

Austin Water Oversight Committee (AWOC) meeting Transcript – 11/28/2023

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[9:00:41 AM]

I'll call to order the Austin city council for this work session. It is November 28th, 2023. It's 9:00 in the morning. We are meeting in the city council chambers located in city hall at 301 west second street in Austin. And we have a quorum of the council present members and public the way we're going to proceed is we're going to go ahead and start with the work session. When a quorum is present for the Austin water oversight committee, we will receive this the work session and have the water oversight have council member pool, who's chair of that committee, called to order that oversight committee. They will hold a very brief meeting and then we will come back to the work session. So just be prepared for us to stop when we get to that, what we're going to do first is we will take up to briefings. One briefing is related to the home

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briefing is related to the home initiative. The second briefing is related to winter preparedness and then there have been a couple of items that have been pulled. And we will take those up the way this morning. Will also probably operate is that because of a commitment that I have, I will turn the gavel over the virtual gavel over to the mayor pro tem, actually see that she's joining virtually. So I will turn the gavel over to council member pool to preside over the meeting when it's when I have to leave. So with that, I'll turn to staff. If yes, councilmember fuentes, can you remind me which items have been pulled for today?

>> Items item 21 and item 84 have been pulled. Okay is one of those related to the urban trails? Yes okay. Thank you.

>> All right. Whoever is going to start the staff presentation on the home initiative, I'll

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on the home initiative, I'll recognize you.

>> Yes.

>> Assistant city manager veronica briseno.

>> Thank you, ma'am.

>> Good morning, mayor and council. Veronica briceno, assistant city manager. Happy to be here with you today. Today staff will be presenting to you an update on the home initiative. As you know, this is something that we have been working on for the past several months. It is following through with a council policy and priorities. We now are here before you with planning commission recommendations as well. We've heard numerous points of view as we've gone through this process, all of them legitimate and staff has worked tirelessly, tirelessly to bring this forward to you. So would like, as a personal point of privilege, take an opportunity to thank our staff, our multiple departments. Yes, you'll see a handful of them here today. But just know they stand before many. So thank you to our staff for your your your efforts. We'll give a brief presentation. We want to update you on where we are now from the last time we were before you about a month ago, followed by our staff presentation, we will hear from the from the American

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hear from the from the American institute of architects who will present modeling on what potential scenarios could look like with these amendments. We look forward to hear from you. Any potential council amendments that you'll be bringing forward, this will allow us the time before we get to our meeting next week to take those amendments and draft some language that you have something to consider on the seventh, on December 7th. We also encourage you to continue to use the question and answer portal. Hopefully this has been been been beneficial to you. It has to us. We've had about 100 questions so far and again, staff is working hard to provide you the information that you need to make these important decisions. So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to our assistant director over planning, andrea bates, and she will walk us through this presentation, if you don't mind, what we might do is we now have a quorum of the water oversight committee.

>> So just before you start and we might take care of that and get that out of the way, and without objection, I'll recess the work session of the Austin city council. Councilmember pool .

>> I'm leslie pool and I chair the Austin water oversight committee. We had a special

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committee. We had a special called meeting to conduct at very brief business this morning and having said that and seeing that I have a quorum of our membership here with council members, allison alter and jose velasquez, as well as myself. I call this meeting of the Austin water oversight committee to order on. 9:05 a.m. We have to speakers. They will each have two minutes. And if the two could please come to the microphone. Yes a total of four minutes if we could. Time for two segments of two minutes that would be really helpful. Knell and if you could please introduce yourself and thank you so much for being here today.

