

Minutes of a called meeting of the City Council.

Austin, Texas, November 18, 1889.

Hon. Joseph Valle, Mayor, presiding.

Roll

Roll Call Present, Aldermen - Asmann, Boland, DeGross, Graham, Haighon, Jones, Linn, Metz, Newton, Nitschke, Platt, Schneider, Townsend, Wilson, Ziller - 15.

Call.

Absent, Aldermen - Lawrence, Morris, North, Tillow, Wortham - 5.

The

The following Call was read:

Mayor's Office, Austin, Texas, Nov. 18, 1889.

Call.

To Honorable Board of Aldermen:

By authority of the City Charter, I hereby call a special meeting of the City Council, to meet at the City Hall on November 18th, this day, at 8 1/2 o'clock p.m. to receive and act upon the annual report of the Mayor and the City Officers, which will be submitted to you.

Respectfully,

Joseph Valle, Mayor.

Aldermen Lawrence, Wortham, and Tillow entered and answered to their names during the reading of the following message:

message.

The Mayor's message.

Mayor's Office, Austin, Nov. 18, 1889.

To Honorable Board of Aldermen: - In compliance with the Charter and Ordinances of the City, I submit herewith, upon the eve of the expiration of my term of Office, a report of my stewardship of the trust placed in my hands by the people, two years ago.

In submitting this report, it will be necessary for me to briefly review the financial as well as the material condition of public affairs, as I found them upon assuming charge of the office. When I took the oath of Office as Mayor on the 15th day of December, 1887, not only was there not a single dollar in the treasury remaining over from the collections of the previous fiscal year, but my predecessor had collected and expended \$3,547.42 of the revenues due and collectable for the succeeding year. Besides this, I found approved claims and maturing obligations on file with the

" City Clerk, aggregating \$16,246.45. Contracted by my predecessor in office, some of them long past due, and itemized as follows:

Due for fire bill	\$476.22
Due to Water Co to Dec. 1	5,000.00
Interest on bonded debt to Dec. 1	11,333.31
Due N. S. Walton	709.00
For \$5000 Carriage, Colorado Fire Co.	960.30
For topographical Survey	2,378.75
To Frank Hamilton on lot	699.00
Miscellaneous accounts	1,589.84
Total	\$16,246.45

Every dollar of this indebtedness has been cancelled during my term of office, and that too, without any increase whatever in the tax rate and but little, if any, material advancement in the gross amount of values. Further, I may add, that this has been accomplished in spite of a marked reduction in receipts from licenses as well as from the recorder's Court. The receipts from the recorder's Court during the last two years of my predecessor's incumbency, as shown by the report of the assessor and collector, amounted to \$11,347.80. According to the same authority, the receipts from licenses for the same period aggregated \$22,103.38, making a total revenue from these two sources of \$33,451.18. The reports of the assessor and collector of the collections for the two fiscal years embraced in my administration, from the same sources, show that the total collections aggregated only \$25,490.75, a clear shortage or falling off in the revenues of \$7,960.43.

Notwithstanding this material falling off of receipts, and the further fact that \$3,547.42 of the revenues rightly belonging to the assets of my administration, were diverted by my predecessor, I managed to conduct the affairs of the city upon a cash basis, and during the two years of my administration, with the ordinary revenues, the streets and thoroughfares have been kept in measurably fair condition, the public buildings have received required repairs, the current expenses of the government have been promptly met, accruing obligations have been amply provided for, and besides all this, "

floating debt against the city amounting to \$16,216.15 has been totally extinguished. I congratulate you upon this wise administration of the city's finances, and court adverse criticism from the most strenuous opponent of my administration, and of this wise, conservative and business-like policy, that has brought about this happy consummation. Best of all, it has demonstrated that the city government, honestly and economically administered, can be successfully carried on with our present revenues and valuations. Again, it demonstrates that the current expenses of the city can be provided for on a cash basis and thus put an end to the pernicious system of contracting debts, without ready means to meet them when due, thereby accumulating a mass of approved accounts, which the people are finally called upon to liquidate by the issuance of a fresh batch of interest-bearing bonds.

By your treasurer's report it will be seen that there is now cash on hand and in the treasury \$11,529.79. The Assessor and Collector's report shows that there is still due and collectable taxes to the amount of \$1,752.58 making a total of \$13,282.37 in cash in the hands of the treasurer and collector. Against this sum we must provide to meet the following claims, which are a proper charge against this administration, that ends December the first prox:

Interest on the bonded debt for five months ending December 15 th '89, but not due until January 15 th , 1890	\$ 4,333.34
Water rent for five months ending December 15 th , 1889, but not due until Jan. 15 th 1890	5,000.00
Pay Roll, month of November	3,100.00
Miscellaneous accounts - for month November, estimated at	1,600.00
Total	\$ 14,033.34

Leaving a possible deficit of, say, \$750, which promised to be quite if not entirely offset by collections from licenses, back taxes and amount due from Travis County on account of hospital fund. For a detailed statement of the workings of the different departments of the city government, I refer you to the

reports of the respective heads of same, which are herewith submitted and made part of this report. The present, severally and collectively, a most satisfactory administration and discharge of duty and require no special reference or commendations from me. They are presented for the inspection of your honorable body, as well as every citizen, and will bear, as they should receive, the closest scrutiny and investigation.

