

Audit and Finance Committee Meeting Transcript – 03/09/2015

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>> Tovo: All right. Thank you. I'm told we can get started. Welcome. This is the meeting of the audit and finance committee. I am the chair, mayor pro tem Kathie tovo, and we're meeting in city hall chambers, city council chambers, and the date is

March 9: So I guess the first order of business is to ask if there are any citizens who would like to speak to this board before we launch into our subject. Okay. Seeing none, I'd like to go ahead and get started. I'm told that our staff have a very, very brief presentation. So with -- with the okay of our committee and attendees, I think I'd like to start there.

>> One question. I have from John Michael Cortez a printout of the different cities where -- and their budget totals. It's called city council offices council manager.

[12:07:22 PM]

Did everybody else get a copy of that?

>> Tovo: I did not.

>> Pool: Let me send it to someone to print it out and give to everybody. Who could I send it to?

>> (Indiscernible).

>> Pool: Okay. Who is that? Who am I sending it to?

>> (Off mic).

>> Pool: Tell me your name and I'll send it to you -- Olga? Okay.

>> Tovo: I tell you what. Would you write your email address down, and in the meantime I believe we have somebody from the city manager's office who has a brief presentation. Mr. Burray.

>> Good afternoon, madam chair, members of the committee, my name is ray burrray and I'm chief of staff in the city manager's office and the purpose of my presentation today is to give you an overview on the framework as well as the allocation of resources that will be used to staff your council committee process. So soon after the passage of the ordinance that established the council's committee structure, the city manager assessed the need of providing support to that structure and made the appropriate staffing shifts to support that need. So as I talk about that framework, I've listed on this slide all of the staff that will be working in support of a council committee process, and I think you can see very clearly that it's going to require a lot of people, and the city manager has pledged to devote the necessary resources to make this work successfully. In my next few slides I'll go through each one of these staffing levels in more detail, but let me just say from the outset that we see these council committee meetings as more or less as many council meetings. So it's our plan to use essentially the same staffing model that we currently use with our regular council meetings. By doing so we have the benefit of already having the technology through the agenda management process to manage it, and to manage it quite well.

[12:09:23 PM]

We also have the people in place throughout the organization who know how to do this, and they've been doing it for quite some time. We can do everything from the posting of agendas, drafting of minutes, research, public engagement, the training of employees would be minimal, and we believe we can get your council committees up and running in a very short period of time. So as we talk about how all of this would work, let me start at the top with our executive leads. Each council committee will be assigned an executive lead, and that person or the executive lead will be one of our five assistant city managers. Of course it will also include the chief financial officer or the city auditor in the case of this committee, and will generally mirror the service group or city departments that they currently oversee. So, for example, assistant city manager Bert Lambra as who oversees the housing department he will serve as executive lead to the housing community development committee. Same thing for assistant manager Ray, he oversees the public agency, police, fire, and EMS, so he'll be the executive lead for the public safety committee. The executive lead will be responsible for the strategic overall coordination of city staff that supports the committee, looking at the big picture down the road and will do all that in support and in coordination with the -- their assigned committee chair in the planning of future meetings and presentation of agenda items. The next staffing level is what we call a committee liaison and here the committee liaison can either be an assistant city manager, a department director or assistant director, and it can also include the chief financial officer or the city auditor. But under our framework the liaison will work most directly with the council committee chair to determine the agenda for the next meeting, but also to supervise administrative support for that meeting.

[12:11:25 PM]

They will also be instrumental in working with committee chair to see that items referred to the respective committees are routed to the finance and the law departments for fiscal and legal review. And if any revisions are needed they will working with the council sponsor of the item or the board chair for those instances in which a board or commission has referred an item for consideration to a council committee to see that those changes are made. And once that's done, the committee liaison will communicate to the committee chair that the item is ready for committee consideration and an upcoming meeting, and once the committee chair approves, the committee liaison will inform the agenda office to launch the posting process. Also assisting in the committee process will be the executive assistants in the city manager's office. They will serve as a quality assurance or double-check making sure that all the applicable backup information and material, including legal and fiscal analyses, draft minutes, reports, and other data, are included and ready for final posting. They will also be at the committee meetings working hand in hand with the department leads' executive assistant to insure the meeting room is prepared when you arrive to help out with speaker sign-up, and later to help draft summary minutes and to compile the final committee report. Now, I've just mentioned them, and I'll list them here again, because in addition to the meeting logistics, speaker sign-up and the drafting of the final committee report, the department executive assistants will also be one of the main coordinators of information -- of information pertaining to agenda items. This will include any previous actions that a committee has taken on an item, gathering all of the public input pertaining to anything that comes before a committee and informing the committee of any recent board or commission actions that have been taken on items under the committee's charge or jurisdiction. Finally, the department executive assistant will work with the appropriate staff in their own department as well as with the council committee chair's policy aide to coordinate the development of committee agendas.

[12:13:36 PM]

Other departments that will be supporting the council committee process include the agenda office, which administers the agenda management system, and that will be the system and the technology that will make all this happen very efficiently and very effectively. The agenda office is currently working on a council committee work flow process that is very similar to the posting process we use for regular council meetings. They're also working to create uniform templates for all meeting agendas, minutes and other documents all in an effort to standardize the committee process. One last thing about the agenda office, they're important to the overall framework that I've been discussing, not just because they help keep us in compliance with the open meetings act, but also because they serve as one of the final quality checks before a full agenda is posted. And of course the city clerk's office also plays an important role because once a committee agenda is posted, they upload the agenda and any backup material to the council information meeting center and then once the meeting is over, the city clerk will upload any additional information that was generated at the meeting, including the final committee report. Two more departments to add to the MIX are the finance and the law departments. As with all items that go before council for their consideration at a regular meeting, all committee items will also undergo a legal and fiscal review. The fiscal review, of course, looks at the possible cost impact of an item and a legal review is done to ensure that an item complies with the city charter, city code and any applicable state and federal laws. And finally, madam chair, this is my last slide, department staff will be doing a lot of the ground-level work of gathering information, conducting research, performing analyses, offering policy recommendations, and collecting public input. Staff is already doing this work for icas so it's not really new to us at all.

[12:15:37 PM]

And then I'll end with this slide, but I did want to summarize that the plan or framework that I presented is something we already do. Staff intends to follow the process that has worked well for regular council meetings and as I've noted we already have the people and technology in place. Training would be minimal and it's our goal to get your committee process up and running as quickly as possible. So with that, madam chair, I'd take any questions that the committee might have.

>> Tovo: Thank you very much, Mr. Baray, for that helpful outline, and I assume that we can get a copy of that presentation.

>> Absolutely. Absolutely.

>> Tovo: Great. If we have the ability to link it to today's meeting as backup that would be useful.

Otherwise, maybe you could send it to our liaison, who can distribute it to the -- to the members as well as -- as -- how about the full council --

>> Will do. We'll take care of that.

>> Tovo: We do have other council members here. I know that we will have -- certainly have questions about this as we move through the agenda, but are there any immediate ones for Mr. Baray about the city manager's staffing plans for the existing system? Okay. So what I've distributed -- I want to just begin by saying, you know, my expectation for today, we don't have a long time to meet, and I really envision this and have spoken with our vice chair about how we might approach this issue. I believe that we'll need at least two conversations. We do have a regularly scheduled meeting of the audit and finance on March 25, so my hope for today is that we can at least work through some of the ideas and questions surrounding the issue and maybe come to some -- some determinations about what additional -- what information we have currently and what information we might want to obtain between now and the 25th, with the hope that we might come to some recommendations on the 25th, or at least as a committee we'll have helped clarify some of the -- some of the issue, some of the issues.

[12:17:38 PM]

So what I've distributed are the minutes from February 26 that account -- recount the amendments that were offered, and then the chart that I've distributed attempts to lay out -- lay out the different -- the resolution itself, the amendments that were offered by mayor Adler, and then the amendments that were offered by others. You'll notice in brackets questions that have been -- that as we were -- as my staff and I were putting together this outline, these were questions that occurred to me about that, and so hopefully we can get some clarification about some of the intent from the makers. And then we've also gone through really just the written documents surrounding this issue, from the resolution to the mayor's post on the message board to the amendments that came forward from council member Casar, from council member troxclair and from my office, and we have used those to compile these documents. We did have some conversation, of course, in work session in council, but I've really tried to rely on what was put in writing so that we could get as close to the original language as possible. And then on the third sheet that I distributed you'll see some questions, they seem to fall into three categories: Operational, structural, financial. So I really hope that we can add other questions to this list too as we move forward. So --

>> Mayor pro tem?

>> Tovo: Yes.

>> A some of the questions that are on the single sheet, the operational, structural, financial, do you think some of those questions may have been answered by Mr. Baray's presentation this morning?

>> Tovo: I believe that we are in a better position to start to answer some of these questions based on that, but I would suggest that we maybe begin by looking -- unless somebody has got a different idea, it might be wise to begin with this chart and see if we can clarify the resolution and the motions that were placed on the table -- were placed before the council at our meeting on the 26th with as much specificity as possible, and then maybe we can move to the questions that are on the sheet and see -- you know, see again what -- whether we're in a position to answer some of those what information we would need to have.

[12:20:07 PM]

And I know council member pool has brought some information forward as well that I assume will filter into this discussion. Do you want to explain the document that you've distributed?

>> Pool: Sure. What this is is a rundown on a number of cities, Phoenix, Dallas, San Jose, Las Vegas, Kansas City, Missouri, with a ranking where they are in size in comparison with Austin. You'll see there on no. 11, and I do have some additional copies here that I can pass along to -- maybe ray, could I pass these to you? So folks can see this as well. Maybe we could put it up on the screen. Just real quick, it shows form of government in each case is council manager. It shows a breakout for the budget for the mayor's office and ftes. Council member budget and ftes, any notes. Then what the population is from 2010 and some additional information at-large or single member and total budgets and total ftes. And I just was surprised in looking at this at the relationship of the council member budgets to the mayor office budgets and the ftes. It's pretty interesting. So spend some time with that and look at that. This is just an example of how cities that are similar to Austin as far as the type of council manager makeup, how they operate simply and only in a budget and an fte breakdown. The other question I would ask is when we are starting to dig in on all the questions, I want to make sure that we're looking at this from a policy perspective as opposed to -- because the operational things, there may be a number of things that we would send to -- or direct the city manager to handle so that we're not accidentally stepping into operational areas as opposed to policy.

[12:22:09 PM]

>> Tovo: Council member pool, I think that's a very good -- that's a very good point. My intent in listing these questions are -- were really to get at some of what I heard being offered as explanations of what the -- what these positions could achieve, and so hopefully we can -- but yes, absolutely we need to be mindful of that. Thank you for this chart. Now, just to be clear, though, the points of comparison were looking at other cities that had a council management form of government. Some are comparable in size, some are not.

>> Exactly. You'll see the ranking on the far left that's the size of the city. You'll see 11 in our excellent no. 11 spot. Austin no. 11.

>> Tovo: Super. So without further ado, let me just kind of point to some of the questions. These are more informational questions that I think we need to answer that are on the chart. The mayor's proposal, while the message board post talked about vacant -- vacant positions, it wasn't clear to me whether the resolution was leaving that open or had a particular suggestion about funding.

>> Pool: And I think at that point we can make a recommendation -- that would be an area that we might make a recommendation. I've been giving some thought as well to where -- do you want to talk about where the positions would be assigned?

>> Tovo: , You know, what I think might make sense is since those are some of the questions on our second sheet that just lists all the questions, let me just -- let me just very quickly highlight some of what we need to get answers from those who proposed in the number -- so that would be the question I have about the first item on this spreadsheet.

[12:24:12 PM]

The second item you'll see under hiring and supervision, again, some clarification about whether these would be transferred positions. The language in the amendment by -- I believe this was council member troxclair, talked about staff housed in city hall or nearby, and my question to the maker of that amendment would be did she contemplate having those staff housed within particular departments? 2, under funding, my question for her would be the reprogram equivalent positions, are we assuming those would be vacant? And then some clarification around whether the highest paid council staff member was accurate or whether she intended for that to be about the highest paid council member, the language. Just was a little bit unclear. And then you see down under the five committee coordinators, council member council member Casar has a few questions in brackets for that maker. So hopefully we can get some clarity, but I think those are more informational questions for those who proposed those amendments.

>> Pool: I had a thought and it goes to two things. Both where -- who the staff would be answering to, and I think it was council member fox calculator recommended the city clerk or the auditor's office, and in both cases -- that felt awkward to me because in that case, for instance, if folks were assigned to Cora stoke's staff they'd be filtering up through her, and I want a more direct access to the staff than having the staff augmenting either the city clerk's office or the auditor's office. So that's pretty much a no-go for me on that. As far as where the new staff would sit, I would ask staff to come back and help us with where they would specifically be assigned.

[12:26:16 PM]

When the council offices were redone for the 10-1 we were a -- a couple extra desks were added in the front office for interns, and I had to take one of them out to put a copy machine in there, but there are

additional desks in the council member offices. So it may be that we have some space. I was hoping to have assistance with the community engagement task force that I'm trying to get off the ground, and then probably also in the open space environment and sustainability committee that I -- that I chair. So I had kind of project-specific areas of need. And it did occur, and I don't know, Tio, what you think about this, and I don't know if you've thought about this, mayor pro tem, but it is entirely possible that if the mayor's office isn't -- doesn't feel right as far as a balance of power to have the additional staff assigned to, that we ask the mayor pro tem to be the person who oversees or has the -- whatever -- whatever form the positions take. We could assign them to you.

>> Tovo: So that speaks to -- as we look down the list of questions, I think I heard -- I think your comments, council member pool, seemed to speak to the structural questions of what are the options for add staff to a department other than the mayor's office.

>> Pool: Exactly.

>> Tovo: And I would like to hear more eventually about the proposals that have been offered, the city clerk and the city auditor, because I know you said you had concerns. It would be helpful to understand what those are. Council member Renteria?

>> Renteria: I would like to second that just for discussion purposes.

>> Tovo: Well, sure, we're not actually in a position to take action. We're just chatting today.

>> Renteria: Oh, you're just going to discuss it, okay. Because I'm really -- I really would be concerned if we put this in the city clerk's or the auditor's office, because then, you know, I just don't feel like that would be fair to either department to have that responsibility where we're all going to be up there asking them all these questions and all the committees.

[12:28:36 PM]

So, you know, I don't think it -- I really don't feel like, you know, it would be the right thing to do. But I really would like to see, really, if we could keep it within the council structure instead of putting the responsibility on the city staff.

>> Tovo: So we have council member Zimmerman and council member Garza with us as well. Do either of you want to speak to the question of structural questions? I think we've had questions raised about all these areas but the structural questions I know are critical for several of us.

>> I guess I'd like to understand the concerns about the auditor's office. I can see the concern about a layer of what we call staff over -- either these positions that would be primarily to be helping council, but the auditor is independent, if I'm correct, from staff. They're not under the management umbrella. Is that correct?

>> Both the city clerk and the city auditor report directly to council.

>> Garza: So I guess I feel like that concern of -- I guess what's your concern about? Because they're independent of the management of --

>> Tovo: Council member --

>> Pool: Yeah, so if we're looking at additional staff being assigned either to the clerk or the auditor's office, there is the chance that even though this is going to be at the front end a short-term appointment through the budget year, and let's say that we agree to go ahead and fund for an additional year, once the staff are in place in an existing council -- even though it's a council reporting office, it feels more permanent to me, and I really am committed to this being a short-term activity. And it feels more immediate to have it direct -- to have these people directly reporting to the council, and who has the -- who they actually report to could be individual council members, for instance, if one person were assigned to me to work on community engagement and/or my committee, and that person would be responsible to me.

[12:30:56 PM]

An alternative, if we're not looking at these people being assigned to the mayor's office, would be to group them in an assignment to the mayor pro tem's office. So there's some oversight. Frankly, I see each of the members of this small group doing project-specific or committee-specific work. So it may make sense to have each person reporting to the council member for whom he or she is doing the work. I was looking for another route outside of the mayor's office and not underneath another department head. They're kind of -- the lines of reporting get convoluted and I'm looking for more direct lines of reporting. So the person could report directly to me who's working with me, but if people were working for Cory, for example, those folks would report to me. Even if she removed herself from the equation, which probably would happen, but the layer is still there.

>> Can I ask -- I guess I don't envision this as Corey -- them reporting to Corey. I envision the auditor's office or city clerk's office. They're just kind of the administrative -- give the assignment -- give the assignment type of position, and what these five ftes ultimately do report to the council members, so, for example, Ms. Stokes has talked about when we asked for, like, audits and how those were assigned, so I think council member pool, you asked for one on public engagement, and so that was just you asking her for that study on public engagement. She -- they have a system where if it's a certain number of hours, they'll give you -- you know, I can get it back to you in these number of days. If it's going to take more hours, it's going to take this long. And for me that would be like a similar process to this. It's basically -- she gives the assignment and that fte reports straight to that council member.

[12:33:00 PM]

So there would obviously have to be some kind of process, some policy of how she would be able to do that, because with only five, and ten council members, and so many committees. But I didn't envision it as the auditor being in charge as much as the auditor -- it being an additional task. Sorry to possibly give you more work.

[Laughter] Just being an additional -- she's just making an assignment, basically.

>> Pool: Right, I understand that, but I also have a picture of an org chart in my head and we have to do that. You have to think, where is this box located? And if -- if these five people as a unit are assigned to the auditor, then the reporting line is through the city auditor, and then to the council. What I'm trying to do is flatten out the organization so we don't have as many levels to go through. I recognize that the auditor's office is attached to the city, but it's specifically the auditor herself, and then she manages the people who are under her so that's another layer. I would like to be able to manage and direct the person assigned to the initiatives that I've got going, to report and answer directly to me. And I think probably the other council members, if you think about it, that may be simpler and less bulky.

>> Tovo: Okay. So I think -- thank you very much. I think we have -- we've heard some different perspectives about locating them within the auditor's office, and I hope that we'll be able to hear in a few minutes about the auditor -- from the auditor about whether that structure would work. Council member Zimmerman, would you like to chime in on this issue of where positions of that sort should be located?

>> Zimmerman: Sure. Thank you, mayor pro tem. Certainly a question -- I was thinking of the additional staff coming in as kind of being direct hires of the elected mayor, so that when the mayor changed over and we got a new mayor, all those positions could, right, be renamed by the new mayor.

[12:35:01 PM]

I think if they -- if they were under the city auditor -- by the way, I love the city auditor's office. It's been great, very responsive, and I like that. But with the expectation -- would the expectation be that the new members would be renamed or replaced by the new incoming mayor, or would the idea be if they were in the auditor's office, would they stay on and survive through different mayoral administrations? The question I guess I ask my colleagues.

>> Tovo: Council member Garza.

>> Garza: What I thought it was -- my idea was taking this out of -- out of the mayor's office so they don't change, so they're completely -- everybody has their issues that they want to push forward, and so these people would always be there, and they would support the council committees however they were directed. And I don't know if I -- if -- I guess I didn't articulate what I was trying to say, but what I thought was they would report to the council member. The council member would give them the direction. This is what I need for you -- this is what I'm looking for, this is the research I'm looking for, and the auditor -- or whichever party assigns them, which is strictly an assignment. You assign it and then you go to the council member. So they would constantly stay on. And I think that would help, if these -- and what council member pool talked about it being temporary, well, that's separate what you're talking about. You're talking about keeping them more permanent, and in that case that would help the learning curve much just learning the ins and outs of city hall, when a mayor's term possibly changes, you know, that means somebody would have to come in new, assuming it's a different mayor in four years, and those five new people would have to learn the job, and we're all -- we all know that it's taking -- it's a big learning curve, so I think that would aid in reducing the learning curve, keeping those people that are strictly there, kind of like research people, really.

