

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Meeting
September 12, 1977

Council Chambers
301 West Second Street

The meeting was called to order with Mayor McClellan presiding.

Roll Call:

Present: Mayor McClellan, Mayor Pro Tem Snell, Councilmembers
Cooke, Goodman, Himmelblau, Mullen, Trevino

Absent: None

Mayor McClellan stated that this was a Special Called Meeting for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on the 1977-78 annual operating budget.

Hancock Fire Station

KERMIT VOELKEL, 6004 Shoalcrest Boulevard, spoke in opposition to the closing of the Hancock Fire Station. He cited some statistics to support his position.

Employee Pay Raise

JOE PINNELLI, Business Agent for AFSCME Local 1624, stated that the 650 members of the Local had voted to ask for a 10% pay raise for all employees earning less than \$16,000 per year, which he said constituted 78% of the City's work force. He then introduced MR. BILL EMORY, who prepared a cost of living and budget analysis for AFSCME.

Mr. Emory discussed a chart he had prepared comparing since 1971-72 to the present fiscal year the cost of living in Austin, the cost of food in Austin and the cost of living pay increases granted by the City. He stated that during that time period there was a 15% gap between the cost of living increase and pay raises. The gap between food cost increases and pay raises was even greater. Under the City's proposed 5% pay increase the gap between cost of living and pay increases would be 20%.

In response to Councilmember Cooke's question, Mr. Emory stated that food prices and cost of living figures did not come from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. He had used the Baylor-Hankamer Retail Food Price Index because it was figured on the Central Texas area. He had compared the Index to the

Consumer Price Index for the City of Houston and found that the cost of food had risen more rapidly than the Consumer Price Index indicated. He felt that it was inappropriate to use the Consumer Price Index.

In response to Councilmember Mullen's question, Mr. Emory stated that he did not take merit raises into consideration because those raises were not meant to cover cost of living increases. Councilmember Mullen then asked about the effect of reclassification. Mr. Emory stated that he did not have specific figures on the effect of reclassification. He did note that the proposed budget contained \$320,000 in the General Fund summary for reclassification. Mr. Davidson stated that about \$1 million had been budgeted previously for reclassification expense.

In response to Councilmember Mullen's question, Budget Director Daron Butler stated that the \$320,000 covered the cost of reclassification for General Fund employees only, and covered the period from May 13, 1977, through September 30, 1977. About \$200,000 additional money would be transferred to the Hospital for reclassification. The working capital accounts currently were absorbing the cost of reclassification. No specific reclassification cost had been identified in the Utility Fund because it was expected that the Fund would pay its reclassification expenses in this budget year. That Fund will have an ending balance above the figure projected last year. Not all of the \$1 million allocated for reclassification last year would be spent this fiscal year (1976-77). The difference would be found in the \$2,224,000 beginning balance budgeted for 1977-78. The approximate cost of reclassification for FY 1977-78 would be \$1,750,000. The total increase in salaries, including 113 new employees was projected to be \$9,417,623 for FY 1977-78. About \$400,000 of the original \$1 million allocated for reclassification was included in the beginning balance for FY 1977-78. The total percentage increase in salaries for FY 1977-78 was 12.5%.

Mr. Emory said that he could not see how the amount budgeted for new employees would benefit existing employees. He wondered who really benefitted from the reclassification.

PECK YOUNG, with Riemer, Kaplan, Duncan and Young, presented AFSCME's salary proposal which totaled \$7,556,560 to be funded as follows: \$4,393,916 (5% proposed by City), \$484,720 (1% reduction in City operating expenses) and \$2,677,924 (transfer from ending balance). Councilmember Mullen requested and Mr. Young agreed to furnish copies of his sources of information for the presentation.

JIM LUMPKIN, Storekeeper I, Brackenridge Hospital, spoke in support of a pay raise for City employees.

JOE CAMARILLO, Purchasing & Stores, felt that the City was losing good personnel because salaries were insufficient.

FRITZ BOCKELMAN, 2500 Bitter Creek Drive, a power plant employee, stated that there were 139 employees in his section. 17 people in the section had quit since the first of the year. He said that a 10% attrition rate was not acceptable in industry or in the City. He spoke in favor of higher pay for power plant employees. In response to Councilmember Goodman's question, Mr. Bockelman stated that the power plant ran 24 hours a day, and that power plant employees would like a shift differential.

JIM PERRER, Public Service Helper at Zilker Park, stated that he had to moonlight to make ends meet.

LARRY HILL, AFSCME staff member, stated that the City should abolish the merit increase system and go into a longevity program. He stated that minorities were being denied merit increases in some departments of the City. He asked that the Council initiate some sort of program to get rid of bad supervisors. Mayor Pro Tem Snell stated that the charges were very serious and asked Mr. Hill if he could substantiate any of them. Mr. Hill said he could back up every charge he had made.

Mr. Hill also charged that in Electric Underground Utilities and the Water and Wastewater Department that jobs were being posted after they were already filled. In response to Mayor Pro Tem Snell's question, Mr. Hill stated that he was not entirely satisfied with the Affirmative Action Report which was distributed about a month ago and that the employees represented by AFSCME were not satisfied.

Mr. Pinnelli concluded the presentation by stating that the City would save money by investing in its work force because efficiency would increase, morale would increase and employee turnover would decrease.

ROYAL MASSET, Executive Director, Austin Citizens League, stated that the League generally felt that the City Manager's proposed budget was a good one and was fiscally responsible.

DON BELL suggested several ways in which the City could save money or increase its revenues.

MRS. RAE PEARL BLOEBAUM spoke in support of a \$10,000 homestead exemption for senior citizens. She stated that the local Democratic women's organization had just officially endorsed that amount and that a letter would be sent to the Council by that organization. She also stated that a Texas coastal City had just given senior citizens a \$4,500 increase in their homestead exemption, bringing it up to \$7,500.

MRS. HANK LYSEK spoke in support of retaining Hancock Golf Course and not turning it into a park. She stated that in 1976, 28,000 rounds of golf were played on the Course, and about 75% of the players were young people and senior citizens. Upon completion of the Senior Citizens Center located at 29th Street and Lamar Boulevard, it would be convenient for those citizens to use the Hancock Golf Course. Mrs. Lysek asked that the golf course be retained and not turned into a park, since the area was within a triangle of parks. Councilmember Goodman stated that a report had been received which indicated that it would cost \$58,000 to operate the course. With a reduced level of maintenance, it would cost \$43,000 to operate the course.

MRS. GLORIA ARRIANO, representing the Southwest Austin Homeowners Association, stated that the Association favored retaining the Truth in Selling ordinance and the continued enforcement of the Leash Law.

DAVID MOHLER, who lived about 1-1/2 blocks from the Hancock Golf Course, wanted to know what were the longrange plans for the golf course if it were turned into a park. He was concerned about what effect closing the golf course would have on joggers, since he was one.

City Manager Davidson stated that there were no plans at present for the golf course. Jack Robinson stated that jogging would continue to be encouraged at the park site. Part of a longrange plan would be better jogging facilities. If the course were closed, it would cost \$25,000 annually to maintain the park. Mr. Mohler stated that he would like to be involved in the decision-making regarding the park.

WAYNE WHATLEY, President, Town & Country Christian School, which was adjacent to the golf course, wondered why the golf course should be closed and replaced with a park. He stated that the Parks and Recreation Board had voted unanimously recently to keep the golf course open. The Planning Commission had recommended closing the course.

There was discussion between Councilmember Goodman and Mr. Robinson as to why the Parks and Recreation Board was not involved in the early discussions regarding the closing of the golf course prior to the Planning Commission's recommendation. City Manager Davidson stated that the Planning Commission's recommendation came as they reviewed the CIP. His recommendation came after looking at the Planning Commission's recommendation in connection with the Operating Budget. Mr. Robinson pointed out that the golfers had been told that when the Jimmy Clay Course was built Hancock Golf Course would be phased out when the next 18-hole course was built. It had been anticipated that the next one would be built starting in 1980; however, play had decreased with the opening of private clubs. At this time there was no need for additional golf courses. In response to Councilmember Goodman's question, Mr. Robinson stated that the longrange plan for Hancock was to turn it into a lifetime sports area. No master plan had been developed at this time.

Councilmember Cooke expressed concern over what the Council would be buying down the line with regard to Hancock Golf Course if it were closed. It was an important question which needed to be answered. He felt that there should be at least some preliminary indication as to what could be expected. Mr. Robinson said that he would not know until he talked with the neighborhood. Councilmember Cooke stated that he was not addressing the golf course issue, but was concerned over future costs for a facility at Hancock. Mr. Robinson said that at this time the Council was buying an open space area for \$25,000 a year at a savings of between \$40,000 and \$50,000 a year. Beyond that point, extensive planning would be undertaken to develop the area.

In response to Councilmember Himmelblau's question regarding the reducing of the deficit at Hancock Golf Course, Mr. Robinson said that attempts had been made to increase the level of play, but had not put the course in the black. However, it did cost less to operate the 18-hole course at Muny (about \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year less) than the 9-hole course at Hancock.

In response to Mr. Whatley's question regarding the years being compared, Mr. Robinson stated that he was looking at the current operation of the courses in the projected budget. Mr. Whatley felt that the money spent to improve Muny made it more desirable to play on, and that if more money had been spent on Hancock, the level of play might improve there. Mr. Robinson pointed out that the level of play at Muny was about the same as before improvements to the course. Mr. Whatley recommended that an advisory council for the preservation of Hancock be created. He offered to serve on the council.

MRS. FRED BARNES, 700 East 41st Street, spoke in support of the Hancock Golf Course. She stated that the construction of a new park would be more costly than simply maintaining the one already at Hancock.

MR. ROGER DUNCAN, speaking for the Citizens Budget Task Force, told the Council that there was a need for zero based budgeting. He stated that the City budget lacked policy options. Mr. Duncan cited a budget taken from the State Water Quality Board which contained program options based on budgetary limitations.

MS. BARBARA CILLEY, also of the Citizens Budget Task Force, felt that the City was getting into a trend that was declining services to the inner-City area. She felt that the decrease in CIP funding for the year should be accounted for and that the fiscal budget should be presented in printed volumes as has been done in the past. Ms. Cilley recommended including graphical comparisons in the budget between the currently proposed budget and past budgets. She stated that monies for approach main contracts comes out of the CIP and the operating budget and should be monitored with care. Ms. Cilley stated that money should be allocated in this year's budget for implementation of the City Master Plan. She suggested that the following items have funds allocated to them:

1. Satellite surveillance
2. Computer-Management information system
3. A quality of life map

In regards to the Bull Creek lateral connection, City Manager Dan Davidson stated that such matters came before the Planning Commission unless projects required extensions, in which case the matter would then come before the Council. In regards to satellite surveillance, Councilmember Cooke indicated that such an undertaking could not yield precise enough information to be of any benefit to the City.

MR. JOE RIDDELL indicated that the City's utility debt was worsening all the time. He stated that the City debt could be lessened if immediate payments were made for services received rather than deferring debts. He pointed out that this could be accomplished by raising the utilities and the taxes. Mr. Riddell stated that minimizing the demands for City services would also help reduce the municipal debt. He stated that new urban developments could be made to pay a bigger cost share, which would also help reduce debt. Mr. Riddell indicated that the encouragement of City growth within the Master Plan growth corridor would save money for the City whereas the occurrence of growth outside of the growth corridor would incur expense to the City. He stated that curtailment of municipal growth would also tend to reduce City expenditures. Mr. Riddell referred to recommendations made by former Budget Director, Joe Liro, outlining increases in the fees charged to subdivision developers. He also suggested laying part of the burden of cost for utility extensions upon the persons demanding service.

