

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Called Council Meeting

September 9, 1980  
6:00 P.M.

Council Chambers  
301 West Second Street

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The meeting was called to order with Mayor McClellan presiding.

Roll Call:

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

Absent: None

Mayor McClellan stated that this is a Special Called Meeting for the purpose of a public hearing on the proposed 1980-81 General Operating Budget. The City Managers' budget as submitted to Council is in the amount of \$418,238,732. The Mayor pointed out that, unlike most Texas cities, Austin owns and operates its own Electric Utilities Department, owns and operates its own Water and Wastewater Department, and owns and operates its own hospital. The Mayor went on to say these are difficult times and the Council is striving to look for creativity and productivity in the adoption of the Budget for Fiscal Year 1980-81.

JIM CANNON, President, MIGHT, discussed the proposed increase in Special Transit fares from 50¢ to 75¢. He felt the fare should be equitable and one that the handicapped can afford. Mr. Cannon requested more funds for Special Transit for the increase in riders expected in the future.

MARTHA ARBUCKLE, member and past president of MIGHT, spoke against the proposed fare increase for Special Transit. She felt the issue should be taken to the Urban Transportation Commission first. Her suggestion is to equalize fares so they are in compliance with the 50¢ now charged.

PAM WETZEL spoke in support of Mr. Cannon and Ms. Arbuckle's views. She said she has a son in a wheel chair, and has found it very difficult to schedule his needs for recreation and necessities around the Special Transit schedule. She requested better Special Transit.

JAMES KILBURTON asked Council to keep the Special Transit fares as they are because on most of the handicapped low income there is no way they can afford a higher fare.

WALT FITZSIMMONS pleaded with Council to keep the Special Transit fares where they are now.

BILL JOHNSON, who rides the Austin Special Transit, asked Council to keep the fares at 50¢ because of the limited income of most handicapped people. He spoke of the mentally handicapped on small incomes who are unable to take regular transit routes. Mr. Johnson suggested that instead of raising rates, there should be a 1% increase in sales tax. He knows this would take legislative action which may not show results for two years, but he urged Council to start the action now.

STEVE COLLINS also discussed the proposed raise in transit fares. He said an increase would discourage ridership because it would become cheaper to drive than take the bus and lambasted the 50¢ increase as compared to the 14.1% increase other cities have proposed.

CHRIS ATTAL, Natural Science Association Guild, cited the number of museums in Austin for learning and asked Council to approve the recommended level of funding for the outdoor nature program.

Mayor McClellan asked what AISD does to enable the children to use the nature program. She wondered if they pay the fee. Donna Brazier told her she does not have the figures but can get them. She said in many instances the teacher arranges for a trip to the museum and the students pay the fee. Mayor McClellan asked her to send a report concerning what AISD has done in the past.

JESSIE MCGREW, President, Austin Branch of American Association of University Women, talked of her organization's help in establishing the Austin Public Library, and encouraged Council to fund a full library system.

Mayor McClellan explained she wanted to share some information and perhaps ask for a commitment. "There have been a fine series of articles running in the newspaper but I think all the information has not been there. Library and parks I was particularly concerned about some information in that regard. There's an article that ran yesterday that talked about how this Council cut some \$400,000 out of the budget. I want to clarify that what

we cut was out of the proposed budget. I think it is important to look at what this city has done in the past five years for parks and libraries and in every other area too. I know it was small, but there was an increase in libraries last year and in the year before. There was a more significant increase in parks last year. It was 8.6% increase over the year before. The year before that this Council put in an increase for libraries of 16.7% and in parks, 15.4% so there has been an increase in the amount of funds in those areas. The newspaper was not comparing actual budget to actual budget. They were looking at proposed budget, which is something far different. I also want to point out that this city still compares, and I believe Council has received this memo...looking at seven other cities across the state, and you can throw in a lot more and we will still be number one on a per capita basis of services. In libraries, we're spending on a per capita basis, this is last year's 1979-80 budget, this is last year's not the recommended, we are number one in the state on library expenditures per capita with 10.52. The closest to that is Dallas with 8.13, then it jumped on further down to \$6.00, \$5.00, \$4.00, \$3.00. We are number one in the cities and state for parks and recreation per capita expenditures. It's 26.96. The next closest is Dallas and then there is a significant jump down until you get to the others. We should be number one in parks and libraries. But we also have other concerns in this city. Several years ago we were way down in police. We now rank number two in expenditures in our Police Department and number three in fire. I think it's important to keep the community wide concerns that this Council has to weigh and balance and therefore we have increased in some of the areas of police and fire that we missed the past few years. I just wanted to present a few of those facts. Our responsibility is to look at the over-all picture. The question I want to ask you is, to all the groups that are coming up asking for extended hours on libraries, etc. Would you be willing to help us out in the libraries. I have a lot of discussion to do with Mr. Holt regarding this. You have 5th and 6th graders in the school district to help out in the library. I feel sure with the qualified people in the room this evening, representing all the groups you do that we think of some creative ways to do some things in the library. Shelving books, helping with the story hour for children. If we can find a way to keep the libraries open, would you be willing to commit people power to helping out on a volunteer basis during these tough fiscal times?"

Mrs. McGrew said she is sure AAUW would be glad to join in the effort of providing a volunteer staff. Mayor McClellan said she thinks it is going to take that type of thing in these tough fiscal times to keep the amenities that we want.

ROY MOORE, 3305 Perry Lane, appeared to discuss the property taxes. He said he is irate over the proposal made in the City Manager's budget.

NELSON PUETT appeared and stated the budget is getting so big it is choking the people of Austin. He thinks Council should thoroughly study the budget and see if they cannot come up with a better one. He compared budgets of several years back with today's budget. Councilmember Goodman briefly addressed refund contracts.

DAVID HILL, member of the Advisory Board of the Givens Recreation Center, stated the Givens Recreation Center was built and now there is not enough money to keep it open in the mornings. He asked Council to appropriate \$11,053 for this purpose.

BARBARA HENTHORN told Council she does not think the Special Transit Service System has good hours. She cannot use it because of this and is opposed to the proposed rate increase. Councilmember Cooke asked what time the Special Transit service begins. Dr. Benson, Director of Urban Transportation, told her 6:00 a.m.

MS. JACKIE BLOCH, West Austin Neighborhood Group, said they support the budget for pools, libraries, and services for children and elderly people. She said the raising of bus fares would be a disservice to all citizens of Austin.

MASZO DELEON, member of Givens Recreation Center Board, asked for an appropriation of \$11,000.00 so the Center can be kept open mornings.

JOHN GILLIES, speaking for himself, supported the budget providing essential services are maintained. He asked that the library be kept in full service and if the Council restores and improves its services he will gladly pay the taxes.

FRANKLIN JOHNSON asked Council to work out a better way for the transit system for the handicapped. He stated Austin's transit was good and if the fares were increased he felt something could be worked out so handicapped people could participate.

LEONARD SMITH, president Alamo Recreation Center Advisory Board, addressed proposed cuts in the 1980-81 Operating Budget. He said they have not had any Capital Improvements in the past two years and have none proposed for the next five years. The current budget is \$25,629.00 and a cut to \$23,000 has been recommended. The hours have been cut so it is not open in the morning. He asked Council's cooperation in reinstating the things which have been cut or they propose to cut from the budget for Alamo Recreation Center.

BILL GROCE is concerned about the library. He said there is a new building and services have been cut, and it faces a budget fight each year.

JIM MUSICK, 2609 Parkview Drive, President of Austin Retirees Coordinating Board, cited the plight of most retired citizens. They are unemployable and on a fixed modest income. He requested Council to exempt homestead from the ad valorem tax and told them in Europe people who retire no longer pay taxes.

MR. DUKE appeared to speak for homeowners 65 and older. He asked for a \$25,000 exemption for taxes. This would help people in the low income bracket.

LAMAR LASSITER, a disabled veteran, spoke against increased bus fares. He feels there is too much of a boost. He also asked for rent control. Mayor McClellan told him rent control is not in the Council's jurisdiction.

JOAN LILAH, League of Women Voters, and a coalition of several organizations, spoke to the curtailment of library services. She said more funding is needed. She answered the Mayor's earlier request for volunteers by saying they will encourage their members to volunteer, however, more and more women are either working or going back to school.

JAY JOHNSON appeared and addressed and questioned several figures in the budget. Ms. Lee Thomson, Director of Research and Budget, and Mr. Davidson, City Manager, addressed his concerns. Mr. Johnson also discussed merit pay, stability pay and the cost of living. He said the private sector does not have the raises the city has. Councilmember Mullen pointed out that last year merit pay was closely scrutinized and it is not an automatic occurrence. Mr. Johnson concluded his remarks by saying the Council works hard and has a big job to do, and when it is over with "we will see you in April".

SHERRY ALLISON told Council there should be more library hours for children's services. She asked them to put the library back on a full schedule.

MR. SHANKIN appeared and showed a chart of library circulation. He asked for full service libraries.

Mayor McClellan asked Mr. Holt, Director of Libraries, about the copy machines used at the libraries. Mr. Holt told her there is a loss at most of the branch libraries, but they break even by the amount of money collected in the central library. He said the machines in use now are old, but the cost of copies would have to be raised if machines were upgraded.

Councilmember Mullen asked for a report on figures for loss by copying machines without the main library copier to make up the difference.

A man who did not identify himself who is a member of the EMS Department, spoke to the education and incentive pay for members of EMS. He said members of his department should be encouraged to get further education because it will provide increased knowledge for their jobs.

PHIL CONARD said he wants well staffed and well funded libraries.