

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
May 20, 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 Captain Todd Clennon, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, KAUS Radio

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

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

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving Council minutes from May 6, 2024. Carried.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Nancy Schnable from the Discover Austin organization spoke to the Council about the Discover Austin Annual Report. Ms. Schnable spoke about the events Discover Austin held in 2023. She stated Discover Austin partnered with outside organizations to bring awareness to our area.

Discover Austin has a new mascot named Cris P. Bacon that helps to promote Austin. Ms. Schnable stated funding for Discover Austin comes from lodging tax and she stated lodging tax revenue has decreased for the 2023 year.

Mayor King asked about the horseshoe tournament. Ms. Schnable stated we have a two-year contract with this organization. She said that registration is still ongoing. Mayor King noted great work as usual.

Council Member Baker stated that we as a community have not recovered as well as the state has. He would like to know what the organization needs or what we need to do differently to get on trend line with the state. Ms. Schnable stated they are doing a lot of local promotions.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Temporary Liquor: Pacelli Catholic Schools on June 21, 2024

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial Report
- c. Investment Report

Event Applications:

4th Ave Fest on June 5, 2024

Cedar River Farmers Market, June 7, 2024 to October 25, 2024

Appointments:

Isaac Oboya as the Honorary Council Member – June 3, 2024 to August 19, 2024

Carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for a tax abatement requested by New Horizon Homes, LLC. They are proposing to build a single-family home at 1306 18th Street NE valued at approximately \$425,900.00. City Administrator Craig Clark stated the application is in conformance with the City's policy for tax abatement.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, approving a tax abatement application from New Horizon Homes, LLC. Carried 7-0.

A public hearing was held for a tax abatement requested by Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Austin, MN. They are proposing to build a single-family home at 905 24th Avenue NW valued at approximately \$350,000.00. City Administrator Craig Clark stated the application is in conformance with the City's policy for tax abatement.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving a tax abatement application from the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Austin, MN. Carried 7-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated at the last work session, Clifton Larson Allen presented the audit report to the Council. The audit presented a clean opinion, and Mr. Dankert requests Council approval.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Poshusta. Carried.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert stated a resident is requesting a deferred assessment. The resident qualifies for the deferment and has been given extensive information about the deferment. Mr. Dankert recommends approval for the deferment at the location of 214 15th Street NW.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving the senior deferral application. Carried 7-0.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated Schad Tracy Signs and Hormel Foods Corp are requesting a sign appeal due do their new signage not being in compliance with the City's ordinances. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the request and Ms. Wallace requested approval from the City Council.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin. Carried 6-0. Baskin Abstain

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated Lance Pogones, o/b/o Turtle Creek Construction, is requesting a variance on a corner lot of a twin home. Ms. Wallace stated that during the Planning and Zoning meeting on March 14, many neighbors attended the hearing and were in favor of the variance. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved the request and Ms. Wallace requested approval from the City Council.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin. Carried.

City Administrator Craig Clark stated at the prior meetings work session Council agreed upon the amount of \$10,000.00 to donate to the Mower County Veterans Memorial out of the contingency budget.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Fischer. Carried

City Administrator Craig Clark stated that the City now owns the Austin Daily Herald site, and Mower County would like to lease the parking spaces, as they have done this in previous years. The lease amount would be \$950.00 per year. Mr. Clark requests the Council approve the parking lot agreement lease with Mower County.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving the parking lot lease with Mower County. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baker, accepting donations to the City of Austin. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 2021 5th Avenue NE, Capital Home Improvements LLC Property. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 2115 5th Avenue NE, Elliott Property. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 1202 4th Street SE, Anthenat Property. Carried.

Park, Recreation, and Forestry Director Jason Sehon gave a short presentation on Emerald Ash Borer. There was no action required. He stated the Park and Rec department had created a forestry team including himself, Jenna Kaiser and Kris Hahn from AmeriCorps, Luke Reese the Director of the Nature Center, and Randy Hofner the Parks Supervisor. They have been meeting weekly to talk about the issues surrounding the Emerald Ash Borer. He stated they are currently treating five hundred trees in the community. There are 2,000 trees on maintained City property. They are trying to identify the most dangerous trees to remove. Their initiative is called "Treat Now." This is in hopes of saving trees that are not too far damaged. Mr. Sehon stated once the Park and Rec department has the tree removal under control, they will start replanting trees in neighborhoods.

HONORARY COUNCIL MEMBER REPORT

Miguel Garate thanked the Council and Mayor for giving him the opportunity to serve on the City Council as an Honorary Council Member.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark relayed that they are waiting on the legislature but a bill is being passed, where the City would be receiving \$350,000.00 towards Wastewater Operator Education in cooperation with Riverland Community College.

Public Works Director Steven Lang congratulated Mike Loucks on his promotion to Street Superintendent. Mr. Lang also gave an update on the I-90 bridges.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Poshusta stated she had a great time at the Taste of Nations and commended everyone who plan, attended, and worked the event.

Council Member Baskin stated the DCA annual meeting was last week, and there is a lot of good economic momentum going on in Austin.

Council Member Baker stated he spent last Saturday getting a tour of all of the local parks with the Park and Rec department. He is very shocked at the amount of repair work that needs to be

done in our parks. Mr. Baker stated we need to think hard about that as we come into a budget cycle.

Council Member Postma echoed the sentiment on the great tour from Randy Hofner and Jason Sehon of the Parks and Rec Department. He stated we are really going to have to look at this budget for replacement costs of the parks and long-term goals. He also stated he likes to see the promotion opportunities available for city staff to step into.

Council Member Helle also agreed with Council Member Baker about having too many acres of parkland that we cannot take care of. She stated when we review the master plan, creating a few parks with a phase-out plan and what would be a good use of the land might be an option. She noted the 4th Avenue Fest will be on June 5, 2024.

Mayor King acknowledged the City Employees with May Anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member Baker, seconded by Council Member Austin, adjourning the meeting to June 3, 2024. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:28 p.m.

Approved: June 3, 2024

Mayor: _____

City Recorder: _____