

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**April 6, 2020**  
**City Council Chambers**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm. Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY: Council Members Steve King, Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller,  
Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Joyce Poshusta

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative  
Services Tom Dankert, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Fire  
Chief Jim McCoy, Police Chief David McKichan, Park and Rec  
Director Kevin Nelson, City Attorney Craig Byram, Human  
Resources Director Trish Wiechmann and City Clerk Ann Kasel

STAFF APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY: Library Director Julie Clinefelter

OTHERS PRESENT: Austin Daily Herald

OTHERS APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY: Honorary Council Member Karem Ramirez

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**Item No. 1 – Dental Amalgam Proposed Ordinance**

Public Works Director Steven Lang proposed a dental amalgam ordinance which would limit the discharge of mercury into the sanitary sewer system. The ordinance would require the installation of an amalgam separator by July 1, 2020 which would remove 99% of the mass solids from waste water. There would also be requirements for record keeping and reporting.

He stated the Minnesota Dental Association established the program in 2008. This is a redundant process because the equipment should already be in place.

Moved by Council Member Poshusta, seconded by Council Member King, recommending approval of the dental amalgam ordinance. Carried.

The item will be on the April 20, 2020 Council Agenda.

## **Item No. 2 – Hormel Property Archery Deer Hunt**

Troy Hawkshead, an employee with Hormel Foods, has worked with Park and Recreation in past years for the City's archery deer hunt. He stated Hormel Foods would like to open up the property to the north of the Corporate Offices to archery hunting. All City guidelines would be followed for the hunt on the Hormel property.

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Nelson stated adding the land to the City hunt would be beneficial.

Council Member Helle thanked Hormel for the partnership in the hunt.

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

## **Item No. 3 – Playgrounds and Parks during the pandemic**

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Nelson stated in the Governor's original "safe at home" order, playgrounds were to be closed. The Parks crew signed the playgrounds that they were closed. Then the State came out with additional guidance stating that the playground could stay open. Some cities have chosen to close their playgrounds and some have kept them open. Mr. Nelson requested Council guidance on this topic.

Police Chief McKichan stated he did not see an issue with leaving the parks and playgrounds open. He felt it would be good for people to get outside while social distancing.

Council Member Fischer stated he does not see a problem with leaving the parks open.

Council Member Baskin would like to see kids on the playgrounds and would like law enforcement to prioritize their resources.

Council Member Helle stated she hesitates to put additional limits on residents and taking kids to a park may be helpful.

Council Member King stated he trusts Chief McKichan's opinion on the subject.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he was initially disappointed when the playgrounds opened back up. He would like to see signs posted to remind parents to wash hands and keep social distancing.

For Council information only; no additional Council action needed.

## **Item No. 4 – Director of Administrative Services Contract Changes and Performance Pay**

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert has an exceptional service clause in his contract which would allow for up to a 3% bonus for

performance in the preceding year. Mr. Clark recommended the award of the exceptional service pay for 2019 of \$3,515.20.

After additional discussion, Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, recommending awarding exceptional performance pay for 2019 for the Director of Administrative Services. Carried.

The item will be placed on the April 20, 2020 Council Agenda.

Mr. Clark also stated there have been some changes requested to Mr. Dankert's contract. Some of them are technical in nature but there are two new sections which would add to Mr. Dankert's base pay compensation. One of which is the accounting work for the Part-Time Firefighters Relief Association and the other for drafting the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The requested amount for drafting the CAFR is \$12,000.

Council Member Baskin stated he is supportive of restructuring the contract but was concerned about the actual financial ramifications and the message it would send for other employees.

Council Member Helle stated she appreciate Tom's expertise at the City but is uncomfortable with adding the savings to the City to an employee's paycheck.

Council Member Waller stated she is in favor of the pay adjustment because Mr. Dankert has many more responsibilities than what was included in the pay study.

Council Member King stated he sees both sides of the issue but Mr. Dankert does much more than a typical financial director. He stated he is in support of the pay adjustment.

Council Member Poshusta stated she understands Council Member Baskin's and Helle's concerns but she is in favor of the pay adjustment.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated Mr. Dankert does many duties that don't fall under the typical finance director position.

Council Member Baskin would like the contract language restructured so that it does not set a precedence for other City employees.

Mr. Dankert stated his position is unique in that he has a contract and isn't part of a bargaining unit.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin to increase Mr. Dankert's salary by \$12,000 and address the fire related compensation at a different time. Motion died for lack of a second.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, recommending the approval of the contract with the wording that the pay increase would be for "in consideration of the hybrid position and additional skills and qualifications" held by Mr. Dankert. Carried.

The item will be placed on the April 20, 2020 Council agenda.

**Item No. 5 – Open Discussion**

Director of Administrative Tom Dankert stated the City received a letter from the Chamber of Commerce requesting the City delay property tax payments by 60 days. He stated he received a response from the State stating that the property tax due date is set by the legislature and those due dates are not up to local jurisdictions. He added that the County boards do have the authority to waive penalties. Mr. Dankert stated that the City would be ok financially if the payments were delayed as long as the LGA payment from the State came in a timely manner.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the County may have to get some kind of loan if the tax payments were delayed 60 days.

Council Member Helle stated she would like the City to encourage the County to waive late fees.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated he would attend the County board meeting and would get additional information.

City Clerk Ann Kasel stated the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations may not happen as planned due to COVID-19. She stated additional information at the next work session.

Public Works Director Steven Lang noted he will be sending street reconstruction information to homeowners stating that the street projects will still be happening for the summer.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member King, adjourning the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ann M. Kasel  
City Clerk