>> Thank you so much. My name is kathleen buck, and thank you for letting me speak today. And I'm here to address the restoration and preservation of green space next to the davis water treatment plant that has fallen

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treatment plant that has fallen victim to the medium pump station project that began in 2016 at Austin water's first public meeting in 2012. It was never mentioned to the neighbors that the green space would be encroached upon in January 14th. The residents became concerned when the conditional use permit showed the existing fence line moving significantly into the green space. And for two years, Austin water said the space was needed for installation of ductwork. Then from 2016 to 2019, residents were told the captured space was needed for four more years for a construction staging area, and three years after that, in 2019. Also, water stated that removal of the old pump station was required before the space would be restored, restored, and this November residents were told it would be about another year before the green space would be restored. Even though in 1987, city resolution Ann limits Austin water to only temporarily entering the green space to place water, wastewater, electrical lines and requires also water to maintain the green space. It's the residents that have been the ones trying to protect, restore and maintain this green space. I understand

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this green space. I understand the necessity of infrastructure projects, but it is equally important to mitigate the impact of those projects on the urban green spaces. So I'm here today to ask this committee three things to one, find out why Austin water was allowed to capture the green space for reasons other than those defined in the in the resolution Ann and to be able to hold on to the captured space going on seven plus years now, two to encourage also water to speed up restoring the green space, including giving the residents a detailed timeline of the phases left to be finished by mateus and to create and install a long term comprehensive maintenance plan that is above and beyond the current inadequate standards. Thank you for your help in this and thank you for your time today.

>> Thank you so much. And yes, sir, you are next. And you have two minutes as well. Thank you for being here.

>> Good morning. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me to speak here today. My name is phil buck and I'm here because the davis water treatment plant

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the davis water treatment plant construction project has been simply a disaster for residents. It has been going on for way too long. The neighbors feel that the green space has been restored and should have been restored long ago. We have reason to believe that Austin water purposefully delayed completion of this project. We only have circumstantial evidence currently, but we continue to look for concrete proof. What we do know is that for two and a half years, Austin water told neighbors the project couldn't be completed because they needed the old pump station as a backup to the quote, unreliable new pump station. We now know that this was a farce. After an email from my wife, kathleen to councilwoman alter, in which she voiced her concern for the reliability of the pump station and informing the councilwoman that we were seeking help from Austin water. Finally capitulated with within just a few days while we're happy that now the there agreeing to tear down the old pump station, we are disappointed that Austin water is telling us that it'll take

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is telling us that it'll take about a year to restore the green space much too long considering we're in our eighth year of this project that was supposed to take 40 months. You're probably asking yourselves, why would Austin water purposefully want to delay completion of the project? We think the answer lies in these pictures right here on this poster. The contract for mateus is using a portion of the green space to store everything from their heavy construction equipment and piles of dirt to other unsightly material in the construction industry. This is called an industry outdoor storage area or iOS, and they normally charge a hefty price to contractors. The questions you should be asking yourselves now is how is Austin water benefit? By allowing mateus to use this green space is Austin water receiving money or a better deal on other projects awarded to mateus in exchange for allowing them to use the green space? Is this arrangement spelled out in the construction contract or is this a side deal? Please please help all the residents by finding the answer to these questions. I pose here today.

[9:09:48 AM]

questions. I pose here today.

>> Thank you, Mr. Buck. Thank you. Appreciate you and your wife being here today. Councilmember alter, thank you.

>> I would like to ask that after we conclude the Austin water, if director Roalson or good can please meet with these neighbors about next steps. Thank you.

>> Thanks so much. So we have. You bet we have two items of action. One is the approval of the minutes of August 23rd, 2023, the regular meeting of the Austin Austin water oversight committee. And then we will talk about item number two, which is to approve the 2024 Austin water oversight committee meeting schedules. First, do I have a motion to approve the minutes? Council member Velasquez with council member Allison Alter? Second, are there any objections to adopting these minutes? Seeing none they are adopted? The 2024 water oversight committee meeting schedule is as follows. Thursday, Feb 28, 2024 Shaw Thursday, May 9th, 2024. Thursday, September 19, 2024.

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Thursday, September 19, 2024. Tuesday November 12th, 2024. All four meetings begin at 130 in the afternoon. Ann is there any discussion about these dates? I think they've all been vetted with your offices. Do I have a motion to approve these dates? Councilmember Allison Alter with a second from councilmember Velasquez. Any discussion, any objections? These dates are adopted. Thank you, staff, for working with my staff to get these dates organized and holding the special called meeting and mayor. We are adjourned. The Austin water oversight committee at 911.