[12:37:07 PM]

>> Zimmerman: Yeah, so that's kind of two different visions of what would happen. I guess I think of us, you know, as coming in new, and yes, we do have a huge learning curve. But then again I think the advantage of 10-1 is hopefully we're a little more responsive to what voters think, and there's been a lot of criticism that, you know, the city hall kind of lost touch, especially with the suburbs. And so if you go back to a system where you have people that stay on and they survive through different election cycles, that might put us kind of back into the position that we were in. And so even though, yeah, it's a big disadvantage to have new people come in because they have to learn everything all over again, but at the same time they can bring in new ideas and I think the voters have more optimism that we're bringing new people in, not just elected officials but the staff as well, so we have a new team coming in and hopefully they can change things. Just a thought.

>> Tovo: Thank you for that. You know, I think what we've got here are some basic different assumptions about what that -- about what that addition could mean in terms of the overall structure. I think we have a proposal based on the fact that it would support the work and then we have some concerns about that structure, so we'll have to kind of tease out, you know, what the points of agreement are here, and where are the just very different assumptions and whether we can at least, again, if -- if we can't come to a consensus on recommendations, at least clarify the issues for the rest of council, where those decision points are. Council member Renteria?

>> Renteria: Well, you know, I really didn't think that there would -- the positions were going to be a permanent position, that we were going to have to worry about under the new mayor coming in. I thought these were just going to be one and a half year type position that -- to help us catch up to speed.

[12:39:10 PM]

I never had intention of voting for anything that was going to be a permanent position. My whole assumption was talking to the mayor, maybe I'm wrong, but I always thought that that was just going to be, you know, a two-year-type hiring so that they could, you know, get us back up to speed to what was -- what the -- to help us, you know, address the need of the city. So I never knew that we were going to have -- hire these permanent.

>> Tovo: So I think, you know, that we've got a couple challenges before us. I think we're being asked to evaluate the short-term proposal as well as begin a conversation about a longer term proposal, and so some of those longer term issues of -- I mean, if we're getting into and our financial staff are here and can help us navigate this. If we're talking about transferring positions that would require some more thought, because that would tend to be a more permanent kind of transfer. Vice chair troxclair, you haven't had an opportunity to participate. We are more or less trying to focus on some of the questions that are on this sheet, but also note that on this spreadsheet there are some questions, some of which you may be able to help us clarify. So if you'd like to chime in here.

>> Troxclair: I apologize for being a few minutes late. As we all know, when it rains in Austin, I was coming from another meeting, it was difficult for me to get back down here in time. So -- yeah, no, I appreciate the conversation so far, and I think that is why it's so important that we're having these meetings so that we can identify -- so we can gather information and identify what questions need to be answered. So I appreciate you putting this information together.

>> Tovo: Sure. Would it make sense to talk about the operational issues?

[12:41:11 PM]

You know, I think one of the questions -- some of these -- again, some of the questions that I think arise from the discussions we've had, what would these positions -- how could these positions facilitate city council work, is there an impact if these positions are not added now? Again, thinking about the short-term question before us. And so perhaps we could have some question about what -- what exactly would these staff members do, and in -- in light of the presentation that the city manager's office brought forward about what their overall staffing plans are for the committees, were these staff positions to be added, how would they interact with that process? So I just leave that open for first committee members to chime in on.

>> Pool: I see the assistance with the community engagement task force. I definitely need assistance in getting that off the ground, and also with the committee work, with the open space environment and sustainability committee. I have less -- fewer specifics on the committee work because we haven't started committee meetings yet, but I suspect there will be some research needed and expertise looked for. Also, the level of expertise brought by the different people who would -- who we would bring on, I see them as experts in specific areas, for instance, in community engagement, or have some experience in it, so that -- kind of like a S.W.A.T. Team approach. So the term isn't necessarily learning how city hall works but rather working on explicating some specifics that are needed for us to move the policy forward and the initiative forward, for instance, on the task force. And there are some folks already in the community who are willing to help.

[12:43:11 PM]

We just need to give them sort of a formal -- the formal go ahead.

>> Tovo: Council member pool, could you help us kind of talk through that with a little more detail? So if, for example, there is a staff member assigned to -- let's take the open space issue. What do you envision that staff member doing?

>> Pool: I haven't had the committee meeting yet, so I don't know what all will be brought to it. I know we'll have agenda setting and then, depending on the issues that come up, we'll either need additional research, outreach or organization. I can talk a little more specifically about the community engagement task force. Since we passed that resolution in January I've been working to find time to put together enough information to help other council members and myself find the right people to appoint to that committee, and I was able this morning to put up a fairly extensive message on the message board about the kind of experience we're looking for for the appointees, and putting together the mission statement and then how it will roll out with the facilitator appointment, how often they meet and where they meet and what the scope of the initiative is, has taken some extensive thinking and being able to bounce these ideas off of folks who have experience, either professionally or because they've simply been involved in it, has been really, really helpful. And I couldn't have gotten as far as I've gotten, even though it's taken two months, I couldn't have -- well, six weeks, I couldn't have gotten as far as I am today without having that sounding board and that additional -- additional support. So -- and that's above and beyond the work my staff is also doing on this initiative, plus the constituent services work they're doing, answering emails, doing research for me and boning up on zoning cases.

[12:45:21 PM]

So it is a capacity issue that I think if we all had the opportunity to have the additional assistance, I know we would make good use of it.

>> Tovo: Any thoughts? Council member Garza?

>> Garza: I guess my reservations are also that there is no -- I still haven't heard any like specific roles, and if we analogize this to a S.W.A.T. Team, a S.W.A.T. Team, they have so many -- like a skill set that's enormous. They have an enormous skill set, so they're not necessarily subject matter experts on open space or affordability. They are trained to tackle a wide variety of circumstances. And so I really don't understand what their role is. I agree that we all could use more capacity. I totally agree with that. But -- and my other reservation is I feel like there is a blurry line, when we're having a conversation about bringing fresh ideas and new ideas, and I feel that that's what we were elected to do. That's what we went and asked the public to -- we gave them this vision, and we said, you know, these are my ideas, and that's to me is not the role of support staff. That's why austinites elected each one of us here, for us to bring those ideas and to further those through gathering information and so I'm still not clear on exactly what these extra staff people would do.

>> Tovo: So I think it would be helpful to the extent that we can to get more specific about what the proposal is, what the main proposal is before us, what exactly those individuals would do, how they would do it, and how they would interact with our existing staff.

[12:47:35 PM]

I think those are some of the questions that would be helpful to get more information. Council member pool, I think I heard from what you were talking about, research and kind of a sounding board for ideas. So let's note those as --

>> Pool: And also carrying out tasks.

>> Tovo: Of what sort?

>> Pool: Whatever would come from the sounding board discussion. Helping with writing. I don't see it really any -- it's like what our policy advisors in our offices do.

>> Tovo: Okay. And council member Zimmerman, you look like you have --

>> Zimmerman: If I could maybe turn the conversation a little bit. This is interesting and very, very important discussion, you know, who the people are and what they do, but I wanted to turn attention

back to the financial question. So, you know, assuming we came up with an agreement, and there are going to be more people brought on, could we ask the city -- one of the questions I've always had is how do we know, or can the council say, if we were going to add five positions, would those come from the existing headcount or would they be new people? And if the council said, we will only support this if these are existing ftes, right, that are simply going to be reallocated. Maybe that's a question for staff. I mean, could the council specify that we would only agree to this provided that it was existing ftes that were reassigned. Could I ask that question of staff and let them talk about that for a minute?

>> Tovo: Sure, and if I could just bring us too, back to the chart, because I think there were some different -- I think that is one of the things that we do need to clarify from the maker of the main proposal, as well as the amendments. You know, I believe that there are different ideas about -- well, there may not be, but it's not really clear to me after looking at each of those proposals where the funding -- whether the funding was being left open, city manager go and determine where the funding would come from or if they're all assuming the thinks would be reprogrammed from vacant positions.

[12:49:49 PM]

So our chief financial officer Elaine hart. Thank you for being here.

>> Thank you. Elaine hart. We have not gotten specific direction from the council as to whether they want to add new ftes or to identify existing ftes that would be reallocated or repositioned -- relocated to whatever office you might want to -- wherever --

>> Zimmerman: How would that process work? If the council decided that the new positions were contingent on reusing existing positions, how would that take place? I mean, we could either pass a resolution directing the city manager to identify five positions and move those accordingly so that they would report to the council or the mayor, right? How would we do that? Would we do that through resolution, or how would that work with you financially?

>> We would need direction from council. Typically the manager gets direction through an item from council, which would be a resolution. If you wanted us to identify current existing vacant positions to be utilized for this purpose.

>> Zimmerman: Would it be possible for the council to identify vacant positions and recommend those? Because we -- how many -- about how many, you know, vacant positions are we talking about that we have in the overall city?

>> Of the 9,000 non-civil service, we have about 130 positions currently, which is about 7%, which is our -- is our typical vacancy rate. As you know, we have a large workforce, and there is a constant churn of people leaving our employment and being hired. So we do run a vacancy rate on average of about 7%.

>> Zimmerman: I guess a final question. How is staffing handled year to year?

[12:51:49 PM]

In other words, we're only talking about five positions, right, out of thousands and thousands and thousands of people. So it seems like it would be a trivial matter -- a trivial matter that if five existing positions, right, were moved over to report to the council and mayor, that those could be replaced with, right, five or ten new positions, right, in the next budget cycle. Because the city manager has authority to create new positions, or how does that work? How could those positions be re-created if they were reassigned?

>> In the event these were reassigned on a permanent basis and we wanted to continue to provide the programmer services in the original place, the fte was in. Typically the manager would propose adding new ftes in the budget proposal that he carries forward. The new ftes would require council approval during the budget adoption in September.

>> Tovo: Ms. Hart, if this were a temporary measure, initially the proposal was described as assigning currently vacant but funded on a temporary -- if this were done on a temporary basis, is that a process that the city -- I guess I'm asking -- what I'm -- I don't recall transfers of ftes from one department to another on a temporary basis. Could you address whether that's a common practice or whether there is precedent for that?

>> We do that from time to time. Typically there is a true-up in the next year's budget proposal process. The concern here is there have been a number of motions, and I'm not clear that on a long-term basis the ftes will be added to the budget for this purpose, or left there. So it's unclear to me whether you should hire a temporary into the fte that's loaned, because the committee has been asked to look at a long-term solution for council office staffing.

[12:54:02 PM]

And so I think that would leave some question about whether you would fill even a loaned position -- fill it on a permanent basis, because you have not determined the long-term solution in the budget for council offices or council committee support.

>> Mayor pro tem?

>> Tovo: Yes, council member pool.

>> Pool: We also asked when we were talking about this in the council meeting the last time we took this up, the original proposal, the original resolution asked the city manager to put Numbers -- budget Numbers to these items, and I think that March 12 was the date that the city manager offered, and since that resolution didn't pass, I think he offered to do it anyway. I see Mr. Van ino coming up to the microphone. Do you have some Numbers for us? Is that what you were coming up for?

>> I'm just coming up because the conversation seemed to be heading towards Numbers.

[Laughter] , But we (indiscernible) Respond to a budget question about what this might cost, and evening our response to the budget question was really it depends upon the level and salaries of the people that are ultimately hired, but, you know, we looked at the five positions that are currently on the mayor's staff and said hypothetically if the five new people were at about the same level in aggregate as the five existing level, I think we costed that out at 220-some thousand dollars for the remainder of this fiscal year. But again, until we actually know what level these positions would be hired at, what salaries they would be hired at, which is all up in the air still, we can't do a final analysis.

>> Pool: But you can give a high end and low end, right? 220 is your high end?

>> 220 was based on looking at the mayor's existing staff, and so again I don't know what level these people, you know, would be hired at.

[12:56:03 PM]

If they were higher than that they would be more than that. One of the conversations had at the last city council meeting discussion of this was there was a desire to have these five new people not be paid any more than the current highest paid staff person on mayor and council budget, and there was?

Discussion about whether or not that was just council's or the mayor and council. But we looked at it in terms of the mayor and council and that these five people were all to make the same salary as the current ent highest paid staff member, if they were, that would take it up as to 287,000. That would be 287,000 for the remainder of this year, would be the high end of what we'd be talking about. 624,000 for a full year.

>> Pool: Thank you.

>> Tovo: This may be a good segue. Council member troxclair, within your amendments, I did have a question about whether your language was intended to mean the highest paid council staff member or council member. What you were setting as your top salary.

>> Troxclair: I -- in my amendment, the intention was for the -- to set that bar at the highest paid council staff member.

>> Tovo: Okay. And did that -- and was -- were you intending to say council staff member or council and mayor staff member?

>> Troxclair: It just said council staff member.

>> Tovo: Okay, thank you.

>> Troxclair: But I guess I would like to say that I think that that is an important part of this discussion. I think if we are going to propose -- come up with a recommendation that we're going to send back to the full council, I do hope that we come up with some more specifics on what kind of number we're looking at, because I think it is only fair for all of us to understand, you know, there's a big difference between, you know, 220, which I think is kind of -- you said the average. It could be -- well, there's a big difference between 220,000 and 287,000, and I think that we owe it to the council to have a more specific number attached to whatever proposal we send back.

[12:58:11 PM]

>> Tovo: Council member Zimmerman.

>> Zimmerman: The question is, could we know right now, what is -- what is that highest number? Because that's known right now. Of all the staff members that council has, there is a known number of what the highest paid number is?

>> It's -- it's just shy of \$90,000. , So the highest paid staff person.

>> Tovo: Mr. Van eeno, I believe that's -- I believe that salary is within the mayor's office.

>> Zimmerman: We're talking council members.

>> Okay.

>> Zimmerman: Just the council members.

>> I don't have that.

>> Zimmerman: I think it's probably around 60 to 65,000, no?

>> Tovo: So that's -- let's peg that as a question. We have the highest paid staff member within the mayor's office, which as I recall is higher than the highest paid council member. And so council member troxclair's amendment speaks to the highest paid council staff member. I think I know the number, but I don't want to say it in case I'm wrong. And we may have that here in a minute. Council member troxclair, while we're looking at your amendment, do you want to speak to any of the bracketed information and see whether we can get some clarity on your intent here? Under hiring and supervision, you had indicated that these would be -- would be assigned by the department head. Now, do you mean the head of the department from which positions might be transferred? Or do you mean the city clerk or the city auditor's office. Office.

>> The city clerk or the city auditor.

>> Tovo: Okay, thank you. And I will update this for next time so that we've got -- we've got these questions answered. And when you say the staff would be housed within city hall or within department offices, again, you are referring to the city auditor and the clerk?

[1:00:12 PM]

>> Troxclair: Right.

>> Tovo: Okay. Thank you. And did you intend for those reprogrammed positions to be vacant? When you talk about reprogrammed full-time equivalent positions, are you leaving open the possibility that those could be currently filled and reprogrammed or were you specifically looking toward vacant but funded ftes that would be reprogrammed?

>> Troxclair: Yeah, I was working within the assumption that we were -- of the original proposal of transferring ftes.

>> Tovo: Vacant.

>> Troxclair: Vacant ftes.

>> Tovo: Thank you.

>> Troxclair: And back on the -- where they would be housed, I think the intention was just to make sure that these -- if we're going to hire new staff members that are supposed to work with the entire council, that they're in a place that is accessible to the full council.

>> I just want --

>> Tovo: Council member pool.

>> Pool: -- On the vacant or -- on the fte, the funding. It may be that an existing employee may be a really good fit for one of these positions, so it would simply be a transfer of a person who already encumbers a position. So I don't want to tie our hands too tightly on that one, if that makes sense.

>> Tovo: Okay. So that is -- that is not currently part of any of the proposals that were made, but we can put that down under an operational suggestion or hiring supervision. I think that would raise the question of how those decisions are made, which kind of raises the question of where they would be situated. So our financial staff were conferring. Did you have any additional information that you wanted to share at this point or do you want to let us know?

>> I think you're looking for the salary of the highest paid council member staff. That is \$70,720. That's the salary. Benefits are on top of that -- would be on top of that.

>> Tovo: Okay. And so we're -- where the proposal -- were the proposal to go forward with this amendment they would be capped at about 70,000, and that may or may not be the top rate for all five, so that begins to put some -- put some Numbers around it on an annual basis -- council member Zimmerman.

[1:02:33 PM]

>> Zimmerman: Another solution could be just to sum up the total that would be 70 per position, and then allow freedom within that, because some would be paid more, some less.

>> (Indiscernible) Would be paid more.

>> Tovo: Council member Garza.

>> Garza: In line with your amendment they wouldn't be paid more, right?

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: I think what he's saying is we wouldn't necessarily have to say that all staff will be paid 70, but we could multiply that number times five, and then allocate the money within -- within that total budget, I think is what he's saying.

>> Zimmerman: That's what I'm saying.

>> Troxclair: I understand what you're saying, we're capping -- that wouldn't be possible. Yeah. Okay.

>> Tovo: Okay. Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: So while we're looking at this chart, I just -- I know -- I don't think that it was a specific amendment that was made, but I know that there was some discussion of the alternative of adding one full-time staff member to each office, including the mayor's office. So I know at the bottom we have the \$25,000 for each council office. The proposal that's in front of us now is five full-time people plus how -- I guess another five part-time people?

>> Tovo: I believe the proposal was five full-time.

>> Troxclair: Plus the \$25,000 for each council member office, which equates to another five full-time people total. So we're talking about really a total of ten kind of ftes and if we did want to allocate that in a different way, another option would be to just bump that to 11 ftes and allocate one full-time person to each office, including the mayor. If we can add that to the decision.

>> Tovo: Sure. Council member pool.

>> Pool: We did talk about that a little bit earlier on. That was one of the things that I was interested in. Council member troxclair was having a person assigned to committee or to help on an initiative, the community engagement initiative that I was working on.

[1:04:38 PM]

So I saw them also as potentially answering directly to -- to council member.

>> Here you are.

[Laughter]

>> Tovo: On the boards and commissions and can see each other. Let me point out that the amendment I made, proposed, was for up to five ftes, not necessarily five ftes, because to me we also -- there's also a question about assessing need and really determining whether the need -- whether there is a need for those -- for that number of positions. Council member pool, before when you were talking about how these additional staff members might operate, you talked about them reporting directly to the council members who chair the committees. Were you envisioning, and would you say that this is part of the main proposal, that a particular staff member could -- could be allocated to two council members for two committees?

>> Pool: It's possible, but I would want to be really careful about open meetings -- open meetings issues that might arise. Especially if that person were assigned to a committee that I'm not on and none of the other committee members are on, then you would have the crossover of one staffer effectively talking with more than the five that we are limiting ourselves to. So I think that is -- that needs to be brought into the MIX as well. I was envisioning a person who could help me on both projects, so the task force initiative and the committee. And whether that was the same person or two different people, I don't know, because I don't know who all will be interested in being involved when we get this finalized. But the -- to answer your %-@question directly, I don't think it would work to have one person helping two committees because of the walking quorum issue.

[1:06:43 PM]

>> Tovo: If they were housed within an individual councilman's office, or two individual councilmen' offices.

>> Pool: Yeah, I think the conversations we would have, it would be like sharing a staff member among our offices that would get a little tricky.

>> Tovo: Right, it has happened but it does call just the questions you've raised into -- I think that does raise that question. So help me -- if we could get back to the operational -- some of the operational questions. If you had a staff member, if one of these staff members was assisting on, say, community engagement task force, how do you envision -- to get down to the fourth question, how do you envision them interacting with the existing staff as Mr. Baray outlined initially? I mean, the city manager has a plan for how these committees will be supported by our existing city staff. So I guess the question I would raise is, how -- how would this additional person interact with that process and, if you could offer some rationale for what the need -- how we know there's a need, without having begun this process, how we know there's a need for that additional individual in this MIX.

>> Pool: Exactly. Well, until we have the committees it will be -- it's all speculative, but I see the additional person as an extension of my existing staff, and to take on whatever assignments flow out of the committee, and that would free up staff to also be working on the other committees that I'm on. For instance, if I used the additional capacity in the committee that I chair, then that would allow my existing policy advisors, who are also going to be helping on that committee, but it will free them up to do more work to support my work on the other committees that I'm on. We're trying to figure out our -- how we're all deployed on all of those committees.

[1:08:44 PM]

Does that -- does that sound reasonable?

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: So I'm unclear if we're talking about the five -- are we still discussing the five ftes or are we discussing the \$25,000 that would be available to each of our individual council offices?

>> Tovo: So my question was directed toward the five ftes. Of council member pool, was that your understanding in answering it?

>> Pool: And what was the question?

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair asked if we were discussing the function of those five ftes or if we were discussing the function of that -- whatever staff we might be able to hire with our 25,000.

>> Pool: So my thinking is that if a person were assigned to me, then I would -- which is why I wanted to have the flat organizational structure and not have the person assigned either to the county -- the city auditor or the city clerk, then the work that that person does would be specifically based on what is happening in my office, and doesn't have anything to do with what any of the other folks would be doing. I would have one person helping with the work that I have, similar -- as an expansion and build the capacity of the policy advisors that I currently have. And you would do the same. You would -- if you had someone assigned to you, you would do the same. You would be able to -- you would have -- the person you choose would depend on the kind of work that you'd like that person to help with. Right? So it would be unique to both the talents and the expertise of the person that you're talking with. And based on the needs in the office.

>> Troxclair: So when you say the person that you choose, you're talking about -- because we wouldn't -- council at this point doesn't necessarily have a say in who these people are, so you're saying we would look at eventually who the five people are who are hired and then --

>> Pool: I think --

>> Troxclair: Choose the best --

[1:10:44 PM]

>> Pool: Yeah, that could happen or the starting place would be the people who have been identified who have been willing -- indicated their willingness either to shift their own -- the work that they have been planning to do. I think some people are -- I don't know if they've exactly put their lives on hold, but there are definitely some folks who have been identified who have indicated their interest in helping council get off the ground, and depending on the -- and there's quite a broad array of community connections among all these folks. So depending on who is there and the level of engagement that they have with the kind of issues that you want to take on, there may be a really good fit there. On the other hand, maybe not. So there is a certain amount of discussion and determination that would be had at that point.

>> Troxclair: Okay.

>> Pool: But I would start, personally, and only for me, with the people who had already indicated a willingness to do this with council.

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair. And so your proposal, I'll just point out, is considerably different it does not begin with five individuals who have been identified by the mayor's office. Your proposal would initiate a hiring process.

>> Pool: Right.

>> Tovo: So I don't think if that's what you wanted to speak to but maybe you could --

>> Troxclair: Yeah, I guess what I was clarifying. So we're specifically talking about the first proposal.

>> Tovo: I think we're going back and forth a little bit. We were talking about. %-[Laughter]

-- We were talking about sort of how they would function operationally. I think council member pool's response to that assumed that they would be the individuals who had been identified by the mayor's office.

>> Troxclair: Okay. And so I guess if -- so then I have another question going back to the open meetings issue that you just raised, council member pool.

>> Pool: Yeah.

>> Troxclair: So in your assumptions in talking about the -- how you would use the staff just now, were you assuming that they would be under the mayor's office or under the city clerk or city auditor's office?

[1:12:54 PM]

>> Pool: There seems to be some reluctance to add these people to the mayor's office, and I'm reluctant to assign them to the city clerk or the city auditor's office, so I was suggesting one of two things. First thing I suggested was that they be assigned to the mayor pro tem, and then the second thing was that these individuals would, in fact, be assigned directly to the council members that were interested in having the additional capacity.

>> Troxclair: Okay.

>> Tovo: And so I guess I would say that assigning all of them to any one office, whether it's the mayor pro tem or a council member or the mayor, shifts the balance of power in just the very same way I think some of us have expressed concerns about. So the second proposal you talked about, about having them report to different -- report directly to the council -- or be hired by, I guess, the council office, in which they would provide the staffing, is not currently before us, but that may be another interesting proposal to add to the MIX, that perhaps we're looking at a halftime position for the very reasons you mentioned, that if we have one person splitting their time between two committees, then they would be -- then we would raise the question of open meetings, which frankly as long as we have one council -- one individual assigned to any one office, we have -- we have to confront the open meetings issue.

>> But council member pool, that may be another -- as we look at the structural questions, the second one on that list is what are our options for adding staff to a department other than the mayor's office to address some of the concerns that have been raised. And that would -- that would be another potential recommendation to consider. Council member Renteria? We haven't heard from you in a little bit. Do you have anything you want to add at this point?

>> Renteria: No

(indiscernible) Talked about it, you know, how much hiring five assistants and then you got talking about should they all be paid the same, and you say no, and then if you're going to have members, they're going to have to report to each committee -- support each committee, two committees, and what -- how do you determine how you pay one person higher than the other one.

[1:15:13 PM]

That kind of -- I got lost there. You know, I -- the structure itself is -- you know, we're -- what we really need to find out is get down -- can we assign it to the mayor pro tem or to the mayor? You know, the biggest thing is the walk-in quorum and that's what we need to address, and if we have those concerns maybe we should be looking at this city clerk or the audit, because I see no solution from that, you know, from the walk-in quorum or wherever we're going to be, having these aides coming and talking to you and then talking -- still -- and then how do we assign -- are they going to be also subject to the open meetings act and -- I mean, there's a lot of questions that, you know, I would like to understand first before we start talking about what committee we're going to assign. I think the most important is can we address that -- the walk-in quorum and who's going to be responsible for it, and who are they going to report to. That's what I would like to see -- hear first before we start talking about assigning them to committees.

>> Tovo: Sure. Thank you for that helpful feedback. I would say as soon as they're in any one of our offices, whether it's the mayor or council members, then they are as if -- as if that person is involved in a conversation. So they would certainly be subject to the same kind of walk-in quorum issues, and we don't encounter those if it's in a department, because that staff member can meet with council members as long as they're not sharing information about the other council members' perspectives. Council member Zimmerman.

>> Zimmerman: Yes, thank you. Council member Renteria is right. We have been jumping around. Part of that is my fault but maybe we can fix it by calling it a brainstorming session, and that might be appropriate for today's weather.

>> Tovo: I like that idea. Well, let's try to get back on some kind of path.

[1:17:15 PM]

Let's look at the operational questions and see whether there are any that we can add detail to. Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: So I do think that we need to have more of a discussion about the open meetings issue, so when would be the appropriate time to do that? Does that fall under one of the headings?

>> Tovo: Why don't we talk about what some of the questions are and see if we have any staff -- I see one representative from our city attorney's office who may be able to answer those questions. What questions do you think we should add to our list?

>> Troxclair: No, just in response to council member Renteria's point, I do think that was the main impetus for me offering the amendment I offered that moved the staff members into the city clerk or the city auditor's office, because of that open meetings question, because we were having a conversation about these staff members working with, you know, two committees and working with a lot of different council members, and it raised questions to me about whether or not that was possible under current laws, and so that -- again, that was really the central idea in me offering the alternative of putting these staff members on the city clerk or auditor's office so that they weren't subject to the same -- they were able to collaborate with more council offices. So I just think that it's an important question that we need to have more discussion about.

>> Leala fireside with the law department. And I think if you want a specific presentation on that kind of thing, it would be a good item to perhaps tee up for the next time that you meet to talk about this. In general, as far as open meetings, the council is the entity that is responsible for open meetings and making sure that there's not a walking quorum, and all of us and all of your staff work toward that goal to make sure that we don't pass ideas from one person to the next, getting a consensus in an appropriate manner, whether the person would be in the auditor's office or in the clerk's office or whether you have each people assigned to your own offices.

[1:19:42 PM]

>> Tovo: Why don't we -- would the committee members like to have a very brief presentation about this?

>> Very brief.

>> Tovo: At our next meeting? And maybe it could be specific to the different alternatives that have been floated, whether -- whether there are staff members added to the mayor's office, added to individual council members' offices, added to a city department.

>> Pool: I would just say that there is --

>> Tovo: Council member pool.

>> Pool: We know how the staff in our offices manage with other council offices. So that wouldn't be any different, and assigning these folks into the city structure to get around the open meetings, I don't like that. It's not very transparent, and again, these folks are no longer directly responsible to me, and we can put them in the auditor's office but say that that's a dotted line and a straight line to council. That seems to me like trying to walk around the open meetings act.

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: I don't think that the suggestion -- I don't think that any of us are trying to get around the open meetings act.

>> Pool: I agree, that's not the intention.

