



**MINUTES
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MONDAY, JULY 6, 2026
6:30 PM
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steve King, Council Member-At-Large Jeff Austin, Council Member Rebecca Waller, Council Member Jason Baskin, Council Member Mike Postma, Council Member Laura Helle, Council Member Oballa Oballa, Council Member Paul Fischer

MEMBERS ABSENT:

MEMBERS LATE/EXITING:

STAFF PRESENT: Interim City Administrator Dave Unmacht, Police Chief Michael Hartman, Interim Fire Chief Troy Tigner, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Park, Recreation and Forestry Director Jason Schon, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, Finance Director Emily Burns and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald

1. City Hall Security Upgrades - Brianne Wolf

City Clerk Brianne Wolf stated she collaborated with IT to obtain a quote from Custom Alarm for the installation of an alarm monitoring system, security cameras on the lower level of City Hall, and panic buttons. Custom Alarm has provided a quote of \$3,947.66 for the security

upgrade. This includes the installation of an alarm panel, two motion detectors, three cameras for the lower level of City Hall, and four panic buttons. There will also be a monthly fee of \$27.00, which gives City Staff an app to arm and disarm the system remotely, check its status, manage user access, and troubleshoot without needing a technician on-site. CRC will also do alarm monitoring. Ms. Wolf stated City Hall is a public facility that houses employees, elected officials, public records, financial records, election materials, technology systems, and other essential government functions, and a monitoring system would provide several direct benefits and help reduce the City's exposure to risks. She spoke with Finance Director Emily Burns, and the funding for this project could come from contingency and then be budgeted into the 2027 City Hall budget to cover the cost of alarm monitoring.

Ms. Wolf is seeking direction on whether Council would like to proceed with installing the equipment at City Hall, budget for it in 2027, or not pursue any preventive measures.

Council Member Postma would like to know the monthly cost for monitoring of each panic button. He would like to know where the City is at with the contingency budget.

Finance Director Emily Burns confirmed there is enough funding in contingency to cover this project and the fees for the 2026 year.

Council Member Baskin is in favor of this project and taking the funding out of contingency.

a. Cameras, Panic Buttons, and Security System for City Hall Discussion

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, to approve moving this item forward to the July 20, 2026 Council meeting for approval. Carried.

2. Opportunity Zones Presentation - Holly Wallace

Development Corporation of Austin Director John Garry gave a presentation to Council to provide an informational update on Austin's Opportunity Zone application. Mr. Garry stated the Opportunity Zones are a federal program designed to encourage long-term private investment in lower-income areas by offering capital gains tax benefits to investors. The current program is being revised under "Opportunity Zone 2.0," beginning in 2027, with stricter income thresholds, fewer eligible census tracts, and a rural set-aside requiring a portion of selected zones to be in communities under 50,000 people. In Minnesota, the number of eligible zones will be reduced, making the selection process competitive.

Mr. Garry stated after reviewing eligible census tracts in Mower County, he recommends continuing with census tract 0410, which runs through the center of Austin and includes the downtown area. This tract showed the strongest combination of need and opportunity, including a high poverty rate, low median family income, limited income growth, and a history of attracting investment through seven prior Opportunity Zone projects. Staff worked with Mower County, HRA, and community development partners before submitting the application, which the Mower County Board endorsed. The City expects to learn in October whether the state will forward the tract for final federal consideration.

a. Opportunity Zones

No Action Required. Informational Presentation.

3. 2027 Budget Review

Finance Director Emily Burns gave an update on the 2027 budget. The 2027 budget timeline was presented as an informational item, outlining the work sessions and council meetings that will guide the budget process from June through the end of 2026. Ms. Burns noted the schedule closely mirrors the prior year's process, which was intentional due to several new participants in the process, including new leadership in finance, police, fire, and administration. She asked that all Council Members review the schedule to confirm these dates work or if there would need to be any changes to the schedule.

Council Member Postma clarified there would only be one extra meeting on August 24th and Ms. Burns stated that was correct.

Council Member Helle appreciated the schedule and asked the Department Heads to let the Council know if any adjustments to the timeline are needed in the future. She appreciated the schedule last year when they were able to spend time with each department to learn more about their budgets. She would be willing to spend more time on the budget if needed.

Council Member Baskin stated the schedule looked good. He would like to know if there is availability to conduct analysis between meetings moving forward.

a. Draft Budget Timeline

No action required.

4. Administrative Report

Interim City Administrator Dave Umnacht asked the Council to have patience with staff as they work through the 2027 budget. They have a lot of new staff, but their goal is to exceed Council expectations.

Mr. Umnacht then reviewed the recruitment process for the City Administrator.

Director of Human Resources Trish Wiechmann presented an informational handout that will be used in the recruitment in the City Administrator search and asked for input.

Council Member Baskin would like to work on the first page of the handout to make it more attractive. He would also like to market the Hormel Foundation, Institute, and Corporation in the brochure.

Council Member Postma would like to know who would be in the interviews.

Mr. Umnacht stated this will be on a work session when they get closer to that date to give the

Council options on what they would like to do.

Council Member Helle stated this is a great tool. Her feedback would be to have multiple perspectives all the way along this process.

5. Open Discussion

Council Member Helle requested an update on the 2025 audit.

Finance Director Emily Burns stated Tom Dankert has been working on this and is on track to get this completed on time.

Council Member Helle stated she spent time reading through the 2026 Performance Survey results and what stood out to her was the amount of incorrect information or perceptions. She stated there are a lot of comments about transparency and people looking for opportunities to engage. She would like to do better on these topics.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated moving forward through the end of 2026, during a work session, he would like to have a discussion about the guidance for the department heads on how they would go about hiring and replacing positions.

6. Adjournment

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:46 p.m.

Approved:

Mayor:

City Clerk: