

M I N U T E S  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
December 16, 2024  
5:30 PM  
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steve King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, and Joyce Poshusta

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Geoff Baker and 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, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON:

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

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

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving Council minutes from December 2, 2024 and the minutes from the Truth in Taxation Hearing on December 4, 2024. Carried.

RECOGNITIONS AND AWARDS

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Massage Therapist: Sarah Bachmeier, Austin, MN  
Sign Installer: SignPro of SoMN & Mankato Sign Service, N. Mankato, MN  
Temporary  
Liquor: Pacelli Austin Committee-UCSF on January 25, 2025  
Exempt Gambling (bingo): Knights of Columbus Council 1201 on January 18, 2025  
2025 License Renewals (*complete list in the consent agenda folder*)

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of bills
- b. Credit Card Report
- c. Investment Report
- d. Settlement and Release Agreement

Making the following appointments and reappointments to Boards and Commissions:

- a. Tyler Hulsebus to the Fire Civil Service Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- b. Daniel Bollingberg to the Fire Civil Service Commission – term expiring 12/31/2025
- c. Vern Lippert to the HRA Authority – term expiring 12/31/2029
- d. An Le to the Human Rights Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- e. Miguel Garate to the Human Rights Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- f. Bryan Davis to the Human Rights Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- g. Nitaya Jandragholica to the Library Board – term expiring 12/31/2027
- h. Kristi Beckman to the Library Board – term expiring 12/31/2027
- i. Michael Bambrick to the Park and Recreation Board – term expiring 12/31/2028
- j. Randal Forster to the Pillars of the City Board – term expiring 12/31/2027
- k. Mike Ankeny to the Pillars of the City Board – term expiring 12/31/2027
- l. Taggert Medgaarden to the Pillars of the City Board – term expiring 12/31/2027
- m. Mark Mayer to the Planning Commission – term expiring 12/31/2028
- n. Jana Norman to the Planning Commission – term expiring 12/31/2028
- o. Holli Mayer to the Police Civil Service Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- p. Tim Ruzek to the Port Authority – term expiring 12/31/2030
- q. Jenna Viehauser to the Culture and Arts Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- r. Kandace Feist to the Culture and Arts Commission – term expiring 12/31/2027
- s. Stephen King to the Part Time Fire Relief Trustees – term expiring 12/31/2025
- t. Tom Dankert to the Part Time Fire Relief Trustees – term expiring 12/31/2025
- u. James McCoy to the Part Time Fire Relief Trustees – term expiring 12/31/2025

Carried.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for the adoption of the five-year capital improvement plan. Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated the plan sets forth \$142,185,310 of purchases over the next five years. Adoption of the plan gives staff direct authorization to purchase the items specified for 2025.

There were no additional public comments.

Council Member Baskin thanked the department heads and staff for all of their planning when putting this together.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution authorizing the 2025-2029 Capital Improvement Plan. Carried 5-0.

## AWARDING BIDS

Director of Public Works Steven Lang stated City Hall has floor tiles that need to be removed due to asbestos. They received bids for asbestos removal from three companies. Mavo Systems, Inc. came in with the lowest bid at \$54,700. This will be for the removal of asbestos in three areas of City Hall. The City has a budget for this project of \$100,000. Mr. Lang stated with the remaining budget dollars they will replace the flooring in these areas with carpet or new tile.

Council Member Postma asked if this would remove all of the asbestos in the building and Mr. Lang stated yes this should remove all asbestos.

Mayor King asked if this will be done during office hours. Mr. Lang stated yes and also over the weekend. He stated these areas will be sealed off so staff will not be able to access them.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving a bid for the removal of asbestos at City Hall. Carried 5-0.

## PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council approve the 2025 tax levy in the amount of \$9,800,000.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the tax levy for 2025. Carried 4-1 (Baskin-Nay).

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council approve the 2025 budget in the amount of \$49,800,227.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution adopting the budget for 2025. Carried 5-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council cancel certain ad valorem tax levies for 2025 because there is sufficient fund balance to cover the payments on the bonds.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution authorizing the cancellation of certain ad valorem tax levies. Carried 5-0.

Mr. Dankert thanked all the department heads for their work on the budget this last year.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council designate the official newspaper for 2025. He stated the rate for 2025 is still \$5.64 per column inch.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, designating the Austin Daily Herald as the official newspaper for 2025. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Poshusta, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution granting renewals of 2025 licenses for the sale of hard liquor on-sale, Sunday hard liquor on-sale, Sunday wine on-sale and 3.2 beer on and off-sale. Carried 5-0.

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann requested the Council adopt a resolution setting the 2025 seasonal, temporary and part-time wage rates.

Council Member Helle would like to increase the wage for a returning seasonal employee from \$0.50 to \$1.00. She believes this would be an additional tool as long as it fits within the budget.

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated all department heads have reviewed this document and they were in agreeance with it. She stated with the way the resolution is written they do have flexibility and can review hiring situations on a case by case basis as needed.

Council Member Fischer asked Park and Recreation Director Jason Sehon if this was an issue in the past with the pool staff returning at the \$0.50 per hour.

Mr. Sehon stated they did have issues with being competitive with other areas that hire but in his talks with human resources they do have the authority to address these issues as they come up per the resolution. He stated they moved the lifeguard position into a different category so they were in a different wage class for 2025.

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated the lifeguard position is a position they have had a lack of applicants. They have made adjustments for this position.

Council Member Fischer stated \$13.50 seemed low for any position. Council Member Fischer stated the lifeguard position needed to be raised due to the conditions and certifications this position has to endure and obtain.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated this was shared with the front-line workers and they stated this is doable within the budgeted parameters that we have. He suggests we defer to their judgement on this subject.

Mayor King stated the City is at the forefront at trying to retain employees and stay competitive.

Council Member Baskin stated he agrees, if the department heads agree with the resolution presented and they have the flexibility they need, he is in support of this.

Council Member Fischer wanted to know if we need to make adjustments in the future are we able to do that.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated number eight in the resolution gives administration and human resources the authority to make necessary adjustments as needed.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving the 2025 seasonal and part time wage resolution. Carried 5-0.

Director of Public Works Steven Lang stated Council discussed the eight work change directives at the last work session. He is requesting an approval of \$684,630. This would include a \$6,431.28 cost increase to the Domestic budget and a \$678,198.72 cost increase to the Industrial budget.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving change order number 6 for the waste water treatment plant project. Carried 5-0.

Director of Public Works Steven Lang stated Wapasha Construction was hired to replace the floating cover on the Industrial EQ/Digester No. 1. There were recommended changes to this project in the amount of \$4,324.12. The original project was \$2,764,000. The revised total project cost is \$2,768,324.12.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving change order number 1 with Wapasha Construction Group on the waste water treatment plant EQ/Digester Cover Replacement project. Carried 5-0.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution declaring the property at 2400 4<sup>th</sup> Dr SW a hazardous structure. Carried 5-0.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated petitioner Scott Soderberg lives at 2408 16<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and is requesting a variance from City Code Section 11.031, which limits properties under one acre to two (2) detached accessory structures in residential districts. The petitioner has five unpermitted, detached structures.

Ms. Wallace stated the property in question is approximately 0.54 acres, the total aggregate square footage of the structures is 892 sq. ft. The planning commission recommends approving the variance.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving a variance request from Scott Soderberg. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution accepting donations to the City of Austin. Carried 5-0.

## HONORARY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT

Honorary Council Member Cindy Stahl had questions about the last Council meeting. It was pertaining to the TIF project for Mill on Main and tax abatements. She wanted more explanation about these programs. Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert discussed how tax abatements affect tax levies and funding.

## COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Fischer thanked the City Employees for their hard work and thanked the Fire and Police Department for taking care of the garage fire in his neighborhood. He watched the Fire and Police Department work together to put the blaze out and he thanked them for their hard work.

Council Member Baskin thanked Council Member Baker for his service to the community and Council. He stated he recently worked with the Lions Club and a group of students from Pacelli and they asked great questions of the City and economic development. He acknowledged we have students who are very interested in our community.

Council Member Postma stated there are so many community events in the upcoming weeks to celebrate the holidays. He also thanked Council Member Baker for his service on the Council.

Council Member Helle congratulated the Culture and Arts commission on their grant from SEMAC. She stated there have been 100 utility boxes that have been tagged so they are looking to identify which boxes to wrap with local youths art work. She also stated the City cannot continue this type of increase to the tax level. The City also cannot cut the pay to our employees. Hopefully in 2025 Council can start wrestling with these ideas.

Mayor King thanked the department heads that participated in the Leadership Austin discussions at City Hall.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting to January 6, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: \_\_\_\_\_ 6:05 p.m. \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_ January 6, 2025 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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