

M I N U T E S  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
October 21, 2024  
5:30 PM  
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steve King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Joyce Poshusta, Geoff Baker and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, Honorary Council Member James Arop Majak

Mayor Steve King called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, approving the agenda as amended. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving Council minutes from October 7, 2024. Carried.

#### AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

#### CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

Temporary Liquor: Austin Area Chamber of Commerce on November 12, 2024

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of bills
- b. Financial Report

Event Applications:

Trunk-or-Treat at LIFE Mower County on October 30, 2024

Appointments:

Cindy Stahl as the Honorary Council Member – December 2nd, 2024 to February 17th, 2025

Carried.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

City Clerk Brianne Wolf requested public hearings for the fall assessments. Ms. Wolf stated for each type of assessment, the individual property owners were mailed a notice of hearing and a public notice was also published in the Austin Daily Herald. She is requesting Council adopt the assessments set forth in the resolutions presented tonight. She stated the property owners will have until October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 to pay the assessments or the assessments will be placed on to their property taxes.

A public hearing was held for the assessment of sanitary sewer assessments.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting the assessment roll for sanitary sewer assessments. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for assessments for miscellaneous sidewalk and driveway projects.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baker, adopting the assessment roll for miscellaneous sidewalk and driveway projects. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for the assessment of 2023-2024 snow removal.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution for assessments for 2023-2024 snow removal. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held on assessments for 2024 junk and garbage removal.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution for assessments for junk and garbage removal. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for the assessments for 2024 grass and weed removal.

Matt Rahlf 71164 220th Ave Hayfield, MN – Mr. Rahlf stated he owns multiple properties. He stated he watched them mow in May and they charged him \$780. He would like to know what the hourly rate is for mowing.

Mr. Dankert stated mowing is handled by the Parks and Recreation department.

Park and Recreation Director Jason Sehon stated he spoke with Mr. Rahlf and requested a written request for all the information he was looking for in writing and Mr. Sehon would be happy to get back with him. Mr. Sehon stated the amount Mr. Rahlf is referencing is the total amount of time that it took the contractor took to mow.

Mayor King stated that Mr. Rahlf needed to schedule a meeting with Mr. Sehon to get this issue taken care of.

Council Member Baker recommended removing the parcels related to Mr. Rahlf and proceed with approving the other assessments on the tax roll.

City Administrator Craig Clark clarified with Council that the motion was to continue the Public Hearing to the next council meeting for Mr. Rahlf's assessments. Council Member Baker and Council Member Postma stated yes.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution for assessments for 2023-2024 grass and weed removal and continuing the public hearing to the next meeting for the assessments related to parcels 34.916.0310, 34.916.0300, 34.916.0260, 34.916.0250, 34.916.0220. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for assessments for administrative citations.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution for the assessment of Park and Recreation administrative citations. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baker, adopting a resolution for the assessment of zoning administrative citations. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution for the assessment of rental housing administrative citations. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution for the assessment of sump pump administrative citations. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution for the assessment of building department administrative citations. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for the assessment of unpaid vacant property fees.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution for the assessment of unpaid vacant property fees. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for the assessment of hazardous housing abatements.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution for the assessment of hazardous housing abatements. Carried 7-0.

#### AWARDING BID

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated the City of Austin received bids for the hazard demolition of the residential buildings located at 922 2nd Ave NE (garage only) and 308 12th Ave SW. Work will consist of building demolition, and disconnection of utility services. The only bid received was from Hansen Hauling & Excavating, Inc. for \$12,050. They recommend awarding the bid to Hansen Hauling & Excavating, Inc.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, awarding a bid to Hansen Hauling and Excavating for Hazardous Housing Demolition. Carried 7-0.

#### PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated in order to improve traffic safety, he proposes to convert the 79 uncontrolled 4-way intersections and 11 uncontrolled T-intersections to two-way stops. Mr. Lang stated the estimated material cost for 160 new stop signs is \$14,000. The stop signs will be installed by City crews. They propose to fund this work from the budgeted street name signage replacement project. The street name signage project is planned for 4 years and would extend another year if necessary.

Council Member Baskin is in full support of this project. He has received positive feedback from the community on this project.

Moved by Council Member Baskin seconded by Council Member Baker approving the installation of additional stop signs. Carried.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace requested Council approve a parking variance for Mill on Main II. They are proposing to provide 125 parking stalls. This would be 30 stalls less than what would be required. Ms. Wallace stated at the October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Planning Commission meeting they approved the variance that was requested by the Stencil Group. This request is in harmony in with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code, and is consistent with the comprehensive plan.

Moved by Council Member Baker seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving a resolution for a parking variance for Mill on Main II. Carried. 7-0.

Council Member Helle commented recently another community abolished any parking requirements for market rate housing. They did this as a way to make it easier for development.

City Administrator Craig Clark requested the Council approve the union groups health insurance rates for 2025.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with WWTP. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with Parks. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with AAO. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with MNPEA. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with LELS. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with IAFF. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution approving a MOA with AEA. Carried 7-0.

City Administrator Craig Clark requested Council approve the new police officer hiring incentive program. This incentive would offer a total of \$7,500 to new police officers hires, structured in two installments.

- \$3,750 after 30 days of satisfactory employment
- \$3,750 after six months of satisfactory employment

Additionally, they would increase the referral incentive to \$2,000 from the previous \$1,000.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving a new police officer hiring incentive program. Carried 7-0.

City Administrator Craig Clark requested \$5,200 in additional funds for employee engagement for Sicora Consulting. The funding will come out of fund balance.

Moved by Council Member Poshusta seconded by Council Member Fischer approving an additional payment to Sicora Consulting for employee engagement. Carried.

City Administrator Craig Clark requested \$15,000 in funding for staffing for Discover Austin in 2025. The funding will be worked into the 2025 budget.

Moved by Council Member Helle seconded by Council Member Postma approving additional funding for Discover Austin. Carried. 6-1. (Baker-Nay)

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the high waters of the June flood event caused damage to the East Side Lake Dam Plaza Overlook. They have inspected the damage and reviewed the repair plan with local contractors.

Bids were received from two local contractors for repairs; Dolan's Landscape Center and Berg's Nursery. The project will be funded using the Property/Liability Insurance Risk Management Fund. They will seek reimbursement from FEMA for these costs. Dolan's Landscape Center came in with the low bid. Mr. Lang recommended awarding the project to Dolan's Landscape Center.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, awarding a bid to Dolan's Landscape Center for the East Side Lake Dam Plaza Landscaping Project. Carried 7-0.

#### CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Tim Sorgine 505 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue SW Mr. Sorgine would like to address the new cannabis laws. Mr. Sorgine stated he would like to know who he could thank for allowing 4 cannabis licenses coming to town. Chief McKichan stated that the City has not established a cannabis ordinance yet and the Council is still working on deciding on the rules and regulations for the City.

#### COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Fischer stated he was able to participate in operations training with the Police department at the Airport on Sunday. He wanted to thank the officers for allowing him the opportunity to participate. He was able to ride along while they did maneuver drills at the Airport. He also thanked Officer Walski for showing him and teaching him how the course worked.

Council Member Baskin thanked the Fire Department for a great job on their 4<sup>th</sup> grade education program that they conduct. He also reminded citizens that early voting is open until November 4 at the Mower County Government Center.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated the Library Board had their meeting recently. He relayed that the Library Director Julie Clinefelter is rolling out an RACI model to the staff so they understand the chain of command and can make decisions at the right level. He stated the library will be closed on October 24th and 25th.

Council Member Postma stated Discover Austin has been working hard at bringing multiple events in to Austin for 2025. He stated the HRA just had their government inspection at the Twin Towers. Their preliminary score at the Twin Towers was 98/100. Kudos to them.

Council Member Helle thanked Lynn Thompson in the Park and Rec department as he takes over responsibilities for Randy Hofner in the P&R department as Randy is recuperating from health challenges. She stated the Culture and Arts Commission has heard the community's voice about the increase in graffiti and they hope to do some wrapping of electric boxes and are applying for grants to be able to do this.

Mayor King read off the October Employee Anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, adjourning the meeting to November 5, 2024. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:06 p.m.

Approved: November 4, 2024

Mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

City Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_