

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
November 5, 2018
City Hall Conference Room A

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

ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Parks and Recreation Director Kim Underwood, Public Works Director Steven Lang and Planning/Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace.

ALSO PRESENT: Honorary Council Member George Bass and Austin Daily Herald

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Austin Area Commission for the Arts

Laura Helle, Director of the Austin Area Commission for the Arts discussed arts in the community, noting they have over 300 volunteers, and 4 FTE's for employees. Honorary Council Member George Bass also serves on the Board of the Austin Area Commission for the Arts. Ms. Helle noted they are serving more people every year, and noted the economic impact to the community was estimated at \$246,160. Ms. Helle noted major employers see the value in arts in our community, and entities such as Mayo Medical Center have made long-term commitments to support the Austin ArtWorks Festival.

Council Member Hagen questioned how the new artworks center proposal is coming. Ms. Helle noted they are in discussion with a major funding organization at this point.

Ms. Helle also noted they recently received a four-year operating grant through the Minnesota Legacy Fund, passed on by the Minnesota Arts Board. Additionally, we are looking for some additional grants to help with some ADA capital costs.

Item No. 2 - 2019 Budget Discussion

Mr. Dankert questioned if there were any additional comments/concerns on the proposed tax levy and budget for 2019, as this will be the last meeting to discuss such. No comments noted.

Mr. Dankert noted in the 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), Parks and Recreation has a new boom truck scheduled for 2022, but we are having some major issues with the current boom truck. Staff is working on trying to repair the issue, but we may end up jockeying around a boom truck to purchase in either 2019 or 2020 depending on what we find out with the current boom truck. We will leave the CIP as is for now but might bring a budget adjustment really quick in 2019. No objections noted.

Council Member Helle noted there is still much confusion out in the public as to where the extra \$500,000 in the budget is going for next year with the implementation of the Comp and Class study. We need to ensure we clarify this with citizens and the media when asked. Ms. Helle also noted that she was surprised in talking with Mower County staff/officials that they do not have a multi-year budget or capital improvement plan. In fact, some of their staff said it couldn't even be done at Mower County. Ms. Helle noted our CIP works well.

Item No. 3 – Honorary Council Member Comments

Mr. Bass stated he would like to provide some observations about the community, noting the two big issues he sees are:

- a.) Controlled substances in our community, and that we need to find the sources and look at community policing needs to be considered. How police engage with their communities is very important. Mayor Stiehm urged Mr. Bass to speak with Police Chief Brian Krueger.
- b.) We also need to figure out how to keep Hormel Corporate employees living and spending their money in town, instead of living in Rochester or other areas. We need to create more opportunities for those employees so that they won't live outside of the City.

Item No. 4 – Administrative Report

Mr. Clark noted open enrollment for our health insurance starts on Wednesday and runs through November 14.

Item No. 5 - Open Discussion

Council Member Helle questioned why we received another claim on the sewer backup. Mr. Clark noted they were rejected by the League on the insurance claim, now they have hired an attorney to take it to the next level.

Council Member Austin questioned the property tax abatement program, and wondered if we advertised outside of Austin for this. Mr. Clark noted we did have billboards in Rochester and Byron advertising our program.

Council Member-at-large Anderson noted going into the 2020 elections, we need to do more to encourage voter registration.

Moved by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adjourning the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk