

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
May 1, 2017
City Council Chambers

PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Stiehm, Council Members Laura Helle, Paul Fischer, Jeff Austin, Steve King, Judy Enright, David Hagen and Council Member-at-Large Janet Anderson

ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning/Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Police Chief Brian Krueger, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Nature Center Director Luke Reese, and Interim Library Director Sara Steinhoff

ALSO PRESENT: Jeanine Vorland (DNR), Sandy Forstner, Austin Daily Herald, Public

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Urban Deer Populations

Jeanine Vorland representing the DNR spoke to Council regarding urban deer populations and the large population of deer that seem to be roaming some neighborhoods. Ms. Vorland stated some other cities in our area have had controlled hunts over the years to thin the deer population, as did Austin at its Nature Center back in 2010. Ms. Vorland stated the DNR does have some requirements if the City wants to authorize a local hunt, however they need to know by May 15 if the City would like to authorize a special hunt that is different than the state deer hunting season. Ms. Vorland noted if a special hunt is going to be requested, the City needs to decide how many permits they would like issued, but the statewide limit of five deer could not be increased.

Nature Center Director Luke Reese noted a special hunt was done at the Nature Center in 2010 with not much success.

Council Member Helle questioned the safety of our citizens during a hunt. Ms. Vorland noted she has not heard of any safety issues when other cities have hunts. Usually the hunters will be in deer stands, so they are shooting arrows at a downward angle. She noted that we may not want to have a hunt in all of our parks because some are small and in close neighborhoods. Ms. Vorland also noted Mower County has instituted a deer feeding ban as we have found some chronic wasting disease in the area.

City Administrator Clark questioned if Austin has a deer population problem. Ms. Vorland stated we did as there are a lot of deer in this area.

Chief Krueger stated he personally would only want to authorize a hunt in Todd Park and the Nature Center if Council is leaning towards a special hunt as these are the only parks large enough for such.

Ms. Vorland stated it is up to the City to decide where the hunt could take place. If you follow the state rules, then they would need to know by the end of May so they can get it published. If you want special rules, then we need to know by mid-May (Ms. Vorland said May 16 would be fine).

After further discussion, motion by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Fischer to assign staff to work with Ms. Vorland and bring back recommendations for a deer hunt at the May 15 City Council meeting. Carried 7-0. Item will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 3 – St. Michael's Addition Update

Public Works Director Steven Lang discussed some failing septic systems just north of town in St. Michael's Addition. Mr. Lang noted that there is a mix of homes, commercial businesses, and apartments totaling 25 parcels in all (23 occupied with a building). Many of the parcels have refused to participate in any review, so it has been hard to determine if system are complaint or not. Of these 25 parcels, the following exist based on Wenck's best estimate:

- 2 no structure on the parcel
- 8 have compliant systems
- 10 are failing to protect the groundwater
- 5 are an eminent health threat

Mr. Lang noted the township hired Wenck and Associates to review the issue and provide alternatives for a resolution. Mr. Lang discussed the different solutions, noting none of which is inexpensive. Additionally, some of the issues we had with the Lansing Sewer Annexation could hit here as well.

Council Member Helle questioned the cost of a mound system. Mr. Lang stated probably in the range of \$15,000 to \$18,000 and would last for 20 years. People could also install a holding tank (concrete) that would have to be pumped out every so often when it was full.

Mr. Lang noted the township voted to do nothing at this point as there was limited willing participation from the land owners. Mr. Lang noted the Turtle Creek II sewer installation is on hold right now as the Point Source Implementation Grant (PSIG) has not ranked us high enough for funding (we fell just below the funding line) and we are waiting for one of the other projects to fall off before we can move in.

Council Member Austin stated option #4 still costs the property owner \$38,000, and we only do hook-ups now, not assessing. Mr. Lang noted the PSIG could cover half of the costs which then knock the owner cost to \$19,000. Currently our hook-up fee is around \$16,000.

Council Member-at-Large Anderson questioned when Mower County steps in as the enforcement agent. Mr. Lang noted there is a letter in the packet and the County is now required to visit all 25 properties, and a fix would usually be required within 10 months or the property owners could face stiff fines. Council Member Austin noted now the County cannot be denied entry by the property owner, also stating that he is not opposed to doing something but Mower County needs to act first.

Jason Korfhage, owner of City Limit Apartments noted he has an eminent threat and wants to correct the problem. He has also been told his area is in the top 5 most polluted areas, so the sooner the issue is resolved the better.

Council Member King stated we need to deal with this now and not push it down the road.

Council Member Helle suggested we contact Mower County and give them 30 days to respond. If the County does not respond, then we can re-address the issue. Mr. Lang noted he would do such and report back to Council once he hears Mower County's game plan. No objections noted.

No further action needed at this time.

Item No. 2 – Hazardous housing update

Planning/Zoning Administrator Wallace discussed some of the challenges her office has had over the last few months dealing with some specific properties, noting one property (2006 6th Avenue NE) had the basement collapse in 2015, the insurance denied, and then the house foreclosed upon. The contractor on this property has a lien against the property for a purported \$25,000 as his equipment is currently holding the house up.

Discussion ensued regarding 1001 6th Avenue NE and that power was cut off 22 months ago, but rumor has it there is a freezer in the basement full of rotting meat that smells and is attracting rodents. Ms. Wallace noted she would contact Wells Fargo on this property to see if we can get some resolution to the freezer and maybe fence the property to keep out children.

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

Item No. 4 – Reviewing 2017 Council Goals

Mr. Clark noted some slight changes to the proposed goals. Mr. Clark noted the following addition under goal #3:

- To continue to support sustainability goals, including but not limited to the best practices recommended by GreenStep Cities and to continue to pursue greater efficiencies in building operations and management, ultimately identifying and defining an operations

and maintenance position that incorporates sustainable practices such as identifying areas of energy/cost savings.

Motion by Council Member Enright, seconded by Council Member King. Carried 7-0. Goal approval will be added to the next council agenda.

Item No. 5 – 2017 Budget Review

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert discussed the process the City has used for the past few years to prepare the yearly budget. Public Safety and Parks and Recreation were reviewed. Mr. Dankert reviewed the budgets for each department and took questions from Council. Council Member Helle noted the pool passes were too low at \$30.00.

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

Item No. 6 – Administrative Report

Mr. Clark noted the following:

- Coalition meeting is coming up
- Rec Center architect interviews have started
- Library Director interviews have started
- We have hired a new Building Official
- We are still waiting on non-union salary info from Faribault

Item No. 7 - Open Discussion

None.

Moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member King, to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk