

**MINUTES**  
**COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION**  
**July 20, 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 APPEARING  
ELECTRONICALLY: Sally Garry, Elaine Hanson, Curtis Sorenson, Mike Postma, Peggy  
Young, Karem Ramirez, Chuck Moline, Austin Daily Herald,  
Public

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

**Item No. 1 – City Mask Mandate Discussion**

Mayor Stiehm opened the discussion on the proposed mask mandate in Austin. He requested the opinions of the Council members.

Council Member Helle stated she received a lot of resident contact regarding masks with 85% of people in favor of a mask mandate. She added that the biggest question for her is how to enforce the mandate.

Police Chief David McKichan stated he agrees with the science behind wearing masks and that the Police Department will do their best to enforce any regulations adopted by Council.

Council Member Helle stated other cities have imposed civil penalties for business non-compliance but she is unsure if the Police Department would have the resources to follow up on every call.

Police Chief McKichan stated they would prefer not to have to ticket non-compliant individuals. He assumed that all residents have access to masks and has been working on mask distribution.

Council Member Helle added that wearing a mask is less of a burden on individuals and businesses than a stay at home order.

Council Member Baskin stated he feels it's a personal decision to wear a mask and that governmental infringement on personal liberty should be a last resort in any situation.

Council Member Fischer stated he is in support of the mandate.

Council Member Poshusta stated she received 168 contacts from residents and they were split down the middle about the mandate. She added that there are a lot of issues to discuss about the proposal including what exemptions will be allowed.

Council Member King stated he looks at this similar to the seat belt law. When that first came out a lot of people were against it and now it is a social norm.

Council Member Waller stated she would like to retailers to regulate their own stores for mask use. She added that the people that contacted her were 90% in favor of the mask mandate.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated that the mask mandate issue is a large issue right now and his biggest concern is the enforcement and how much of a burden it will create for the Police Department.

Police Chief McKichan added that wearing a mask is the right thing to do during the pandemic because it will save lives and keep businesses open.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the Mayo Clinic is in favor of the mask mandate.

Elaine Hansen with the Chamber of Commerce stated the Chamber would prefer the individual businesses regulate mask use in their stores.

Curtis Sorenson added that COVID is a new virus and it isn't as deadly as some think.

Mike Postma stated he believes in masks and would like to know what the exemptions would look like.

After additional discussion, Mayor Stiehm stated he would like to take additional input and discuss in two weeks.

## **Item No. 2 – Administrative Report**

None.

## **Item No. 3 – Open Discussion**

None.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, adjourning the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Ann M. Kasel  
City Clerk