

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
January 19, 2021
City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Jason Baskin, Joyce Poshusta, Michael Postma, Oballa Oballa and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and Police Chief David McKichan

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, City Clerk Ann Kasel, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann and Public Works Director Steven Lang

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Austin Daily Herald

Mayor Stiehm opened the meeting at 6:21 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Families First Coronavirus Relief Act

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated as part of the Federal government’s response to COVID-19, employers were required to provide Emergency Paid Sick Leave, up to 80 hours per employee and Emergency Family and Medical Leave. She stated this requirement began on April 1, 2020 and ended on December 31, 2020. Since it expired, City employees are required to use their own sick time for COVID-19 related time off. she stated Mower County has extended this benefit to their employees.

Mayor King stated this would be a benefit to the employees that cannot do their job from home. He stated he would be in favor of extending it until March 31st.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated it is doing the right thing for the employees.

Ms. Wiechmann stated it would not create new banks of time for employees, it would be from the original 80 hours.

Moved by Council Member Waller, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, to extend emergency sick leave benefits through March 31, 2021 for City employees. Carried.

The item will be placed on the February 1, 2021 Council Meeting.

Item No. 2 – 1st Street SE Two Way Traffic

Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum reviewed some options for converting 1st Street SE from Oakland Avenue E to 1st Avenue SE from one-way traffic to two-way traffic.

He stated if the street was converted into a two-way, the traffic on 1st Avenue SE would need to be merged and controlled either with an unconventional 3-way stop or the addition of a new signal light arm.

Mr. Wenum recommended leaving the road as a one-way street. He stated it is efficient at getting vehicles from eastbound 1st Avenue to Oakland Avenue and the public is accustomed to the street setup.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he thinks they should just keep it the way it is.

After additional discussion, Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, to leave the existing traffic conditions at 1st Street SE. Carried.

No additional Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 3 – Sanitary Sewer Connections

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated there are approximately 68 homes in the Lansing, Turtle Creek 1 and Turtle Creek 2 sanitary sewer projects that are not connected to the City sewer. The City Ordinance requires that properties in the City must be connected to the sewer withing 90 days of official notice to do so. He proposed notifying the property owners in April of 2021 that they have 90 days to either certify that their septic systems are in compliance or to connect to the City sewer.

Mr. Lang stated the Lansing project has had 20 years to plan for the connection, non-compliant systems have the potential to contaminate groundwater and create sewer discharge into the Cedar River, which flows into the City and the City expended millions of dollars for the extension of sanitary sewer and it needs to recoup its investment.

Mayor King and Council Member-at-Large Austin spoke in support of Mr. Lang's proposal.

Council Member Postma asked what the enforcement mechanism for the City is.

Mr. Lang stated the ordinance is the enforcement mechanism. Mower County does the inspections for the septic systems but there has to be a triggering event, like a sale of the property or improvements to the property.

Council Member Postma asked what would happen if they refused to comply.

Mr. Lang stated the property owner would be issued a monthly administrative citation. He added that many of the properties in the Lansing area were the objectors from the original project.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, to notify property owners in April of 2021 for 90 days to certify their septic system or connect to City sewer. Carried.

The item will be placed on the February 1, 2021 Council agenda.

Item No. 4 – Airport Engineering Services Selection

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated pursuant to FAA requirements, every five years the City is required to solicit requests for Statements of Qualifications from engineering firms for the implementation of the airport's five-year capital improvement plan. He stated Short, Elliot Hendrickson, (SEH), Bolton & Menk and TKDA submitted proposals. He recommended using SEH for the projects because they have been the City's consultant for the last 20 years.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, accepting the statement of qualifications for Short, Elliot, Hendrickson for the Airport's 5-year capital improvement plan. Carried.

The item will be placed on the February 1, 2021 Council agenda.

Item No. 5 – Extension of Ice at Packer Arena

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Nelson stated he has been in talks with Austin Youth Hockey and the Mower County Curling Club about extending the ice season at Packer Arena through March 14th. He stated the engineering department anticipates the need of a temporary dehumidification system for those warmer weeks in March at a cost of \$2,500 per week plus the typical expense of operating the arena of \$1,500 per week.

He stated Austin Youth Hockey and the Mower County Curling Club stated they would cover approximately 70% of the fees at a minimum.

Mayor King spoke in support of the youth events at the arena.

Mr. Lang stated the City would need to plan for the dehumidification in those weeks.

After discussion, moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, to extend the ice for 2 weeks at Packer Arena. Carried.

The item will be placed on the February 1, 2021 Council Agenda.

Item No. 6 - Administrative Report

Mr. Clark asked Council to reply to the CGMC legislative action day.

Item No. 7 – Open Discussion

None.

Item No. 8 Closed Session

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, to move to closed session pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 13D.05, subd. 3(c)3 for the purpose of considering offers or counteroffers for the purchase of parcel 34.460.0200 at 7:07 p.m. Carried.

See DVD of Closed Meeting.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to open the closed session at 7:21 p.m.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adjourning the meeting at 7:21 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk