

Closed Caption Log, Council Meeting, 01/24/12

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[08:04:23]

>> Cole: Good morning.

I'm mayor pro tem sheryl cole and I now call this work session to order of the austin city council.

Mayor leffingwell is travelling on important economic development business outside of the country.

02 and we are meeting in the boards and commissions room at city hall.

I want to inform anyone that is listening and our councilmembers and professional staff that the briefing on ambulance staffing has been withdrawn.

So if you're here for that, we will not be discussing that this morning.

The first item of business is to go into executive session.

And without objection of council, we will go into closed session to take up one item, pursuant to 071 of the government code, the city council will consult with legal counsel regarding the to discuss legal issues related to austin lifecare for city of austin and the roman catholic diocese of austin and the city of austin.

Is there any objection to going into executive session?

Hearing none, the council will now go into executive SESSION. 231][v:tv][C483]

[09:42:00]

[Rumbling] Announcer: What if a disaster strikes without warning?

What if life as you know it has completely turned on its head?

What if everything familiar becomes anything but?

Before a disaster turns your family's world upside down, it's up to you to be ready.

Get a kit. make a plan. be informed today.

>> We're out of closed session.

In closed session we took up and discussed issues related to item .

Now we will move to council items of interest, and the first item is discussion of potential times and locations for off-site public hearings on proposed austin energy rates.

I bel i does everybody -- rudy, he's here.

Does everybody have a copy of potential items for council retreat?

That's the next item.

I want to get that passed out.

Then let's talk about potential times and loabsz for hearings on proposed austin energy rates.

The council retreat item is second.

Any comments on the austin energy rate discussions off-site public hearings?

>> Tovo: You want to talk first about locations?

>> Yes.

>> Tovo: I don't know have feedback on locations but I want to talk about decision points we need to make space for as part of the council discussion.

>> Cole: Let's land on times and locations.

I think it's important we have locations around the city, in particular I think we should try looking at our timetable.

Larry, can you go ahead and come up?

You might be able to help us.

I know we haven't set a date to vote, but -- assistant city MANAGER michael McDonald?

>> One of the things, as you deliberate on locations, one of the things that will be important as you deliberate in having it in different locations throughout the city is whether you'll want to televise it or not.

Then, of course, very certain locations that will probably present challenges to us versus other locations, you know, that are city facilities that may be equipped to help us along those lines.

That's one of the areas you may want to think on as you decide.

Once you get to specific locations, we can weigh in as to let you know what we think is accomplishable or not.

>> Cole: I would like to suggest we consider austin community college because they have all the media equipment that we have and I don't think that that would run nearly the cost of what we sometimes continue plate of doing off campus, and they have large facilities.

So I would like to direct staff, as long as it's not -- I mean, without objection of the rest of my colleagues, to look at the austin community college east view and to look at austin community college south, i believe it's called the pinnacle, and we can bring up any other locations after that.

>> Morrison: I would like to suggest that wherever we have off sites they be televised.

This is so important across the city.

>> I would agree with need to be televised.

Council member martinez?

>> Martinez: Does anybody have any idea how many we'll have and what days?

I'm curious as to what peoples' thought process are.

I firmly believe we should go out into the community and hold these input sessions and town hall meetings and briefings, but when you start talking about the pinnacle and east view campus, obviously, somebody will get left out.

Where do we stop?

Do we go to runburg, northwest austin, the delco center?

Where is there a stopping point in at some point, we'll have to make a decision.

>> Are we not using first names now that lee is gone?

>> I'm practicing!

>> Morrison: That's a good point.

One of the things I'm wrestling with is not only does it make sense to get input from different parts to have the city, but, also, you know, i think that there are, as kathie mentioned, there are specific nitty gritty things we need to talk through, having received the input.

You know, you have about six broad areas I think that are policy areas that are embedded in this, so I don't know how that plays into moving around.

Do we want to have the discussions as part of the hearings or are those going to be separate discussion times for us?

>> Mayor pro tem.

>> I think we should be talking about timing.

We're scheduled to vote on SEPTEMBER 22nd.

I don't think we'll be ready as a body or community to make those decisions on february 2.

It might make sense to have internal discussions or work sessions around policy discussions around decide what our long-term gain is.

