

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
November 18, 2024
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steve King, Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Geoff Baker

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Michael Postma, Council Member Joyce Poshusta, Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

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, Director of Human Resources Trish Wiechmann, 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 Fischer, approving Council minutes from November 4, 2024. Carried.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Public Works Director Steven Lang acknowledged Mitch Wenum, Assistant City Engineer, for his work over the last ten years in the public works department. Mr. Wenum will be leaving for new employment and Mr. Lang wanted to recognize the contributions he has made to the City during his tenure. Mr. Wenum has developed a street rating program, a street mapping tool, he has assisted in expanding the GIS program, and has been successfully in obtaining multiple grants for the City of Austin. He has also been a city lead for the White Water Project. Mr. Lang thanked him for his dedication. Mayor King thanked Mr. Wenum for his years of service.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

Right of Way: Landmark Concrete and Landscaping, LLC, Albert Lea, MN

Liquor Catering: ALGM, LLC, Albert Lea, MN
Exempt Gambling (raffle): United Catholic Schools Foundation of Austin,
MN on January 25, 2025
Exempt Gambling (raffle): United Catholic Schools Foundation of Austin,
MN on multiple dates in 2025

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial and Credit Card Reports
- c. Investment Report

Carried.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

City Clerk Brianne Wolf presented a resolution certifying the results of the 2024 election. She stated Mower County had a 77% voter turnout and the City of Austin had an 81% voter turnout, and registered 1,450 new voters on election day. She thanked the election judges, Mower County, and Citizens of Austin for a successful election.

Mayor King thanked the Clerk's Office and election judges for their hard work.

Council Member Baker also thanked City Clerk Brianne Wolf for her work on elections and stated he has confidence in the quality of work that comes out of the City Clerk's office especially when it comes to elections.

Council Member Baskin stated we have a long-standing tradition of safe and secure elections in Mower County and in Austin, and there is a high level of confidence. He thanked City Clerk Brianne Wolf and her team for all their efforts.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving a resolution certifying the 2024 election results. Carried. 4-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving a public hearing for December 16, 2024 on the adoption of the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution granting 2025 off-sale liquor licenses, club on-sale licenses, wine on-sale, and brewer off-sale licenses. Carried 4-0.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, accepting donations to the City of Austin. Carried 4-0.

Public Work Director Steven Lang requested Council approval for the sale of a 1999 Dodge 1500 pickup, a 2005 Chevy 3500 pickup, and a pickup topper for an F150. He would like to take the following equipment to an upcoming Hamilton auction.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer, authorizing the sale of two pickup trucks and a topper from the public works department at auction. Carried.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Mia Eckert, 2104 6th Ave NE, stated she received citations for having her car parked in her driveway. Her grandfather, former Mayor Tom Stiehn, also appeared with her. Mr. Stiehn stated Ms. Eckert called him about the fines and he stated that it was a scam and to ignore it. He then found out that the fines were increasing and that it wasn't a scam. He stated it was his fault the citations were ignored.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated they had sent out citations and they never received any response from Ms. Eckert. She stated she had spoken with Mr. Stiehn prior to the public hearing.

Ms. Wolf relayed there were five citations issued against the property for illegal storage of vehicles. She stated the public hearing had been held and now these assessments had been certified to the County.

Mayor King advised Ms. Eckert to speak with Ms. Wallace about the citations after the Council meeting as she had missed the public hearing before the city makes any recommendations on the matter.

Doug Bathke, 808 Oakland Pl NE, cited City Code 10.31 Section E on vehicle noise. He stated there is an issue with increased jake breaking in his area. He stated these are usually ag related or livestock trucks causing this issue. With this issue being in the City Code he would ask that it be enforced. He would like to know what could be done. He would also like to know what alternative route could be used instead of 8th Avenue NE as large trucks are using this road, the road is deteriorating and the snow plows are also ruining this road. He would like to know if there is anything that can be done.

Mayor King stated that unless an officer hears it, they cannot enforce it or write a citation.

Chief McKichan stated the City are not allowed to place signs related to said ordinance on Interstate 90.

Council Member Baker stated if the City were to ticket and place signs in this area it would make a difference. He stated within the City we can put up more signs. He stated selected enforcement over a short period of time would impact this area.

Council Member Fischer acknowledged that he has received multiple complaints about this matter.

Mayor King stated that if the Police Department is able to enforce this they will.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Honorary Council Member James Arop Majak thanked Council for allowing him to be a part of the Council meetings.

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert stated the Truth in Taxation documents are uploaded to the website and will be available for council to view. The hearing will be held on

December 4th. He also thanked Brianne Wolf and Wanda Hatfield in the Clerk’s Office and all of the election judges for their great work on the elections.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated this last weekend was the Minnesota Association of Flood Plain Managers conference and it was held in Austin. They conducted a tour of the City and Mr. Lang showed them different places within the City related to flood mitigation. He thanked all involved.

Council Member Helle thanked the residents of Austin for their patience as work is conducted on the bridges on I-90 and the 4th Street Bridge.

Council Member Baker is frustrated with MnDOT and the way they are handling this project. He reminded the citizens of Austin that there are businesses that are negatively impacted by this project and he asked that citizens please go out of their way to support these businesses.

Council Member Baker asked Mr. Lang to explain summer averaging. Mr. Lang stated residential properties in the City have summer averaging on their sewer bill. The resident has one meter in their home that monitors water consumption and use of sanitary sewer.

Mr. Lang stated in the summer, people may be watering their lawns, watering their gardens, and washing their vehicles. That is water usage that occurs outside and doesn’t go down the sanitary sewer. He stated generally it is a five-month period, May through September, that they take the average of the winter water usage and apply that to the summer water bill.

Council Member Baskin thanked Steven, Mitch and their staff for advocating for the City during these state construction projects.

Council Member Fischer thanked Brianne Wolf and Wanda Hatfield in the Clerk’s Office for their work during elections.

Mayor King stated the bridge construction is the price of progress but the City will be better for it in the future. He congratulated Mitch Wenum on his new employment and thanked him for his service to the City of Austin.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting to December 2, 2024. Carried.

Adjourned: _____ 6:02 p.m. _____

Approved: _____ December 2, 2024 _____

Mayor: _____

City Recorder: _____