

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**July 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, Library Director Julie Clinefelter and City Clerk Ann Kasel

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace

OTHERS PRESENT: Austin Daily Herald, Diane Baker

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Alex Bumgartner, Sherry Schied, Elaine Hansen, Brian Todd, Sarah Kiefer, Alisa Bawek

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:06 p.m.

**Item No. 1 – Electric Vehicle Charging Station Request**

Alex Bumgartner stated that Austin Utilities is looking to install a second electric vehicle charging station in a municipal parking lot at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue NE. It is a level two charging station. He requested the stalls be designated for electric vehicles only. He stated electric vehicles are gaining a lot of momentum in the auto industry.

Council Member Poshusta asked what it is the difference in the amount of charging time.

Alex stated the fast charger with charge in 40 minutes and the level two charger is a 3-6 hour time frame.

Public Works Director Steven Lang noted this is a public parking lot and wanted to bring it to Council for consideration. The two stalls are would be designated for electric vehicles only.

Moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member Helle, to recommend approval of two public parking stalls for an electric vehicle charging. Carried.

The item will be on the July 6, 2020 Council agenda.

#### **Item No. 4 – YMCA Request for Second Quarter Payment**

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Nelson the YMCA has requested their second quarter payment from the City in the amount of \$25,000.

City Administrator Craig Clark noted that part of the utilities could be allocated to the payment.

YMCA Director Diane Baker noted that the area the City partially funds is being used for child care which serves the community. She also stated the YMCA hasn't had the opportunity to raise funds due to declining membership due to COVID and that the YMCA is counting on the City's payment.

Council Member Helle stated 2020 is an unusual year and the City's partnership on the recreation center is a good thing and the City should provide the payments.

Council Member Waller stated she agrees with Council Member Helle and the City should provide the whole payment.

Council Member King agreed that it's the City's obligation to support the generosity of the Hormel Foundation and Hormel Foods.

Council Members Poshusta and Fischer agreed.

Council Member Baskin stated he is comfortable with making the full payment for 2020.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he isn't against making the full payment but has some reservations.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, recommend approval of the second quarter payment to the YMCA for the Community recreation center.

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

#### **Item No. 2 – Chicken Discussion**

Mayor Stiehm opened the chicken discussion with asking the Council their opinions on the topic.

Council Member Waller stated she has had a lot of e-mail about chickens and she would support it being regulated.

Council Member King stated he is against chickens being in town. Noted that the proposed ordinance would overload City staff that would not pay for itself. He stated there will be issues and it isn't for the greater good of the City and for City staff.

Council Member Poshusta stated she is undecided on the issue.

Council Member Fischer stated he is against the ordinance.

Council Member Baskin stated he is also undecided on the issue. He stated he doesn't want an ordinance unless it is enforceable by staff.

Council Member Helle stated people are trying to be more self-reliant in the COVID pandemic. She stated that 70 percent of her responses were for the chickens. Would like to look at an extremely restrictive ordinance.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he also received a lot of negative feedback on the topic and is against having chickens or putting it off for after the first of the year.

Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, to table to chicken issue until 2021. Carried 5-2 with Council Member Baskin and Helle voting nay.

Alisa Bawek, 1804 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW, noted she is in support of the chicken ordinance and would like to speak in the future on this.

The item will be placed on a future work session.

### **Item No. 3 – 2021 Budget Discussion**

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the Council budget committee on multiple occasions recently to make recommendations for the \$1,150,000 in spending reductions for 2021. Mr. Clark reported that the group recommended not filling 5.5 full time positions and laying off an additional two employees. They also recommended utilizing a private contractor for tree trimming and removal and reassigning the current tree trimmers to park maintenance.

In addition, a fire hydrant fee of \$1 per month will be added to utility bills to offset the costs charged by Austin Utilities for maintenance of the fire hydrants. The housing initiative funds of \$200,000 per year will also be removed.

Council Member King stated he was a member of the budget committee and looked at the cuts seriously.

Council Member Poshusta stated her biggest concern was laying off the two people. She asked that the process was for choosing to eliminate those two positions.

Council Member Helle stated the budget committee reviewed a lot of financial information along with information from the departments which itemized potential cuts. She stated they also

reviewed employee counts by departments and concentrated on long-term cuts. She noted that she felt confident that cutting those positions will be a positive for the community in the long run.

Council Member Poshusta asked what the levy would be at if the two positions weren't eliminated.

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert stated it would be 6 to 6.5%.

Council Member Fischer thanked the committee for their work on the budget.

Council Member Baskin also thanked the budget committee but thought they would be a little more aggressive with the cuts.

Council Member Helle noted she didn't want to zero out housing budget line item in 2021.

Council Member Waller thanked the committee and would like to stick to the 4% levy.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated there were a lot of tough choices made and he wasn't in total agreement on everything. He noted that a large portion of the City's budget is people so there had to be some employee cuts.

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert stated there are 7.5 positions being cut with 5.5 of them being vacancies and 2 employees being laid off. In addition, there will be other vacancies that won't be filled in the future.

Public Works Director Steven Lang advised against cutting street reconstruction projects to keep the City's roads in good shape. He noted that he is also against laying off employees.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated there will be a lot more discussion going forward on this topic. He also requested direction on outside agency allocations.

After additional discussion, the Council directed Mr. Clark to send letters to the outside agencies with anticipated funding cuts of 5 – 15 %.

Moved by Council Member King, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to move forward with a 4% levy increase for 2021. Carried 6-1 with Council Member Poshusta voting nay.

The item will be placed on a future work session.

#### **Item No. 5 - Administrative Report**

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the capital investment in the House is looking at a phased funding approach for the Waste Water Treatment Plant.

**Item No. 6 – Open Discussion**

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he has heard of employees being stressed about not getting their jobs done and suggested allowing the hiring of seasonal help to get the work done.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, adjourning the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ann M. Kasel  
City Clerk