress and that is disappointing to him.

Council Member Jordal asked if Riverland Community College and the School District are participating in the community recreation center also.

Mr. Cano stated the committee did not want to double up on services that were already provided by these entities.

Council Member Austin stated he doesn’t think the Council can look at the project without knowing all the funding sources. He added that if the City commits to the project then they are committing to a tax levy increase to the citizens.

Mr. Cano would like the Council to be more involved with the committee to learn more about the project and have discussions about the roles and funding for the project. He also added that he will find out if the Hormel Foundation is supportive of funding operational costs for the project.

Council Member Enright noted the project also needs a plan for capital improvements and replacements that will maintain the building without Hormel Foundation support or increasing the tax levy.

YMCA Director Tedd Maxfield stated there are many different ownership models for a community recreational center, in many cases the city constructs then hires the YMCA to operate the facility. He stated he would like the City and the YMCA to work together for a partnership. He also added that the more services the City wants to provide the more funding the City will need to bring forth to fund those services.

Mayor Stiehm noted that if the citizens of Austin do not want the recreation center then it's going to be hard for the Council to support it.

Council Member Austin asked what the citizens of Austin would get from it being larger YMCA and rec center.

Mr. Maxfield stated a larger facility will serve more people, make more activities free or reduced for the public through the collaboration between the City and the YMCA.

Ms. Underwood stated Park and Recreation needs gym space. The proposed school dome over Wescott Field will help with the issue but not resolve it completely.

The Council stated it would be more involved in the Rec Center Committee and have additional discussion in the future on the issue.

For Council information only, no Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 2 –On Road Bike Lanes

Director of Public Works Steven Lang provided an estimate of \$1,635 for shared bike/vehicle lanes on 4th Street SW from 1st Avenue SW to the Turtle Creek bridge and on 16th Avenue SW to 31st Street SW. Bike symbols would be placed every 120 feet and after each intersection. He noted this would take time away from the one sign department individual's primary duties. The proposed bike lanes would tie into the current City's trail system.

Moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, for support of on road bike lanes. Carried.

The matter will be placed on the May 4, 2015 Council Meeting.

Item No. 3 – Public Works Budget Review

Director of Public Works Steven Lang continued the annual budget review process with Council to go through expenditure and revenue for his department for the 2016 budget. He reviewed various revenue and expenditure line item categories for each department. 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 2016, revenue for Public Works is projected to be \$764,319 and expenses are projected at \$3,855,580.

Mr. Dankert noted one employee is about \$70,000 a year in salaries and benefits.

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

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

Item No. 4 –Flood Wall of Recognition

Tom Dankert and Mayor Stiehm identified the final decisions to be made for the Pillars of Austin committee and program. Mr. Dankert reviewed the options for the plaques and Jeff Anderson provided examples of the materials for them.

After discussion, moved by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, seconded by Council Member King, for the plaques to contain the name, brief synopsis, QR code and photograph (if available) of the nominee. Carried.

After discussion, moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Enright, for the plaques to be made of bronze material. Carried.

After discussion, moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, for up to five plaques to be dedicated the first years. Carried.

After discussion, moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Austin, for up to three plaques to be dedicated for each year thereafter. Carried.

After discussion, moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, approving the makeup of the Pillars of the City committee. Carried.

The item will be placed on the May 4, 2015 Council meeting agenda.

Item No. 5 – 2015 Council Goals

City Administrator Craig Clark provided an update to the 2015 Council goals.

Item No. 6 – Open Discussion

None.

Moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Anderson, adjourning the work session at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk