

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**June 1, 2020**  
**City Council Chambers**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Stiehm. Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin, Council Member Joyce Poshusta and Laura Helle.

MEMBERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Council Members Steve King, Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, and Jason Baskin

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, City Clerk Ann Kasel  
Also at 6:00 p.m. Public Works Director Steven Lang, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Police Chief David McKichan, Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, City Attorney Craig Byram and Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: At 6:00 p.m. Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace

OTHERS PRESENT: At 6:00 p.m. Austin Daily Herald

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: At 6:00 p.m. Craig Popenhagen, Brian Beasley, Elaine Hansen, Sherry Schied, Sheila Berger

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

**Item No. 1 – Closed session**

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to close the meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd. 3 (3) to develop or consider offers or counteroffers for the purchase of real property identified as 34.855.0112. Carried.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member King, adjourning the closed meeting to attend the Council meeting at 5:17 p.m. Carried.

The Mayor reconvened the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

**Item No. 2 – 2019 Audit Review**

Craig Popenhagen with CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP presented the December 31, 2019 audit report noting our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) has been given an award for many years, and there is no reason it should not qualify again this year. Mr. Popenhagen stated everything is in order and no findings occurred during the audit. He noted there were no deficit fund balances, and that the City has adequate fund balance based on state guidelines and best practices.

He reviewed the City's fund balance and stated the City is in a good financial position. He stated a 35 percent to 50 percent fund balance is recommended by the State Auditor's office and the City has a 54 percent fund balance, which is healthy for the City's finances.

He also reviewed the City's revenue sources and noted that the City receives \$8 million in local government aid. He stated the tax levy per capital scores very low at 225 out of 233 cities of comparable size in Minnesota.

The Council thanked Mr. Dankert and the finance staff for their excellent work.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, recommending approval of the 2019 audit report. Carried.

The item will be placed on the June 15, 2020 Council Agenda.

### **Item No. 3 – Stop Sign Requests**

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a stop sign request for 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street NW, which is adjacent to Sumner School. It currently has a 2-way stop with traffic stopping on 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The request is for the intersection to have a 4-way stop with traffic also stopping on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He added that there is also a 4-way stop one block west at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW. He stated there have been three accidents over the last ten years at the intersection and it is unlikely that a stop sign would have prevented the accidents.

He added that the School District is requesting the stop signs due to kids darting out between buses at pickup time. He noted that the school does have crossing guards at both the 7<sup>th</sup> Street & 8<sup>th</sup> Street intersections along 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Mr. Lang did not recommend stop sign placement stating it is unlikely that a stop sign will address the true issue of students crossing mid-block during a short period of time during the school day.

Sumner Principal Sheila Berger stated that three years ago the school did away with school safety patrols and now staff does it. Staff has expressed concerns about their safety and student safety at the intersection. She noted Sumner school operated on modified calendar also proximity of playground and is a popular park for after hours.

Brian Beasley, Director of Facility Services for Austin Public Schools, requested a review of the intersection and suggested collecting data on the intersection. He stated traffic traveling east on

8<sup>th</sup> Avenue may be blinded by the sun in the morning. He added that the school resource officers have expressed concerns about the intersection.

Council Member Helle stated she lives in the neighborhood and is familiar with the intersection. She believes that driver behavior is the issue and there may be other options besides a stop sign.

Mr. Lang stated visibility issues would be the same with a stop sign at the intersection. He noted that bump outs may be a solution to the problem but they are very costly to build.

Chief McKichan stated he would like to speak to the school resource officers prior to expressing a police department opinion on the matter.

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member Baskin, to approve a stop sign at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street NW. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, to table to matter until additional information is gathered. Carried.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a stop sign request for 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue & 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW. Mr. Lang stated the intersection currently has a 2-way stop with the traffic stopping on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The request is for the intersection to have a 4-way stop with traffic also stopping on 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue. He stated there have been five accidents over the last ten years and recommended not installing a stop sign. He stated the sight distance is clear in all directions and it is unlikely that three of the accidents would have been prevented with a stop sign at the intersection.

Council Member Helle stated she lives very close to this intersection agrees cars going fast on the road but a stop sign would not help that.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, to deny a stop sign request for 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue & 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW. Carried.

#### **Item No. 4 – Chicken Request**

Sherry Schied presented a chicken keeping proposal for the City. She stated many people want to keep chickens to have fresh eggs available especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Council Member King stated he is against having chickens in the City. He has received comments from residents not wanting that type of animal.

Council Member Poshusta stated she is undecided on the issue.

Council Member Fischer stated that chickens belong in the country.

Council Member Baskin stated he would like additional feedback from residents.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated she looks at chickens as an administrative issue but it could have some cross over with the police department as an animal control issue.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he would like to take additional feedback from citizens. a lot of feedback from citizens, would like to take additional feedback from the citizens,

After additional discussion, moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, to table the item until the July 6, 2020 Council Meeting. Carried.

#### **Item No. 5 – North Main Flood Update**

Public Works Director Steven Lang detailed the City's flood mitigation response over the last 16 years stating that Austin is known on a state and national level for its flood programs. He stated that the City recently made the final payment on Phase 1 of the North Main Street project and the entire North Main Flood contract project was \$22 million dollars. The City removed 35 acres of high value commercial property from the flood plain.

#### **Item No. 6 - Administrative Report**

None.

#### **Item No. 7 – Open Discussion**

None.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adjourning the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ann M. Kasel  
City Clerk