Are we going to ask for revisions and then come back and have public hearings or do we want to continue to have public hearings around a rate proposal that we may all agree need very significant revisions.

So to come extent it might make good sense to have focused policy discussions as a council.

But I think we need to give the community a sense of our time line and whether it's still on the projected vote on february 2.

>> I'm pretty sure we moved the february 2nd date to a final vote.

>> We've not done that as to date.

It's set for february 2 but we can certainly do that.

February 2 is the next public hearing with potential action.

That's on the timetable, but we can certainly shift that as we're feeling we need to continue this discussion.

>> Morrison: I wonder if we could work backwards a little bit.

If my goal is to make sure we have some kind of rate change in the budget next year, whether it be an interim or something that's proposed but adjusted, what's the last time period that you can get approval fra from council and still get that implemented in the system for next year's budget?

>> General manager, austin energy, larry weis.

That's a very good question.

It depends on what time, so it's good to answer that question.

I want to make sure we don't encumber the public process and the decisions to get there.

We have a new billing system that's up and running and in place, we have the -- the timing is part of our plan.

We would have liked to have gotten it before the summertime, but it depends on the rate structure design a bit, what the timing is.

So right now, all we have on the schedule is a place holder for the 2 of february and one for THE 9th.

>> Sorry for interrupting.

It's not for next budget cycle.

It's ideal to implement it before the cooling season.

>> So the rate structure as proposed could be implemented -- the reason I'm thinking back is when we talked about adjustments to the water rate structure, the building couldn't handle that it.

There was going to have to be changes and that was going to delay it.

If we were just to do adjustments to the rate structure now or adopt the new rate structure, all of that could be implemented before the summer and I presume that there would be a deadline of the final numbers you would need out of council.

>> Right.

The last question that I asked of her cc&b team at austin energy for the building system is is there any dependency on the timing for the new building system to do it and the answer was no, the new building system is ready when the rates are.

>> If we passed a new rate or interim rate by march, would that give you time to get it running on the billing system?

>> I would have to check on the date.

As far as I know, there isn't any impediment for a new billing system.

>> I was wondering what the delay would be between when we passed the rate and when it would be up on the billing system.

>> I don't know the answer, the timing or the actual days to take it to make it happen.

>> We'll get the answer to laura's question.

>> And one last thing, if we want to do it before the summer season, what's the start date?

What's the goal for that?

>> I would want to confer with the city manager on that to make sure we have the information for you.

>> But it appears there is leeway beyond february 2?

>> Yes.

>> Great.

>> I think that our goal all along and the timing of all the rates was to try to get them in place.

That's behind our schedule is to get them in place before the cooling season.

>> Yes, and I remember that, i apologize.

>> I just wanted to add to kathie's comments.

I think she makes a really good point in there's a healthy balance between public input and what austin energy has taken back from the input and what we are contemplating from a policy standpoint.

So it could actually help answer a lot of folks' questions in their minds out in the community as opposed to having, you know, an eight-hour public hearing, when we already are hiding in a certain direction, we're already thinking about certain things that's on the public's minds, so I agree with kathie that there should be some good, healthy policy discussions with austin energy staff and among us as council members in anticipation of going out and hearing furtherer from the public so they will know what we're contemplating and what direction we may be heading and maybe ease some of the tension out there.

>> Maybe we can come to some conclusions if you would talk to the city manager and try on thursday during your quarterly briefing of the financial report for austin energy to let us know based on what you think is the financial position of the utility, the deadline that we need to make a decision, we would appreciate that from you, just like you suggested the 2nd and 9th, there was rhyme or reason behind that, so if you tell us thursday what the date is.

It's wide open when you say before the cooling season.

Well, what are the financial implications of that?

When do you need us to make a decision?

Then we can back up into dates and how many places we'll go.

I think if we cover eastview and austin pinnacle, that's good, but there are additional places the council wants the go, we can, and we heard we want that to be televised.

>> Any other comments on austin energy hearing and rates bill?

>> I want to throw this out as a possibility.

Since larry is scheduled for a briefing on thursday and we have a lot of unanswered questions, would that be a good opportunity for us to ask larry and staff about questions about the background of the rates or should we hold that off for a different meeting?