>> Troxclair: I do think that there is a direct conflict between what -- the job description that we are applying to each of these people, which is that they're going to work on broad proposals, citywide issues that they're going to work with multiple committees on some of these big ideas that are affecting the whole city, and then the requirement that they will not be able to talk to more than four other -- more than five council members at any time. So I think that there is a direct conflict there. They're not -- those two things are not in line. We either need to have a job description that allows them to work within the open meetings laws or we need to have a job description that is more in line with what the city staff does, so that they can work with more than five council members at one time on citywide issues.

[1:21:42 PM]

>> Pool: And if I could --

>> Tovo: Council member pool.

>> Pool: I think that's actually the central question right here. Early on in the meeting I had talked in terms of the person working on specific issues -- issues that I am specifically working on, my committee and my task force. And I wasn't looking at this person being any of all five, either. So I think we need to have an agreement on how the pool of people is being used, because that will answer the question that you have. And we spent some time early on talking about -- talking about their job description, and I was not seeing them the way you're describing them. I really was seeing it specific to each council office.

>> Tovo: Council member troxclair.

>> Troxclair: That was -- I know that I have -- at our meetings, that's how the mayor was describing some of these positions. So yeah, I just think that we need to come to some kind of resolution. And then it kind of leads us around in a circle because the answer to that question depends on what their job description is, and because we haven't started our committees yet, we don't really know exactly what their job description is. So it's a carousel.

>> Tovo: Council member Renteria.

>> Renteria: , You know, we do have the other option of just saying let's not just hire anybody. Let's keep it the way we're operating right now.

>> Tovo: Council member Garza.

>> Garza: Yeah, I -- I think the best way maybe to do this is to detail what these -- what the goal of these staff positions are, because I think we all -- we're talking about different roles that these people would play, and that's where the blurry line is. Are they strictly a research person or are they getting -- delving into policy, which staff shouldn't be doing.

[1:23:46 PM]

So I mean, I think if we could get on the same page, what that role is, and for me it was strictly a research perspective. So, for example, if council member Zimmerman went to this one person, however we found out the policy, you know, to assign people was, whatever that was, and he says, tell me everything about why pud's are bad. That's what I want to know, and that research person goes out and researches pud's and comes back to council member Zimmerman and says, this is why pud's are bad. And then I could go to that person too and say, I want to know every reason why pud's are good, and they would go research and they would not have -- be in a role to decide yes or no, pud's are good or bad. They'd just give us a very specific -- just like a research position, and then as far as possible -- since we're brainstorming -- compromise between not being assigned -- or not being under the city auditor or city clerk, I like the idea of a possible -- not reporting to the mayor pro tem but maybe the mayor pro tem being the person who makes the assignments, but ultimately it would be a council support department, and the mayor pro tem makes the assignments, and those are very strict, you know -- a flow chart. This is what the assignment is, this is what -- and the mayor pro tem strictly makes the assignments and then that person goes and researches that issue. That's -- that's how I was envisioning it, but I think maybe that's the best way to figure out where we're going with this, what their role is, is the biggest question, I think.

>> Tovo: And that's really why I started with the operational questions, though for me some of the other considerations are really important, like the structural ones, and particularly the balance of power.

[1:25:48 PM]

I think fiscal concerns are among them, but to some extent we really need to have a clear understanding of how they would function, what they would do, what issues, and whether -- you know, again, how they would integrate into what has been proposed as the structure and whether -- whether there is a need for them immediately or whether that is something we should take time and think about. I think those are all -- are all questions. Are there other operational questions? I heard one, how they interface with our open meetings rules. Actually to some extent that goes under -- that crosses operational and structural because where they go will help us understand whether, for example, if they're in the mayor's office, it's as if the mayor's office is involved in each one of those issues as the fifth person, right? So any issue that staff member works on, they would be in essence, a fifth -- they would fill that fifth slot with four other council members. Council member Zimmerman, did you want to jump in here?

>> Zimmerman: Back on this point of what the people would do and if or why they're needed, I think I'd like to bring back up that maybe this should be at the discretion of elected council or the mayor. When I got involved in the art question, you know, I put up a resolution and asked, you know, do we -- should we be required to spend 2% of construction budgets on art. And so what I ran into is city staff came in and there were three people all telling me that my idea was bad. And so when we're talking about policy, right, I mean, in theory -- well, what I've been told so far is that it's city staff's position that they're required to work on prior policy. So whatever the prior councils have done, they're only allowed to do that. And so to me that's more of the root of the problem here, is that we have thousands of employees already, and they're all going in one direction, policy-wise, and so when I ask a question as a newly elected member I got a bunch of fiscal conservatives and they're saying, we got to cut spending.

[1:27:58 PM]

So I want to look at spending but the incumbent staff is all on one side, no, you can't cut art and here's why. So I guess I'm not comfortable that we know how to micromanage the new employees, and if -- if they're policy people, I think each one of us as council members and also the mayor, they're elected by the voters and they have certain policy initiatives, so they need to have the flexibility. So if they want to bring in -- or if I wanted to bring in a new staff member and we could certainly use one on questions of policy, because I found out here that if -- if my voters have a different idea of the direction, I'm not going to get that support from staff. I have to bring that with me or do that within my own budget. So -- that's just another brainstorming comment.

>> Tovo: So council member Zimmerman, back to council member Garza's point, you could -- you could raise a question and ask staff to either do it through a resolution or through some other means, and ask staff to say, look at best practices in other cities and whether -- how widespread art in public places are. You know, you could phrase -- you could frame it in a way that sends staff off to provide the information you want to make the policy.

>> Zimmerman: Yes, I can do that, but I kind of already know the answer. Can't cut art spending. That answer has already been given to me. So I think it's a question of -- it's a question of motivation. It's a question of motivation. And if each of us as council members, if we bring in people specifically for what we think the voters are telling us to do, then your hire is going to do what you ask them to do. But if it's incumbent city staff, somebody that doesn't depend on my election and they're not answerable to my voters, and they don't answer to me, they're free to give whatever advice they want, you know, influenced by others, not by voters or by the elected member.

>> Tovo: Council member.

>> Troxclair: I think councilmember Zimmerman bricks up some really good points.

[1:30:00 PM]

I just do want to make one clarification with the current private schools we're talking about, the city clerk and the city auditor are one of the few people who report directly to city council. Not to the city manager. So when I proposed that idea that was an important part of why those departments were the ones that I was looking at, because I knew that the city councilmembers would want someone who had direct accountability to city council in light of the fact that we do have a lot of city staff that is answerable to directly to the city manager. So I do think that there's a difference between kind of the city staff as a whole and those specific departments.

>> Tovo: Councilmember troxclair, I'm idea what you brought that up. We started by talking about some of the structural questions. And so I appreciate your contribution on that. Are there other operational questions that should be considered? Otherwise I think we should leave that and move on to the structural questions or -- we're nearing the end of our time. Councilmember troxclair, you talked about your rationale for proposing the city manager and the city auditor. Councilmember pool and councilmember Renteria have raised concerns earlier about the city auditor and the city audit -- city auditor and the city clerk as the housing departments. The challenge is if they're not within a particular councilmember's office or the mayor's office, they need to reside somewhere. They need to be somewhere within the reporting structure, and so I wonder if we could hear a minute from our city auditor some of what -- this kind of gets us back into the discussion of what they would do. Some of what I hear people interested in seeing them do is research, best practice, information gathering. Can you explain whether it would work from the city auditor's perspective to have additional staff in there that are more -- are responding directly to requests from council for that kind of an action.

[1:32:08 PM]

>> If I can make that work. Core I stokes, acting city auditor. I guess one thing to say is by charter and also by city code we follow government auditing standards. What that means for us is any time we're asked to do something we have to put it through some scrutiny in terms of can we do this and still be objective to do our audits. So anything that's not an audit we put through kind of a test of am I looking at something that's really -- or am I being asked to do something that's really in the manager's purview, one of the pieces, am I being asked to do something that I would be asked to come back and audit later. That's kind of a big piece of it. So to the extent, like right now, as y'all know we do special requests for the council. Those are not audits. The way we handle those and set expectations with each audit office to say we can provide this information, but it would include conclusions. It won't include recommendations. We're just going to answer the question, whether that's a question about best practices, whether that's a question about how other cities do something, or if it's a specific question about city operations, we'll analyze information and provide that information, but we are not drawing conclusions or making recommendations. So we really reserve that drawing conclusions and making recommendations for our audit work. So in this case, it really does depend on the job description, obviously. I'm not the first person to say that today. But it really does depend on whether these are people doing policy research and making policy recommendations, whether these are people doing research like the research we currently do, and then I would say our annual work plan is approved by the council. So if within that work plan the council had work, such as research or analysis, then that would just be -- it would be part of our work plan, essentially. But there are some concerns, if we're being asked to do more policy recommendation, policy work, or getting involved in something that we might want to come back and audit later.

[1:34:18 PM]

>> Tovo: So getting back to councilmember Garza's example earlier, if you had a staff member in the audit department who is asked to research planned unit developments, their benefits and their drawbacks, would that be -- would that be something that you believe fits within the mission?

>> I think --

>> Tovo: -- Of the kind of work you do.

>> Yes, I think we could do that under our standards. I appreciate you added both -- I think we would be put in a difficult position if we were asked to provide only one side. I think our position would be -- one of our main jobs and one of the tenants we follow is objectivity so we would want to be able to present both sides, not just one on any issue.

>> Tovo: Then if you were to be asked by the council to audit planned unit developments and the city's use of those through time, would that be something that the audit -- that the auditor's office could audit, having done the initial sort of best practice work on it?

>> We could as long as the best practice work stayed away from making recommendations or suggestions for how it should be done going forward.

>> Tovo: Councilmember pool and Renteria, not put you on the spot, but I know you two had some questions about the auditor's office and how this would or would not be the appropriate place so I'll just open it up for questions from you, if you have any.

>> Renteria: Sure. And I guess since it would be under your department and since -- there would just strictly be instructed to do research and not get involved with whether this is the right thing to do or the wrong thing to do? Is that how it -- you basically structure it, you're going to structure that committee, in these added employees? What would your role be over these five employees?

>> I think that would have to be determined by the council.

[1:36:19 PM]

>> Renteria: So we can just make the decision and then give you the responsibility to implement it.

>> Technically, yes.

>> Renteria: Okay. Thank you.

>> Tovo: Councilmember pool.

>> Pool: I appreciate everything that our auditor has talked about and agree entirely with both the objective approach and the fact that you have some threshold questions that you have to ask whenever you are looking at making an assignment and assigning staff to do the research. But -- and I will say that the very very fact that it would be missing some analysis and a broader discussion that could be brought to bear if the person were a member of a councilmember's staff, for example, I think that that's a key item that would be missing. So we would then -- we would have additional information that we could get anyway without the additional people on the auditor's staff and we would still be left with the lack of capacity in our offices.

>> Tovo: So councilmember pool, do you envision the staff -- what would be the missing element? The policy recommendations? Do you envision the staff members who are being contemplated making policy recommendations?

>> Pool: I don't see this any different than the status quo currently. I can go to the --

>> Pool: I can ask the question on the puds we're suing as our example here and would get the pros and cons and best practices and that kind of analysis -- or research would come and it would be under is it the 200-hour threshold. We can do that now. There's nothing different there. What's different is I still don't have the additional capacity to work on initiatives that are pending, and the larger thinking that I'd like to engage in.

[1:38:20 PM]

>> Tovo: Councilmember Garza.

>> Garza: And I think councilmember Zimmerman articulated it perfectly, one of my biggest concerns was -- is when staff is coming from one office, reporting to one office, they're going to push -- that's natural. They're going to push the agenda of that office. My staff are amazing, wonderful people, and they might come to me with an idea, and I am the one that ultimately says that's a great idea, but, you know, that's not a priority of this office. And that's what I'm -- really is my biggest issue with staff report to go one issue -- one -- I'm sorry, one office. And concerns of -- I guess I'm not understanding -- I just feel like we were the ones that were elected to make those big decisions. We make -- I make that big decision every time I'm up here and there's an agenda item and I have to research it and I look at every -- and I meet with people and I learn the facts, and then in the end -- and I talk to the people that I, you know -- some people I value their opinion, some people I might not agree with them but I still listen to them. And in the end, we are the ultimate decision makers, and I don't -- I guess I don't understand the capacity concern there. It's -- I don't want somebody telling me what I should do. I want to know all the facts. I want to know all the stakeholders. I want to do my homework. And then I want to make my decision. And so I agree we need extra staff but I want them to play the appropriate role for us.

>> Tovo: Councilmember pool.

>> Pool: I would just say that -- my concept of it doesn't change at all the fact that I'm the one that's making the decision. And I don't think -- I hope I never communicated fact that I was handing over decision making on policy issues to anybody other than myself.

[1:40:21 PM]

But that the additional capacity would expand the number of minds that are out there delving into an issue, in addition to what the city staff already do. But I agree. I'm the one who sits up here and votes. Nobody else does. And I don't -- that should not ever have entered into the conversation with regard to anything that I've said, certainly. I'm not ceding my policy making responsibilities to anybody.

>> Tovo: Councilmember troxclair.

>> Troxclair: I just would like clarification on the pud example that we're using. If I wanted to know the pros and cons of a planned unit office, under this system we're asking you if you have five additional employees and that was their job, was so respond to questions like that, then I would call your office. I don't know if right now your office would be my first call if I was asking for the pros and cons of a planned unit development. Do you feel like that is part of your purview right now.

>> I would say if you asked a specific question like that and we felt we could answer it in less than 200 hours and we have time set aside on our current work plan to allow for those requests. They typically tend to be requests about what are some of the best practices, what are peer cities doing in this area. But we -- yes, we can answer those questions right now as long as it would take less than 200 hours.

>> Troxclair: But when you were responding to mayor pro tem tovo's question about that example, were you answering it within the framework of the proposal that we're discussing, which is having five additional employees to do that kind of work for council? Or were you answering it within the -- your current staffing limits?

>> I would say both.

[1:42:23 PM]

>> Troxclair: Okay.

>> Just in terms of the kinds of services we can do are limited by the standards that we follow, regardless of the -- the 200 hours is an internal limit that we set up long ago to be able to do those kind of quick, special requests, answer -- you know, provide information to a council office that asks for it. We're able to do those within our standards, we could do the same thing to a larger standard. Again, depending on the job description it's could get outside our purview pretty quickly.

>> Troxclair: How many staff members are under the purview of the auditor?

>> We have 26 and a half.

>> Troxclair: 26 and a half.

>> That's permanent positions. We also sometimes have temporaries.

>> Troxclair: Okay.

>> Tovo: I would guess, councilmember troxclair, I don't know if this is where your question -- your question also contemplated that, you know, I can see us also directing that kind of a question to our planning and development staff as well. And so one of the things that I'm looking forward to doing is going through Mr. Bray's presentation a little more closely because they have come up with a staffing plan to help coordinate the logistics of the committee, as well as the content area expertise from the departments themselves, as well as the city manager experience. So, again, I think for those who have brought forward the main proposal, I would like to better understand how these additional positions, where wherever they are, how they would operate within that existing structure and what is the -- I hate this expression, but what is the value added? Where do they get us that we can't achieve with our existing plan? And I think that was -- you know, as I listened to the conversation, the point that councilmember Garza made and the points that councilmember pool made, I think we still are not all understanding each other about what these positions will do beyond research.

[1:44:26 PM]

What are the expectations that they will do beyond research and policy information? Will they be making recommendations? Will they not be making recommendations? And in they're not -- councilmember pool, do you want to --

>> Pool: It sounds like you are discounting the level of expertise and time and thoughtfulness that goes into all of those things. It isn't just research. That's the bulk of the work that we do, is understanding an issue entirely and looking at different ways to get to agreed-upon goals. And it just sounded a little -- I don't think you meant it to sound dismissive but to say that the additional capacity is only for research or -- and whether they write recommendations or not, I mean, that's a lot of what our staff members do currently, and I am specifically looking for additional support in the same frame as my policy advisors provide to me now on my staff. Some folks call them policy AIDS. They're called policy advisors in my office. There isn't anything new about that. It's the construct that we have in front of us currently. It would just be an additional body, where that person could sit, I mentioned earlier on, we have additional desks in our office that were put in there with the new configuration and the person could sit there. I have an intern currently that I have on payroll that I've brought in to assist when one of my staff goes on leave in a couple of months. So we've already planned for that. So looking down the road, we dealt with that. And having the additional support, we have room for that as well as. So it isn't anything - - so two things. One, please don't be dismissive of the research and analysis and recommendation work that the additional capacity would give and the fact is we do have room for folks in our offices.

[1:46:28 PM]

That was all I was looking for.

>> Tovo: Yeah. By no means did I mean to dismiss the nature of research. I've spent a good deal of my professional life doing exactly that. I fully understand the value of it. I did hear you say the word "Recommendation," so that I think gets us -- we just need to, I think -- I think between annoy and then and the 25th, if we could all take a look at the operational questions and see if there's more we can add or if there are additional questions that we should have on this list, I think it would be helpful to use our message board to add those. The structural questions we've spent certainly -- certainly spent some time talking about the second piece of that, and we haven't specifically addressed the city clerk's office. Councilmember troxclair, I know you brought that forward as a recommendation. And we do have our city clerk here, if you'd like to -- if you have any questions for her about whether this would work operationally from her perspective, we could certainly talk about that. I don't know if anyone wants to address the first on this issue, or if we want to talk -- since we've got about 15 more minutes, I think we need to be strategic about our time and figure out what else we need to talk about today and what other questions we want to have on our list or answers from staff about in the next couple of weeks.

>> Troxclair: In your opinion, do you feel like the kind of role, the kind of staff and the kind of role they would play we've been talking about would be more [indiscernible] To the city clerk or the city auditor's office.

>> I'm not sure I have an opinion on whether it's more appropriate in one or the other. Janet Goodall, city clerk, for the record. I think what we would probably could is take a similar approach to what Corey outlined even know we're not following audibility stand lines, to do it more as a comprehensive review, if you proposed a question to us.

[1:48:30 PM]

I'm not sure I'd want to get in between two competing policy viewpoints from different councilmembers who might be on a committee and trying to figure out -- and get into the perception that we might be responding to one side and not the other. We would probably approach it where you asked us a general question, we went out and researched it and came back with all of the information we could find to present to you so that you can make the decision. Even if that meant, like, researching what other cities are doing, et cetera that, whole gamut of possibilities. And then from the operational standpoint, I guess they would officially report to me, but I think we would work out, if comb so chose, some type of method where we solicit feedback from those councilmembers who are -- they're getting the support provided to them to make sure that these employees are doing a good job, fulfilling what you need so that we can evaluate them on the city's appropriate scoring rank.

>> Troxclair: In my proposal I included both the clerk and auditedder because we hadn't had a chance to fully talk about either of those options. So I wanted to allow councilmembers the opportunity to have input into that discussion. It seems like from the discussion today, if we are going to add five new people and if we are going to choose a department other than the city council or the mayor's office for them to be housed, it seems like the job descriptions that we have been talking about would be more in line with what the city auditor currently does.

>> Tovo: Councilmember Renteria.

>> Renteria: Directed to the city clerk, but I do have a lot of concerns, you know, because basically when we first started out, it was these five members, added staff were going to be focusing on the most pressing issues that are facing the city of Austin, which is affordable housing, transportation.

