

Called meeting of the City Council
Austin Tex June 15th 1884

Hon. J. W. Robertson Mayor Presiding

And Call present aldermen Hancock Wells
Campbell Schubro Maas Oriskill Crooker
Odell Hill Platt Ervin Brush and Brunner
absent aldermen Schneider Underhill
Underhill Carrington & Robinson

On motion of Alderman Brunner the marshal
was sent after the absentees
Alderman Carrington came in and
answered to his name

The following call of the council was read

Austin Texas June 15. 1884
To the members of the City Council of the City
of Austin

Gentlemen

I hereby call a special meeting of the City Council to convene this Wednesday evening June 15th 1884 at 8.30. for the purpose of taking with reference to sale of city bonds and to provide means to meet the fully interest on the bonded debt and to transact such other business as may be brought before your body
Very Respectfully

J. W. Robertson

Mayor

Aldermen Schneider and Underhill came in and answered to their names

The following message was received from his
Hon J. W. Robertson Mayor

Austin Texas June 15th 1884

Gentlemen of the Council

In entering upon the duties of the office of Mayor of the City of Austin. it is but just to myself as well as to your honorable body. that I should present a brief resume of the condition of our city affairs and make such recommendations

as I may deem expedient, as to the public policy to be pursued in the administration of the City government. I find on the very threshold of these duties, that grave responsibilities are before us, and it will require intelligence, conservatism and economy in the management of affairs. if we hope to secure to the people such a city government as they have the right to demand and expect at our hands, many complications and embarrassments exist, but by faithful adherence to principle and duty, I believe these difficulties may be easily overcome. It is well for us at this time to address ourselves to the faults as they exist, and to deal with them as best we may. In expecting this trust the people expect much of us and we, as well as the people should understand the issues before us.

It is impossible for me at this time to enter into a discussion of the necessities and wants of the City I can only refer to those most important matters that are demanding immediate and prompt attention, and to these I will address myself.

City Finances

The financial condition of the City is much embarrassed, when the present city council came into office in December, 1883 there was an outstanding bonded debt of \$99,400. out standing interest bearing warrants about \$13000. of the bonded debt \$14400. became due January 1, 1884. This with the interest bearing warrants, created an immediate demand on the treasury for about \$118,000. Your predecessors in November 1883 authorized the sale of city bonds to the amount of \$110,000. provided for under the amended charter and \$10,000 for the purpose of refunding the bonds falling due January 1. The bonds were offered for sale but for some reason were not sold. A loan of \$118,000 was negotiated on these bonds in New York and the money was used to pay off the interest warrants and January bonds. To meet this loan and prevent a sacrifice of the City Bonds this council ^{properly applied and} appropriated every dollar in the City Treasury and in this way consumed

all the special funds in the Treasury as well as the warrant revenue for the year. This course was unavoidable and was the only means of saving the City from heavy losses. These bonds released from the hypothecation are now in the hands of the City Treasurer.

The taxes for the current year are about all collected and the balance in your Treasury for all purposes does not exceed \$3,500 the interest on the bonded debt becomes due July 1st which amounts to \$4,350. The amount due the City water Company on its contract for first half of year 1854 is \$5,000 the pay roll for June will amount to about \$1,700. Valid claims against the City amount to several thousand dollars more. the exact or approximate amount I have no means of stating.

In addition to this the several funds are entitled to reimbursement for the amount used or borrowed or used from them. the withdrawal of \$78,000 from the general revenue of the current year to pay past due warrants and bonds has produced the embarrassment in which we find ourselves placed, it creates the necessity for the sale of a portion or all of the bonds authorized to be issued; and while I am opposed in principle to any increase of the bonded debt yet I see no way to avoid this result under the circumstances surrounding us. The obligations of the City are sacred and must be honored and respected. This debt is not of your creation, it comes down to us by inheritance from our predecessors. But the necessity exists and the question must be solved to the best our ability, for the good of the City.

I am advised by bankers and financiers in whom I repose great confidence, that the bonds heretofore issued cannot be sold to the advantage they should be. a part of them have been refused on account of the form of the obligation. I believe it the wiser and safer policy to repeal all ordinances authorizing the issue of bonds and to pass a new comprehensive ordinance, providing for the issue and sale of such amount of the bonds of the City as may be necessary to meet the present emergencies. such bonds to run twenty

years, redeemable after ten years at the pleasure of the City, and to bear interest at the rate of six per cent per annum payable semi annually. I would further recommend that the sale of these bonds be intrusted to some bank or banker of Austin, and he accorded a reasonable compensation for his services; otherwise you cannot expect the highest price obtainable for these bonds.

I was determined before the present city council came into office that the amount of forty thousand dollars of bonds should be sold and the proceeds used to pay the outstanding interest warrants, and the bonds maturing January, 1884 and the remainder to be appropriated to necessary permanent improvements in the City, and this policy seems to have been acquiesced in by the present city Council. If the full issue as proposed be sold it would create a fund of several thousand dollars that might be profitably invested in permanent works and improvements. These matters are for your consideration, and I invite the exercise of your careful and prudent judgment.

Street improvements

The streets of the City of Austin are in a most deplorable condition. In portions of the City they are impassable for vehicles. A great deal of money has been expended on the streets and still they are not kept in repair much less improved. I would suggest that we adopt a policy of making all improvements, with a view to permanency. expenditures for temporary repairs are a total loss. I we can only improve one street, or one block, let it be done in such manner that it will remain permanently. The bridges at crossings are so worn and dilapidated as require special attention.

To repair or replace them with temporary structures is a waste of money. To make the improvements thorough and permanent will cost more at present but will save money in the end.

If money derived from the sale of bonds is to be used upon any public works of the city it must be upon those of a permanent character,

we cannot afford to incur a debt to pay current expenses and make temporary improvements. such a policy would be ruinous.

I call your special attention to this question of streets and other public improvements, and trust we may be able to adopt some policy that will result in benefit to the City.

Austin is far behind her sister cities in her streets and other public works, and I am confident that her people would be pleased at an earnest effort on our part to adorn her in these public enterprises, all measures looking to this end, will receive my earnest co-operation and approval.

Taxes

By some oversight the City Council has not fixed the percentage of ad valorem taxes for the present year. This should have been done on or before the first Monday in May. I would recommend that this matter receive your earliest attention.

Further, it appears that the Board of Equalization and appraisers required by law have not been appointed which retards the assessor and collector in the discharge of his duties.

The levy of the tax also includes the tax for the support of our public schools. The amount of this tax has been fixed by the people by an election held for that purpose, and their verdict should be respected. The public schools are under an able and intelligent management and are daily growing in popular favor.

They are the pride of the city and should receive at our hands the fullest support provided by law. These matters should not be postponed.

Police Department

Any measure looking to a better and more efficient organization of the police department will receive my cordial support. I believe that the City Marshal should have full control and command of his police force and that he should be held responsible to the city council for the peace and good order of the community.

and for the discharge of all other duties devolving upon his department. The police force should be employed for police duties as the law contemplates and not as clerks and assistants to other salaried officers. If the number employed are greater than are necessary for police duties reduce the numbers, and save useless expense.

A better system of accounts should be provided and the marshal should stand charged with the full amount of all fines and costs assessed in the recorder's court. He should be allowed as credits the amount paid in cash and for amount worked out, and should be required to render daily reports to the assessor and collector accompanied by vouchers. The books of the recorder, the marshal and the assessor and collector should be a check each upon the other, a daily register of prisoners should also be kept so that by its inspection the exact condition of prison matters would be manifest.

By these suggestions I do not mean to intimate that there are any positive abuse in this department. I do not think there are. I merely desire to point out some of the defects of the system as it exists and to suggest some reforms that occur to me as beneficial.

Water and Gas Contracts

The present water contract was made by our predecessors. We are in no way responsible for any of its conditions. We find it a subsisting contract costing the City over \$10,000 per annum. I venture no opinion as to the validity or equity of this contract nor as to the faults as to whether the water company has complied with its obligations. These matters are before a committee of your body and will be reported on in due time. I will however suggest that the obligation of the water company to furnish the people of this city with pure water and at specified rates is a matter of public concern over which the city council can and should exercise supervisory control.

There is at present no permanent contract with the gas company for lighting the streets. I would suggest that in any contract to be made with that company that provisions be made for extending the mains and enlarging the advantages of gas light. The company is now confined to very narrow limits and I doubt not could be induced to enlarge its system in view of a long contract with the City. The effect would be to distribute the advantage of the system to a much greater number of people.

Public Health.

The sanitary condition of the City demands careful attention. A system of sewerage is badly needed; and I trust that this subject will receive the attention its importance merits.

I do not believe that an extensive improvement of this character can be inaugurated and put in operation at once, but a beginning can be made we can at least inform our selves at what is necessary.

I would recommend the immediate enforcement of such needful sanitary measures as will secure the cleanliness of the City and promote the health of our people.

There are many other matters of a general character of which I might speak. But this communication has already attained to great a length.

I shall have occasion to advert to these and other matters in our official intercourse, and I trust and believe that we shall act harmoniously, having in view only the welfare of Austin and the promotion of wealth, perpetuity and happiness.

Very Respectfully

J. W. Robertson

Mayor

The Finance Committee submitted an ordinance entitled an ordinance providing for and authorizing the issuance and sale of (80 bonds) eighty bonds of the City of Austin of the denomination of five hundred dollars each.

Section 1. Authorizes the mayor of the City to issue eighty coupon bonds of the City of Austin on the denomination of five hundred dollars each amounting to \$40,000.

to run 10 years but subject to be called in at expiration of 10 years to bear interest at the rate of 6% ^{but per} ~~if~~ ^{minimum} interest to be payable semi annual

Section 2. That the bonds shall be issued for the purpose of taking up paying and funding all out standing warrants, debts and claims against the City not already covered by the bonded debt. That the proceeds shall after paying all claims due be applied to public improvements under the direction of the City Council.