MS. JEAN MATHER, representing Austin Neighborhood Association, told the Council that she was concerned that the budget track concepts laid down in the City Master Plan. Ms. Mather read a list of proposed budget cuts:

1. Special contracts with community and cultural organizations, \$300,000.
2. Delayed opening of three new playgrounds, \$14,500.
3. Enforcement of City leash law, \$51,000
4. Dental Hygienist, \$21,500
5. Truth in Selling Ordinance, \$12,500
6. Tuition Reimbursement Program, \$45,000
7. Closing of Rosewood-Zaragosa Library, \$51,000
8. Reduction in the hours of our branch libraries, \$17,500

TOTAL CUT - \$513,000.

Ms. Mather stated that these cuts amounted to .36% of the total budget and that so small a percentile should be easy to reflect somewhere. As President of the South River City Citizens Organization, Ms. Mather indicated that her organization was concerned about enforcement of the City Leash Law. She expressed support for the law. She stated that the closing of the Twin Oaks Branch Library was also of concern to her organization.

MS. DEBORAH SHAW, a member of the South River City Citizens organization, spoke in support of the Twin Oaks Branch Library. She indicated that potentially there were 20 nursery schools that used the library in the morning hours.

MR. ROGER TAYLOR, Vice-President of the Alamo Recreation Center Advisory Board, told the Council that Alamo Park was in need of City funds. He asked that the Council consider Alamo Park in its budget deliberations.

MR. JERRY LOBDILL, representing the McCarty Lane Neighborhood Association, spoke before the Council. Mr. Lobdill indicated that the closing of the Hancock Fire Station would degrade fire protection in the area surrounding the Station. He said that the fact that fire protection was needed in the periphery of the City was no reason for degrading fire protection in the inner City areas. In regards to the Truth in Selling Ordinance, Mr. Lobdill indicated that the majority of opposition to the Ordinance came mostly from developers. He asked the Council to re-fund enforcement of the Ordinance.

MS. HELEN SPEAR, a member of the Library Commission, spoke before the Council. She urged the Council to adopt the budget that was previously submitted to the City Manager's Office by the Library Commission. Ms. Spear pointed out that the City libraries, in particular, would suffer a serious loss in the amount of services it could provide if the budget as presented by the City Manager is adopted.

MR. JOE STREET, Director of the State Special Olympics Program, spoke before the Council. He stated that Austin had one of the better recreational programs for the handicapped in the State. Mr. Street spoke in support of a recreational leader position being budgeted for the Parks and Recreation Department. He indicated that a 4% reduction in the PARD budget would eliminate this position. Mr. Street requested that the Council not reduce the PARD budget beyond the 3% level, as this would eliminate certain staff positions.

MS. ANABELLE GAGE, Director of the Faith Presbyterian Kindergarten Day Care Center, spoke before the Council. Ms. Gage spoke in opposition to the closing of branch libraries in the South part of town. She felt that there was some other way the City budget could be improved.

MR. W. D. GREGG told the Council that the rate of population growth in the City was out of proportion with the increases in utility costs. He stated that the Firemen's Retirement Fund was under funded. Mr. Davidson stated that the retirement programs were sound and were above the national average.

MS. MARTHA SIMMONS, representing the Environmental Health Volunteers, asked that the Council reconsider the additional amount of \$64,000 requested by the Environmental Health Section. She indicated that the Council had cut this amount by almost one half.

MR. VIRGIL HUMPHREYS spoke in support of maintaining the Hancock Golf Course. Mr. Humphreys indicated that he had heard that the level of maintenance at the course was being cut down because the Council was planning to close the course. Mr. Jack Robinson, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, indicated that the level of maintenance at the course has not been reduced. He stated that one person at the course had quit and that the position was being temporarily slotted until a determination was made on the future of the course. Councilmember Goodman suggested charging no entry fees for the course and maintaining Hancock at a minimum level, providing maintenance personnel only.

MR. ALAN BUSSLER, a City of Austin employee, spoke in favor of the City employees pay increase.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjournedaat 9:55 p.m.

ATTEST:



City Clerk

APPROVED



Mayor