The Arsenal lot.

As the block of ground, known as the Arsenal lot, ceded by the United States government to the city of Austin for public school purposes, has been the source of no little controversy between the School board and the city authorities, it is perhaps proper that I should present to your honorable body in detail, the steps taken upon my individual responsibility to carry out the wishes of the Council, by securing a cancellation of the donation and the establishment of a military post upon the site. In company with Aldermen Graham and McGress, I visited San Antonio and calling upon Gen. D. S. Stanley, Commander of the Department of Texas, I laid before him the object of our visit, which was to gain his endorsement or approval of our effort to secure the reestablishment of the military at Austin. He assured us of his support, but frankly admitted that he did not deem the grounds owned by the government sufficient for the purpose. I at once proffered, at my own expense, to purchase the adjoining block and present it to the government free of charge. This, Gen. Stanley assured us, added to the original block, would furnish ample ground for the purpose, and with this understanding he assured us of his earnest, active and personal support. In several subsequent interviews, his remarks were of like tenor, and I have every reason to know that, if the opportunity had presented, he would have exerted his influence actively in our behalf, notwithstanding the unfriendly, not to say brutal attacks that were made upon him.

by, and through, the columns of a portion of the local press.

With this influential support to start with, and sanguine that the then incoming national administration would grant any reasonable request, backed by the Commanding general of the department, I set earnestly at work to secure the prize. From Mr Charles Dillingham, of Houston, a personal friend, I received letters of introduction and endorsement to his brother, Hon. Wm. F. Dillingham, governor of Vermont. At my own expense I visited Governor Dillingham at his office in Montpelier, and was most warmly and cordially welcomed. From Governor Dillingham I received assurance of his active aid in our behalf, and letters of introduction to Secretary of War Proctor (also of Vermont and a warm personal and political friend of the governor), Senators Edmonds and Merrill, and the entire Vermont delegation in the lower house of Congress. Each and every one of the distinguished gentlemen gave me active assistance, personally interested themselves in the success of my mission. I made numerous calls on Secretary of War Proctor, during the course of one of which he said: "Mr Kalle, I want to accommodate you and Dillingham, and it will only be necessary for you to get a reasonable military recommendation and it will be all right". In the meantime a mutual friend called upon Major-General Cook, Commander of the military division embracing Texas, who was then in Washington on court martial duty, and presented the claims of Austin for the re-establishment of the post. General Cook stated he would endorse the measure if recommended by General Stanley, and as it had already received that officer's approval, no further trouble was anticipated in securing a favorable decision from the Secretary of War. But the opponents in Austin to the measure became alarmed, and adopted prompt plans to neutralize what I had accomplished. The Secretary of War, both through letters and by delegations, was notified that the school board had brought suit to recover

" the property, that there was no desire upon the part of the people of Austin to secure the reestablishment of the post, and that the entire opposition to the acceptance of the lot grew out of a personal controversy between the mayor and school board. Apprehensive that any action on his part, pending the suit at law might embarrass his department, Secretary Proctor referred the whole matter to the attorney general of the United States for his opinion. Pending the law officer's reply, I was summoned home by sickness in my family, and arrived to find the opponents of the measure organized, aggressive and determined to defeat it at all hazards. Meanwhile, judgment was rendered in the Travis district Court in favor of the school board. But even then, I did not despair of success, provided I could induce the school board to consent to an arrest of judgment for sixty days. I notified their attorney, Judge Doorn, of this fact, and offered to cheerfully pay out of my own purse the necessary rent for any building the board might select for a school house during the interim. But the gentlemen of the school board had secured the Arsenal lot, even though they lost the military post, and with an eagerness as keen as it was ludicrous, insisted upon judgment being entered instantly. It was done, and thus ended Austin's opportunity to secure the military post, which meant the expenditure of thousands of dollars annually in her midst.

Discouraged and disheartened at this virulent opposition from those ^{whose} interest I was unselfishly endeavoring to serve, I surrendered all efforts in the matter, and permitted the public spirited gentlemen of the school board to enjoy their success, without fear of further molestation or interference, at least from me.

The Cemetery.