Section 3. Provided that the City Treasurer shall set apart on May 1 and Sept the 1. of each year the amount due semi annual upon the bonds and that a sinking fund of 7 per cent of the amount of the bonds shall be set apart each year

Section 4 That the face of the bonds shall state the purpose for which the bonds are issued

Section 5. That the Mayor and finance committee shall have the bonds engraved and offer them for sale in the City of Austin. if not sold then to sell them through any bank or Banking house in this City in New York or elsewhere

Section 6. appropriate the sum of \$300. to pay for engraving the bonds

Section 7. Repeals a bond ordinance approved April 12 1881 an ordinance providing for the sale of \$45,000. 6% per cent bonds approved Nov 8 1883 so much of an ordinance as provides for the sale of Austin City bonds No. 76. 77. 78 ~~79~~ and 80 approved Nov 18 1883 also an ordinance amending an ordinance passed Nov 7th 1883 and approved Nov 8th 1883 approved Dec 8th 1883

The ordinance was read first time. alderman Hancock moved that the rules be suspended and the ordinance be read a second time. motion to suspend the rules was carried by the following two thirds vote yea aldermen Schneider

Hancock Wells Campbell Schuber Underhill
Maas Driskill Crooker Odell Carrington
Hill Ervin Brush & Brennen 15 Nays Alder-
man Platt

The Ordinance was read by sections
Alderman Hancock moved to amend section
one by inserting after the words "said bonds
and before the words" shall be added" the word
shall be numbered from one to eighty inclusive
the amendment was adopted.

No further amendment being made to
any of the sections Alderman Crooker moved
that the rules be suspended and that the
ordinance be read third time motion carried
by the following vote yeas Aldermen Schneider
Hancock Wells Campbell Schuber Underhill
Maas Driskill Crooker Odell Carrington
Hill Ervin Brush and Brennen 15 Nays
Alderman Platt.

The ordinance was read third time
and on motion of Alderman Brush passed
by the following two thirds vote yeas Aldermen
Schneider Hancock Wells Campbell Schuber
Underhill Maas Driskill Crooker Odell Carring-
ton Hill Ervin Brush & Brennen 15 Nays
Alderman Platt.

His Honor the Mayor called the attention of the
Council to the fact that the vote cast for or
against levying an additional school tax had
not been canvassed. Alderman Platt moved
that the matter be referred to the City attorney
Alderman Maas as a substitute for Alderman
Platt's motion moved that the Council proceed
to canvass the returns at this meeting motion
to canvass the returns adopted.

His Honor appointed as the committee to can-
vass the returns Aldermen Crooker Schneider
and Brush. The committee reported that
there was raised for an increase of school tax
597 vote against an increase of school tax 79 votes.

His Honor declared that the school tax increase
was carried by a two thirds vote.

Alderman Brush introduced an ordinance amending article 605 section 62 of the revised ordinances of the City of Austin in regard to the mayor appointing a board of appraisers and equalization. The amendment provides that the mayor shall appoint the board at the first ^{regular} meeting of the City Council in April or at any subsequent regular meeting thereafter. The ordinance was read first time and then read second and third times under suspension of the rules and passed by the following vote yea aldermen Schneider Hancock Wells Campbell Schuber Underhill Maas Driskill Crooker Odell Carrington Keile Plath Ervin Brush and Brennan

An ordinance levying the school tax for 1884 and an ordinance levying the ad Valorem tax for 1884. an Ordinance levying the ad Valorem and school tax for 1884 was referred to the finance committee

Under authority of article 605 section 62 of the ordinances of the City of Austin The Mayor appointed as the board of appraisers and Equalization for the year 1884, Aldermen Odell, Campbell and Ervin. L. E. Shelley and J. W. Dooner on motion of alderman Crooker the nominations were confirmed.

Alderman Crooker introduced an ordinance appropriating the sum of \$452.50 to pay the insurance on the city Hospital the ordinance was read first time. and then went over.

The special committee appointed to confer with Mr. Driskill in regard to the purchase by him of the west half of lots 7 & 8 in block 69 submitted a report recommending the sale of said lots according to Mr Driskill's proposition submitted with the report of the Committee. for

\$7500⁰⁰. Alderman Brunnen moved to adopt the report of the Committee. Alderman Hancock offered a resolution in lieu of Alderman Brunnen's motion, authorizing the mayor to convey to Mr. Diskit the lots according to the proposition approved by the Committee.

Alderman Hancock moved that the report of the Committee the proposition and the resolution be referred back to the special committee with instructions to confer with the Fire Department in regard to the matter. Motion to recommit adopted.

On motion the Council adjourned.
Read and adopted July 7th 1884

J. L. Purnell
City Clerk