

CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 6, 2020 at 9:00 a.m.

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ABILENE, TEXAS SOUTH BRANCH LIBRARY, MALL OF ABILENE

The City Council of the City of Abilene, Texas met in a Special Called Work Session Meeting (Retreat) on March 6, 2020, at 9:00 a.m. at 4310 Buffalo Gap Road, South Branch Library, Mall of Abilene, 1st Floor, South Conference Room. Mayor Anthony Williams was present and presiding with Mayor Pro-tem Weldon Hurt, Deputy Mayor Pro-tem Donna Albus, Councilmembers Shane Price, Jack Rentz, Kyle McAlister and Travis Craver. Also present were City Manager Robert Hanna, City Attorney Stanley Smith, City Secretary Shawna Atkinson, and various members of the City staff.

Councilmember Craver delivered the invocation. City Council led the pledges to the United States Flag and the Texas Flag.

The special called meeting was held for the purpose of holding the annual city council retreat to provide the city manager the opportunity to present certain issues and obtain input from the city council on the direction desired in specific service areas as well as any new areas members of the city council felt needed to be reviewed/included for staff follow up, research, strategy development, and/or project analysis.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mayor Williams opened the public comment period. With no speakers coming forward, the public comment period was closed

AGENDA ITEMS

2. Recreation Center Study

Zack Bisek with Barker, Rinker, Seacat Architecture, presented the findings of the Recreation Feasibility Study that was done. There were 332 points of data collected from public responses for this study. Mr. Bisek went over the existing facilities assessment and what could be done to make our facilities better – this included GV Daniels, Sears, Cobb, Rose and Cesar Chavez. He presented facility concept designs for each of these with proposed budgets, as well as the plans for a new facility on the South side of town at Kirby Lake Park.

Mr. Bisek and Lesli Andrews, Director of Community Services, answered Council's questions on the projects. There were community partners invited to attend focus groups for the study, the modern programming they are discussing adding are things like space for games, teaching kitchens, walking tracks, and gym equipment. Council questioned if there would be fees for these services, but Ms. Andrews clarified that they would keep it without fees at first. The whole goal of the project is to attract young families and professionals to our area and doing these upgrades will help. Our centers are not competitive right now and potentially pose safety risks.

3. Review of Core Values and Mission

Robert Hanna, City Manager, briefly discussed the City's core values and mission statement. Council was asked if they were comfortable keeping these as they are, or if changes need to be made. The consensus was they are fine the way they are.

4. Review of Council Priorities

City Manager Hanna discussed the current five Council Priorities – Infill Development, Downtown Hotel, Efficient and Effective Government, Full Understanding of Deferred Maintenance and the Plan to Address It, and Street Maintenance. Mr. Hanna asked Council if they are comfortable with each of these or if they need to be changed.

Councilmember McAlister stated his desire to expand the Downtown Hotel Priority to just Downtown Improvements. Mayor Williams agreed that this could be an umbrella for downtown to grow under once the Hotel is completed. Mayor Pro-tem Hurt would like to see the Animal Shelter moved up to the list.

5. Council Rules of Procedure and Charter

The City of Abilene Charter was last amended in 2006 and there has been legislation passed since then, and the Charter needs to be updated accordingly. City Manager Hanna suggested changing the language from male dominant to a more gender inclusive language. Councilmember McAlister would like to see a filing fee or a petition requirement to run for office. City Manager Hanna thinks there are legal requirements that would hold this back. The consensus of Council is they do not want to see that added. Mayor Pro-tem Hurt would like to address attendance problems with Council in the charter – stating elected officials can be kicked off if they do not attend a required number of meetings, or some type of penalty.

City Manager Hanna would like to see a charter review committee to recommend small changes to Council.

For the Rules of Procedure, Council discussed options on changing the meeting times. There was discussion on keeping them split between mornings and evenings, making them all evenings, and making them all mornings. Council would like to see this added to an agenda for public comment on it during open session.

6. Post-Election Retreat

Mayor Williams requested to hold a post-election retreat. This would be an opportunity for Council to have a workshop to define their roles and allow them to be more effective. The rest of Council agreed and the consensus is to wait until any new members are seated after the election. City Manager Hanna would like to bring in an outside party to facilitate this.

7. Electronic Voting Demo

Shawna Atkinson, City Secretary, gave Council a brief demonstration of the electronic voting capability of agenda management software currently in use, CivicClerk. Ms. Atkinson walked Council through the voting process on their end, and showed what it would look like to the public. Council questioned if this was needed; there was a split between moving to this and keeping it the way it currently is, with audible voting. Council would like to see it both ways during a meeting.

8. Financial Overview

City Manager Hanna gave a brief financial overview – discussion of the General Fund balance, Water Utility Fund balance, and the Self-Insurance Fund. Options on saving money on health insurance were discussed, from moving to an HSA, to the City not paying for high-dollar pharmaceuticals, to an option of a tiered plan based on income. Staff will come up with different options and present to Council at a later date.

9. Denison Infill Program

City Manager Hanna presented a program that he started in Denison 7 years ago. The City of Denison worked with the community to set up an incentive program that promotes new home construction in existing neighborhoods with a goal of 10 infill housing projects in 24 months. There were different incentive options and qualifications to apply for the project. After 4 years of the program, 70 new homes had been built and they ran out of lots in the affordable program. City Manager Hanna would like to take Council on a field trip to Denison to show them the program first hand. Council agreed this sounds like a great program and would be open to a field trip to Denison. There is no timeframe for the project yet, but discussions among community partners could begin soon.

10. Third Party Convention Center Management

City Manager Hanna discussed the option of outsourcing the Convention Center management to a third party. The Convention Center tries to remain competitive but with the new hotel coming, we probably will not be competitive with them. There have been conversations with ASM Global on managing, which would really help elevate the types of shows we get. They would raise the rates, but the money would go right back into the facility. Their big change would be in the food and beverage service. We currently have over 40 vendors and it creates confusion and does not allow us to maximize revenue. We have three options if we were to use ASM Global:

- Option 1: stay with the over 40 caterers, as is.
- Option 2: ASM Global and their food and beverage company Savor, serves as the caterer for all in house events, alongside a greatly reduced list of local vendors.
- Option 3: Savor becomes the sole food and beverage provider.

City Manager Hanna thinks that option 3 is too much too fast, so recommends going with option 2 first and reevaluating in a few years. Council agrees to proceed into looking at option 2.

11. Towing Regulations

Mayor Pro-tem Hurt requested this item. There have been several concerns about parking lots price gouging and taking advantage of people recently. City Manager Hanna stated that he has been in talks with Doug Peters from the Chamber of Commerce to see if we could approach the banks to see what it would take to open those lots up to public use after hours. No decision has been made yet but they are working proactively on the issue. Councilmember Rentz stated that he met with a representative from one of the parking lots and they say they have stopped towing under pressure from the public.

Stanley Smith, City Attorney, presented an overview of the legal side of regulating towing fees. There are quite a few limits set out by the State as to what you can and cannot charge for and City Attorney Smith went over all the options. The consensus of Council is that we would need to have a towing fee study done and look at what other sister cities are doing.

12. Discussion of a New Bond Initiative

City Manager Hanna discussed the idea of a bond committee and then each department presented their bond proposals.

a. Community Services:

Lesli Andrews, Director of Community Services, went into further detail on the various projects that were outlined in the Recreation Feasibility Study by Zack Bisek, earlier in the meeting, for bond projects. The following centers were discussed:

- GV Daniels – \$12,160,634 budget
- Sears – phase 1 is \$17,795,425, phase 2 is \$7,504,317 budget
- Kirby Lake – phase 1 is \$25,771,680, phase 2 is \$22,520,219 budget
- Cesar Chavez – \$11,069,815 budget
- Adaptive Rec – \$14,062,500, phase 2 is \$2,844,400 budget
- Nelson Park Flat Field Complex and Roads – \$14,853,535 budget
- Walking Trail Renovation – \$1,578,000 budget
- Adventure Cove Expansion – \$5,500,000 budget
- Zoo Parking Improvements and Entry – for parking - \$1,400,000, for entry \$358,000 budget
- Park Restroom Replacements - \$2,500,000 budget

b. Streets:

Not discussed – Public Works is preparing a stand-alone presentation to present to Council during a regular Council meeting at a later date.

c. Fire:

Cande Flores, Fire Chief, presented his proposal for Fire Station #9, to be located on Highway 707, off of the Beltway and 707 Spur. Chief Flores presented the cost and specs of the project. With the new developments going into this area, the current two stations covering the area (Station 2 & 8) are stretched very thin. This new station would allow for a faster response time, and keep our ISO rating at a level 1. There was discussion on mutual aid to the Potosi area and annexation of ETJ areas. Councilmember McAlister questioned if we would also need to look at adding a Station #10, but Chief Flores thinks the Training Facility will be able accommodate a full station in the future. The total for the project would be \$5,640,000, but only \$4,750,000 would be bond money.

d. Convention Center:

City Manager Hanna presented the Convention Center bond requests. This would be for an update of the Convention Center, making the required accessibility updates. Council questioned if this would address all the needs of the Convention Center, but City Manager Hanna stated that it would only address the most critical needs. It would be a lot more money to completely redo the entire Convention Center and Conference Center. The total funds needed for this project would be \$6,094,218.

e. Airport:

Chris Taylor, Assistant Airport Director, presented the Airport bond requests.

- Airport Improvement Project - \$4,107,775, to replace ARFF truck, terminal rehab, Taxiway C1 partial closure, Hangar P taxi lane, De-coupling of runway 4/22, 17R/35L and NW GA Ramp, and reconstruction of T1 and T2.
- Airport Aerospace/Industrial Development - \$8 million for infrastructure development to identified tracks in area A and B, to attract high-quality aerospace and non-aerospace industrial jobs.

f. Animal Services:

City Manager Hanna and Council discussed the presentation by Tim Rice McClarty at the last City Council meeting with a budget of \$9.1 million. Council is hesitant to spend that much money but knows something needs to be done with the shelter. Council is also not set on the location being at the zoo. Council would like staff to look into other locations, try to get the budget down, and look at other ways we could pay for this project.

13. Water Capital Improvement Plan

Rodney Taylor, Director of Water Utilities presented the item. There was discussion on:

- Drought Response Strategies
- Infrastructure Needs Presentation of April 2016
- Water Distribution System Master Plan
- Wastewater System Master Plan
- Water Treatment Plant Master Plan
- Computer Based Water Rate Model
- Funding – intentional drawdown of residual funds, a 5 year plan for water rates and issuance of Certificates of Obligations at market rates
- Implementation and Progress – a report card to hold them accountable. Discussion of the Fort Phantom Hill dam. Coordination with TX Dot to widen the dam will be coming to Council soon, but it is not failing.
- Looking Ahead – unplanned expenditures in utilities because of the street improvement plan. Water will be coordinating with the street maintenance projects to see how they will affect utilities and working together to get it all done at the same time.

Agenda Items 14 (Storm Water Update) and 15 (Solid Waste Study) were not discussed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.



Shawna Atkinson
City Secretary



Anthony Williams
Mayor

Minutes approved on: 3/26/2020