I'm not sure whether it's a legal or a practical question.

>> I think the posting is pretty broad.

I think it's an austin energy quarterly update.

So I think my understanding of the presentation he gives to you covers a whole host of different issues and I think it would be appropriate if you had questions that related to rates from his quarterly update th I think you could ask those and have a discussion about those issues.

But I think the posting brought enough for you to have those discussions under that matter.

>> I think it might be a good opportunity for us to clear the air and at least begin the discussions we were talking about.

>> Cole: I'd like to suggest, either if we do it here or thursday, it would be --

>> Morrison: It would be helpful to have discussions with council going out and delineate topics that we'll address in each of the work sessions.

I don't know if the rest of my colleagues are interested in doing that, but I think that we, in addition to asking questions, if we can sit around and roll up our sleeves and delve in and make decisions about the revenue requirement and all the pieces there and the general fund transfer and all of that.

So I'm not quite sure how we would create that schedule.

>> Okay.

Let me see if I can help.

We're posted today to give the quarterly briefings on the financials.

We're posted tomorrow to get that in audit and finance and posted thursday to get the quarterly briefings.

I think the posting brought enough to consider a number of topics, such as reserves out of service -- I mean, out of sus tin, rate payers, and yang of much else that wouldn't fit in that if you want to quantify those and ask for those at a subsequent time.

>> And it's not that I want to ask questions about those.

I want us to have a focused discussion and I think it would make sense if we landed on some decisions about, for instance, how do we want to handle capital investments with austin energy, what percentage will we be using cash versus debt.

That's a policy discussion we need to have and it's not just a question and answer.

[10:44:00]

So I wanted to capture all of those topics every one thinks we should have and have a focus on each one.

Especially through the hearings, we have been hopping from topic to topic and not coming to what might be a consensus on how we want to handle each of these issues that then drives the rates.

>> I think the posting is fine but I would suggest to eektaably participate in that.

If you lay out a few items thursday you'd like to focus on for the next public hearings that we could have a discussion about or anybody could lay those out.

In autumn finances day, maybe we can divvy up the topics.

>> Tovo: I took a stab at information we heard conflicting information about in our public hearings.

I'll say that I've requested we have a short briefing about the audit.

I think that will inform our discussion and I'm told there hasn't been a grieving about the navigant report and there are areas where I certainly have questions and others may as well.

>> Let's hold that up till we bring up austin energy in the quarterly report and move to the council retreat, because we'll bring these guys up if you can stay right there.

>> Tovo: So don't want me to run --

>> no, public hearings and proposed locations.

>> Tovo: I thought we were mempleg merging.

>> No.

>> I misunderstood the agenda.

[10:46:01]

I don't believe we'll actually get a briefing today.

We'll get a briefing tomorrow at afc and thursday.

>> We'll have a briefing but it is posted on your agenda.

>> We bring it up but --

>> correct, but sit on the agenda.

>> We can talk about it.

>> It's item.

No 59.

We can talk about it.

We're not going to have a briefing.

Let's move on.

I hope everybody has a discussion of the potential locations and agenda for the council policy retreat.

The first one was from council member morrison.

Expectations of how the comprehensive plan will be utilized for policy, guidance and planning.

>> Morrison: There is a lot of effort that went on in the past two years for the comprehensive plan and theoretically that will be providing a road map and guidance to us as council as well as the community add a lot of the things we do for the next 30 years, and, so having worked through it in conference of planning and transportation committee, getting stuff going, and there is an implementation section of the comprehensive plan.

I think a lot of people have maybe different ideas about what it's really going to do for us, how we'll use it.

I thought it would be interesting if we could maybe make sure that we're sort of up to speed, number one, on what the "priority programs" are that are being recommended, what the implementation plan is and how we might see that play out in the way that we do our jobs as council members.

>> Okay.

I think that is a great idea.

The next one was from council

[10:48:02]

member Riley, current council and committee structures.

>> Riley: A lot of our work, obviously, is in council committees.

In the almost three years I have been here, we've never stepped back and talk about what the committees are and how they're structure.

I think it would be interesting to talk about the committees we've had in the past, the current committees and if we want to consider changes as it currently stands.