By reference to the report of the City attorney, it will be seen that the City has been relieved, by a decision of the Travis district Court, of all responsibility or liability in connection with the

" purchase of the Patterson tract of land, purchased by my predecessor for alleged Cemetery purposes, as well as the notes executed by him on the part of the city for the payment of the same. This relieves the city of an irritating and troublesome claim, but still leaves the question of securing additional ground for burial purposes unsolved. By an arrangement with Mr John S. Palm, two acres have been added to the grounds of the present Cemetery, out of which thirty lots have been donated to the city by Mr Palm, valued at \$1500.

But the pressing demand is space for the burial of paupers. No room exists for their interment in the Cemetery, and immediate steps should and must be taken by the Council to provide proper space in which to enter the remains of these unfortunates in our midst, the cost of whose burial must be borne by the city.

Public Improvement.

The meagre revenues of the city have precluded the undertaking of any public improvements of an extended character. The receipts of the government are based closely upon its absolutely necessary routine expenditures, and consequently but a slight margin is left for the inauguration of new work or extensive improvements.

In my inaugural address, delivered to your honorable body two years ago, and emphasized in my message the year following, I advocated and suggested the submission to the people of a proposition to issue two hundred thousand dollars in bonds, the proceeds to be expended in a comprehensive system of permanent street improvements. An Ordinance embodying the suggestion was subsequently introduced, but failed of passage by one vote, the vote standing thirteen in favor to five against. As the Charter requires that all measures of this nature must receive the assent of two thirds of all the members of the Council, the proposed ordinance was defeated. I have but to repeat what I then said: that this action was wrong in spirit and in principle. In a matter of this kind, one so vitally affecting their immediate and future interests, I contend that the people

" should be granted the right to Express their will and voice their wishes.

I still believe the people should be permitted to Express themselves on the subject. If they desire to beautify their city and enhance the value of their properties, surely no just or valid reason can be urged in opposition to their being permitted to do so. Besides the general impetus that would be given all classes of business by a liberal and enterprising policy of public improvement, employment would be given hundreds of worthy and industrious men in our midst, now in enforced idleness through the prevailing apathy that permeates not only our public but our private business affairs. Many poor but most worthy and excellent citizens have been compelled to leave Austin because they could not secure employment, and unless some radical and vigorous change is made to counteract the general feeling of discouragement and despondency that prevails, many others will inevitably follow. This is a subject that I do not like to dwell upon, it is alike unpleasant and disagreeable, but the fact stares us in the face, and it is the duty of those entrusted with the management of public affairs to seek a remedy and provide measures that will bring about a more desirable and prosperous condition.

Retrospective.

I do not deem it necessary to enter into lengthy and dry details of every act of this administration. They are familiar to you and to the people, and if further information is desired, the reports of the heads of the respective departments have been submitted to you, and are open for public examination. When, two years ago, I assumed the office of Mayor, the floating debt of the city, due and accruing, was \$16,246.45. At the close of my term, she is free from debt, owing no man a dollar, and has sufficient cash in the hands of her treasurer to meet every dollar of accruing obligations contracted or used during my administration.

This is a financial showing that certainly few if any Administrations in the history of Austin's municipal existence can excel, and it therefore may be pardoned for this explicitly referring to and dwelling upon it. What more might have been accomplished had it been upheld throughout my administration by a practically united and undivided board of aldermen, can only be surmised. But certain it is, that the organized and partisan opposition of a portion of this board, to the executive, has resulted in a waste of opportunities to Austin, and been productive of no single good result to the people at large. However, upon the eve of our separation, I have no animations to indulge in.

Conclusions

In view of the fact that the official life of this administration is near its end, I deem it alike indelicate and improper to submit any suggestions affecting the future policy of the city government.

The new administration will soon be inaugurated and should be left free to outline its own policy and dictate its own course.

And now, gentlemen, as we are about to sever our official relations, I desire to return to you, individually and collectively, my earnest thanks for the kindness and courtesy you have extended me during my term as your presiding officer. Differences we have had, and mistakes we have made. For myself I can truthfully say that all my actions have been born of an earnest desire to do that which would be best for Austin and all her people. Most cheerfully do I accord like motives to those with whom I differed.

Respectfully,
Joseph Hall,
Mayor.

Alderman DeGress moved that the mayor's message be printed in the Statesman, and that the printing committee be instructed to have the same translated and printed in the Texas Verwarder on the best terms obtainable.

Alderman Wortham moved to amend by adding

the evening. I. Lake. The amendment was accepted
and the motion as amended, adopted.

G. F. Penderster Alderman Wilson presented a petition from Geo. H.
Penderster, City Attorney, requesting leave of absence from
November 26, to December 1. Granted.

In motion the Council then adjourned.

Milton Morris,
City Clerk.