[1:50:51 PM]

You know, it was these type of big-picture items that was first discussed when the mayor brought up these five added positions. And now, you know, I'm really concerned that we're just going to have five individuals out there and you're going to have competing committees all wanting to have their issues addressed first. And it really is concerning me how we're going to set that up. And who gets the more -- most time. Who is going to focus on what committee, if there's two committees and one needs 500 hours worth of research and the other one needs just a hundred hours of research, but later on they say, well, you know, you're not putting enough time, giving enough attention to my committee. So there's a lot of other questions that I'm really thinking. But somehow we're kind of missing the big picture of why we need it. The five individuals was to address the problems, the most pressing items that we're facing here in the city of Austin. And that really -- not really just be out there looking over our shoulder at our committee level, saying, well, you know, what do I need to do for you? Should I help you set up this and that? I just -- that's not what I see these five members are -- were supposed to be hired for, and I think that's where we should just keep the big picture of noted -- you know, I'm going to be able to survive with my committee without, you know, having these people focusing on my local committee on housing issues, but I would rather having them helping me on the bigger picture than setting up my committee.

>> Tovo: Thank you, councilmember Renteria. I think you've added a few questions to our list that are important to talk about, how would their time be allocated, et cetera. I guess one other would be how we arrive at a decision about what those big picture items are as a council.

[1:52:58 PM]

Councilmember Zimmerman.

>> Zimmerman: Thank you, mayor pro tem. I want to go back to something that the city manager chief of staff Mr. Bray mentioned. He put up a brief slide show that I think underscored some of the additional

work that's going to be coming our way, both as councilmembers and the mayor, I think, will have additional work as well. Just sitting here thinking about it, I thought wouldn't it be great if we had those resources reporting to the elected councilmembers instead of those resources being in the city manager's office. Wouldn't that be great? And I'm going to go back to what happened to me in the work session. We had a -- I had a policy idea on the art and construction. I do need some research on that, right? I need -- and I don't have it. And so when we're talking about these new committees and you have one you're doing here, wouldn't it be great if you had someone that could help you with the particular work for this committee. They would report to you. I would support that. They would support you as, you know, chair of the committee. And they would help you with policy questions or whatever you needed them to do. Then that way your committee could be a little more independent and not have to depend on the city staff resources.

>> Tovo: Councilmember Zimmerman, I appreciate that point. I think for me it would be a question of how we allocate that staff person's resources and it would be necessary to take some kind of action ahead of time to make sure it's the will of the committee as a whole to do that kind of research. You know what I'm saying? Those are -- typically those are best brought as a resolution saying it's the will of this group to look into ways to lower our construction costs and that this is, you know -- you know, send the staff to look at how much we would save if we no longer had a 2% for art program, for example, and then have them report back?

>> Zimmerman: I'd still be comfortable with you directing that new employee as the chair of your committee both for your district and the city at large.

[1:55:06 PM]

I guess I'd rather see each of our new customers have a resource reporting to the elected official instead of having to come from city staff.

>> Tovo: Thank you. Councilmember troxclair.

>> Troxclair: So would that be the last option that I suggested earlier we added to our spreadsheet, which is that each councilperson have the ability to hire one new full-time staffer that they could assign however they see fit, but in this context they could assign them to help with the committee or to do constituent work or however that councilmember sees fit?

>> Zimmerman: I could see that fitting in there, yes. That's a possibility.

>> Troxclair: And I guess I want to ask that same question too to councilmember pool because when you were talking earlier you were talking about having a new person being physically housed in your office. So is that kind of what you were referring to as well, having a staff member that you hired specifically in your office that could help you start and manage the committee?

>> Pool: You know, I personal care if I personally hire the person or if the person comes from the list who had indicated their interest in helping. So I'm agnostic on who does the hiring. There are a number of excellent people who are willing to help us out, and I would betology work with any number of them. As far as who hires them, if they need to be on my payroll, that's fine with me. So if they're on a payroll that is assigned to the mayor pro tem or the mayor, it all -- that works for me too. I see the direct line directly to me, which is why I'm not enthusiastic or eager about assigning either to our most excellent city clerk and our most excellent city auditor.

[1:57:09 PM]

It obviously doesn't have anything to do with those folks, if just that I see the assignments come directly from me.

>> Troxclair: Okay, thank you.

>> Tovo: So we are at our time almost. As we look over the questions regarding financial, we have some information, I believe, coming from staff. Am I understanding correctly that staff have begun to look at vacant positions that would be proposed to -- well, let me ask our staff, and I'm not sure to whom to direct this, but what do you see as your direction, the direction you received from council at our last hearing to begin to look at some of the financial options were the council to propose -- were the council to adopt a proposal that either reassigns vacant staff positions or asks you to go and find funding for as many as 11 new positions? I guess we -- the 11 just came up today. So let's say five.

>> We would look at all the alternatives that have been presented and try and cost them out as best we can. And that may include the high and the low or a range of dollars, but.

>> Tovo: Any other contents comments from our staff about what research you are undertaking as a result of the council discussion?

>> I recall there being some back and forth about if we were looking at existing staff positions, whether or not we're talking about for the remainder of this fiscal year and we would address permanent needs as part of the fy16 budget process if if you're talking about looking at positions that would forever more be transferred to some other office because I think that changes the dynamic quite a bit. I think many departments would report back that if -- you know, there may be situations where a position is currently hold up in a lengthy reclassification look by hrd is will take four or five months, in which case obviously they can get by for four or five months without that position but they have a need for it longer term.

[1:59:26 PM]

So the longer term issue I think becomes a lot more problematic when you're looking at taking vacant positions that in the -- short term solution. That's not been clear to me yet, what you're looking at.

>> Tovo: Councilmember Zimmerman.

>> Zimmerman: Thanks. Quick question. What is the -- there are some statistics on that, right? If you're talking 130 people, right, that have open ftes, right now, is that right?

>> It's 130, ed corrected me, it's 130 that are over six months old, that have been vacant over six months.

>> Zimmerman: Do we know how much are 12s? Are there any over 12 months or 18 months, et cetera? Do we know?

>> We have the information. I don't know it off the top of my head.

>> Zimmerman: Don't know it off the top of your head. It's probably statistical distribution, the longer it goes the fewer there are open but there could be some that have been out there maybe more than a year, year and a half or so and then that would beg the question if these were so urgently needed, they should have already been filled. So, you know, we might presume that we could move those over safely without any dramatic effect because it's already been a year, year and a half and no one has been in that job so we could move them to the council and no one would notice a difference. Again, thinking out loud.

>> Tovo: Councilmember, I think I hear a question from you about some more information about vacant positions here at the -- within the city, time period they're vacant. I will say we have had some pretty thorough discussions about vacant positions over the last couple budget cycles so there's extensive answers about what those vacant positions are but maybe our staff can update us about that.

>> Zimmerman: One more quick comment if I could. I remember during our extensive discussion, you were talking about how there's a tendency, right, when you make something temporary it becomes permanent. And I think you made that point very well, and I agree with you more than 100%.

[2:01:29 PM]

>> Tovo: Wow.

>> Zimmerman: No, I do.

[Laughter]

>> Zimmerman: It's temporary, it's temporary, it's temporary, next thing you do it becomes permanent. So I'm kind of with you. I'd like us to try to get something that makes sense, get it right. We can call it temporary but typically these things have a way of turning into being permanent. So we'll see if we can get something right that makes sense for us to continue with.

>> Tovo: And I would ask our financial staff to provide us with a little information, maybe at our next meeting, about what the financial options are for each of those. Because the transferring is a more permanent solution. Councilmember Garza.

>> Garza: Mayor pro tem I want to thank you for allowing me to participate in this discussion because I'm not on the committee but it's an issue I'm very concerned about. I think these two hours have really shown us there are still so many questions about what these positions are. Each one of us has articulated what had we thought was a different role. Each one of us has articulated what we think that role should be, and I absolutely agree 100% with councilmember pool, it sounds to me, what would really be helpful is an additional staff person in each of our offices that answers to us, that -- and making that equal is something in a that I strongly support or leaving it as it was because I also have concerns about the impact. I know a lot of the concerns about 10-1 was, oh, great, now we're going to have three more council people and have to hire additional staff which I agree is an issue for austinities. They don't want any additional costs. So I just -- I think this has shown us that there's still so many questions about what role these staff people would be playing.

>> Zimmerman: I just want to say thank you.

>> Tovo: Councilmember Zimmerman.

>> Zimmerman: Thank you, mayor pro tem, for allowing us to contribute. I really, really appreciate that. Back to the point of councilmember Garza, if the positions came out of existing ftes, right, maybe there wouldn't be a financial burden.

[2:03:36 PM]

Great point. I'm a fiscal conservative, don't like adding costs but if we can reallocate, that would get me on board with it. Thank you again.

>> Tovo: Absolutely. You're more than welcome and I would encourage you to all come back on the tag as well. Councilmember pool, any last comments, thoughts, any information you would like to see our staff pull together for our next meeting? Or any questions that you think should be in the MIX?

>> Pool: I don't have anything right now. I thank you all for all the work you did in advance to prepare for this meeting and I know we'll be getting the additional Numbers from the city manager's office that was asked for previously. So I think we're good.

>> Tovo: Great. I would say as we think of things in the next week or two, let's use our message board to communicate because I think it's really important that we make some progress on this. Councilmember Renteria, do you have any last thoughts or any questions that you would like to see us address or any information you would like to see staff help us pull together between now and the 25th?

>> Renteria: I'll just go ahead and --

>> Tovo: Super. Vice chair Troxclair? Any . . .

>> Troxclair: Thank you for trying to keep us on track and for the preparation that went into kind of outlining the questions we need to answer.

>> Tovo: Sure. Well, thank you. Thank you all. Thanks again to our staff. All right. We stand adjourned at 2:04.