There has been changes in membership and it would be helpful, as long as we're having a retreat, to survey the council members and see if there's any interest in adjusting the current commit as and we can talk about membership of the committees.

It's just something that the rest of the general public may not have that much interest in, but we obviously have a real interest in that, and, so, a retreat seems like an opportune time to talk about that.

>> Thank you.

The next is encouraging development that provides community benefits and support, community priority such as housing and sustainability.

>> I think the description sort of captures the main idea and I'm -- I added another one, too.

And, you know, if we need to tighten up, we can certainly tighten up around this one.

But it struck me, as we talked about cure and the downtown plan, that it might be useful to have a more global conversation about community benefits and what are some of the city's priorities and how might we get there.

You know, in particular, I'm interested in affordable housing, and I know that's a stated priority of the council, and also family -- promoting family friendly divide and how we get to the point where we are meeting the city's stated goal of being the most family-friendly city in the nation.

So community benefits are one way of talking about those.

[10:50:00]

In general, it was kind of a broad discussion about sort of different philosophies about what community benefits we want to encourage and how we will encourage those.

You know, what the different perspectives are, encouraging them from requirements on one side.

>> Thank you.

Any comments?

The next and final item was city support and collaboration of school district that fall within the city of austin boundaries.

Do you want to comment on that one?

>> Sure.

The city staff and the district staff have done great work at looking for opportunities of collaboration.

A few of those moved forward, and I think will be successful.

Some of the others are worth, i think, considering and talking about.

But this is designed to be an opportunity for us to get a presentation about that work through the staff.

I've done a pretty detailed matrix of opportunities and it would provide us with an opportunity to go through and talk about them.

Some things were returned as impossibilities for the city to participate in and I would like more information and an opportunity to talk about why those might be legally impossible or whether there are other opportunities out there.

>> Cole: Very good.

Laura?

>> Morrison: That's a great thing to consider.

If I understand you right, you're talking about the financial collaborations that were done.

I wanted to mention that, with our joint subcommittees that the mayor and kathie and are on, there is been good collaborations and we have opportunities of setting new projects to work on.

So I'd like to broaden this to include a quick rundown of what we have done to get the full council's ideas on things we might collaborate on.

[10:52:01]

>> Tovo: The other thing I've talked with our city manager with are discussions going on around use planning and the way the city and county and district might further collaboration in that area and that belongs in this area.

So it's a good opportunity to bring that up to talk about some of the successful collaborations that have taken place at joint subcommittee and potential for the future and maybe get feedback at which are priorities for the council.

>> Cole: Shows would be subgroups under agenda items we'll propose for the meeting.

Do you want to tell us the details of where it's located and time and place?

>> The location will be at the palmer event center.

We'll have a meeting room there.

Scheduled -- it's actually up for council action on 26th this week.

Item 18.

To move the date to february 29.

So that's pending council discussion and approval.

At this time, we're scheduled from 9 to 4:00.

We talked about a facilitator.

The facilitator is rubina jackson from group solutions.

>> Cole: Bill?

>> Spelman: We have a list of topics.

I wonder how bound we are to be circumscribed in our discussion.

We talk about the comp hence offplan and how to use it for policy.

It could open up individual department plans, lead us to talking about the capital improvement plan generally, it could lead us to talk about what ought to be on the bonds in november and wondered how careful we need to go stay inside these boundaries when we're discussing this.

>> Cole: Give that to legal because I think it's a posting

[10:54:03]

issue.

>> Morrison: What we would do to give you as much flexibility as possible is we would take these items here and try to broaden them so they aren't so specific to give you that flexibility.

So I guess, off the top of my head, comprehensive plans and any other plans related to guiding the city's planning or something like that.

So we'd have to work with them, but what we try to do is not to be so specific but allow you to have a very broad conversation about any of the things that ordinarily could be an offshoot of those discussions you want to have.

But I think some of these are very specific and we will tinker with them to make sure that they are as broad as possible.

>> If we continue the specific conversation, that would be fine, but I can imagine one thing leading to the next.

All of a sudden we talk about plans and departments.

I appreciate that.

I would like for us to be able to do that.

>> I definitely think the bonds should be covered within that specifically.

I think the november bond election should be included within the comprehensive plan as council member spelman pointed out.

I would just be sure to check with the authors of the topics about whether details -- yeah.

Okay.

>> We will work with each of the council members listed to make sure we adequately captured the nature of the discussion they want to have with the council.

If there are other issues, send them our way and we will get them posted.

>> Okay.

That leaves us to other items on the agenda.

We've already had some discussion about austin energy

[10:56:00]

and I know that we want to have a lot of robust discussion while we're already here.

It would be my preference to go ahead and take that up, unless you guys -- and then go in order through the agenda.

>> Okay.

Austin energy quarterly briefing is number 59, but, larry, why don't you come on up.

Kathie, I remember you wanted to talk about that, particularly.

>> Tovo: Thanks.

I wonder if you could give us a short sense of what you will presenting thursday and if you'll have an update about the rate proposal and I wanted to have areas I wanted to high light as discussion area.

>> Larry weis, general manager austin energy.

We did not plan on having a rates discussion thursday.

What we try to do in the quarterly briefings is go to the resolution and what was passed by council, and that is to do financial update.

So we'll have an end of year financial report, and then the other part of it is our generation plan and where we are in a different generation pieces and components are.

So I know that, in that presentation which I was editing just as late as last night, there was our solar rebate program.

We have presentation on that, where we are with some of our wind acquisition strategy, and others.

So those are the only two components that we have in there.

But I also have a pret -- pretty cognizant a couple of questions might come up about rates and so forth, but we don't have anything prepared.

>> Tovo: It was my understanding there was a presentation last night.

Will you be prepared maybe thursday to tell us if they are having continuing deliberations about the rate proposal?

>> There was no presentation to the eeuc last night.

[10:58:00]

There was just an update about the calendar as to where we are.

There was also a discussion, some of the members wanted to have more discussion about the rates, but the year of the euc pointed out we're kind of past that now and what we need to work on is the calendar and where we are.

So I gave that update last nigh.

I didn't give a lot of specifics because, as you can see, we don't have those.

That's where we are with that last night.

>> Tovo: Calendar with regard to the rate proposal?

>> With regard to the rate proposal.

Specifically, I told them I have to sit down with the city manager and go over various options we're working on and, with his permission, and so forth, we'll figure out where we go next.

That hasn't been done yet.

>> Tovo: And I think based on our earlier conversation, do you think you might have an answer back from the technology folks by thursday about how quickly the turnaround time is for implementing a rate proposal?

>> From the technology?

Oh --

>> you will be able to tell us on thursday.

>> Should be able to by thursday, yes.

>> Tovo: As I mentioned, seems clear from my perspective we need more time on the raid proposal.

We've heard very compelling testimony from lots of different stakeholders and I'll just kind of get to what I see as policy discussions that we as a council might consider having in terms of thinking through the timeline and what it might take us to get there to a final decision.

Allocation methods is kind of top on my list for having a really in-depth discussion about the different allocation methods and whether or not the one that's been used in this rate case -- in this rate proposal makes the best sense and offers the most protection to different customer classes.

The revenue requirement is the second big issue, and then i broke this down for me into the areas that I would like to see more detailed discussion about debt service, reserve funds, whether low-income users use more energy or less.

I think there is conflicting information about that.

That, for me, relates very directly to fixed fees and whether or not fixed fees are a good approach or whether they are -- have too much impact on our low-use customers.

And then test year, what is the appropriate test year?

You used 2009.

We've heard some folks say there is -- that using post market test year might make better sense.

General fund transfer, I think we've gotten a lot of questions from the public, so I think it might be useful to have some discussions.

But allocation method, revenue requirement, and then underneath that debt service, rate funds, fixed fees and impact on low-income and low-use users and then test year.

So I'll just throw those out as some of the issues I would like to explore and I think maybe we can talk about a council about how we can carve out time in tuesday work sessions or quarterly briefing on thursday or create some other time for focused discussions around some of those issues, if they are -- if they are decision points for the rest of y'all as well.

>> Deputy city manager michael McDONALD HAD A RESPONSE.

>> I think the council member answered my question.

The list of questions and the list as we move forward, as you have your session before we go into the community meetings and you do your deliberations, those are the things you're wanting to cover, but, you know, there's no expectation on thursday for us to be prepared to go into all of that, is there?

>> Well, I think that probably these are all big enough discussions that we will want to break them down.

If there's a consensus among the rest of you these are topics you want to talk about, I would suggest we take them in chunks, debt service and so forth, in one discussion.

We might want to talk about it next tuesday because there is significant discussion in the navigant report.

The other thing I'm open to, i haven't completely figured out whether it makes sense to have another public hearing and talk about.

I'm open to either one.

We want a lot of public feedback at the rate proposal more than on the calendar at present, but I think we probably could make some decisions as a council that will reflect the public's testimony we've already heard.

To get us in a different position.

>> Morrison: I wanted to add, I agree with all of those as topics and maybe wanted to expand them a little bit.

Under the revenue requirement, I'd like to add the financial policy for capitol expenditures, cash versus debt, because i think that that apparently may be a driver for the revenue requirement.

Is certainly, the allocation method is critical, and I would like to make transfers a separate topic, because I think that the whole -- there was a very interesting report that really sort of eliminated the topic for me from fox and smallens (phonetic), is that the name to have the company that did the report under navigant on transfers and did research about what other utilities do and what happens with private investors.

There is a lot of complicated considerations there.

So it's the transfers to our general fund to, economic development, to the other special trams, and that gets us into a topic of rates for non-city residents, which we heard from representativeworkman workman and a discussion of whether to fall under the regular tier or the other one.

I would like to, as part of this discussion, if my colleagues agree, I think it would really make sense for us to ask staff to put on the table an interim rate proposal as was suggested by the residential rate advisor, because we do get into timing with the test year issue and perhaps other things in terms of special contracts being over and all of that.

So under test year and under timing issues, I think that, actually, starting a conversation about it doesn't make sense to have an interim would be important.

With regard to fixed fees, i think that that's a very important issue to discuss, and it's not just about, you know, impact on low users.

I think that, as per the water utility, we should really sit back and talk about do we want to have a goal of what percent of our revenues come from fixed fees.

We know that 57% of our expenditures are fixed, so how do we want to play that, and then how do we deal with that in term volumetrics, so that's important.

This might be too ambiguous, but I'm interested in how our plan for renewable and efficiency plays into and is treated by our rates design and how we need to take special care with that.

>> Okay.

I want to be clear that what we're kind of doing is teeing up from you guys the topics and subject areas, but I want us to be careful not to get into too much discussion while mayor leffingwell is gone.

So we can continue that process, but I just want to make sure that he can hear that and be a part of that discussion because I know he's been real active.

>> Sure.

>> Bill.

>> Spelman: We had a couple of things to talk about.

One came up in the public hearing, the assignment of religious institutions to one category or another, perhaps coming up with a separate wrait rate for religious institutions that came up a lot.

We need to talk about it at least.

The other one is the amount and usage of the cap program funds, who is entitled to get them and how will we spread them out in such a way that we're holding the poorest folks as harmless as possible.

And one piece of that that i think works to the fixed fee issue is if we could actually get not just the average for -- average usage for poor families or households, but the entire distribution, so we have a sense of who are in the group of very lowest users who are or who are not poor.

I think that will help us understand whether the fixed fee really is as bad as it "pierce to be on paper or whether it really doesn't matter that much.

>> If I could comment on that, i would remind you that we have given you these vast volumes of information and that there is a distribution of bills and numbers of customers, a lot of that is inside of there.

>> I understand that you've given us a lot of information and there's two issues here.

One of them is sometimes we'll need a little indexing help, where we'll find all this stuff.

And the other thing is we need to have a conversation about what it means.

Thanks.

>> Along those same lines, bill, as it relates to the cap, we'd love to continue the discussion of eligibility and automatic enrollment so that folks don't have to necessarily sign themselves up if they fit into a category of eligibility, they're automatically signed up.

>> Spelman: I agree completely.

>> Along the lines of what Laura was saying and hearing the different topics that are being brought up, this is going to be a lengthy conversation, and I'm certainly open to creating or contemplating some type of stability for a short period, meaning 12-16 months, so we can have this very detailed decision and hopefully come up with a fix that's permanent and not kick the can 17 years down the road for some other council to have to deal with.

I think we really have an opportunity here to do something really special with Austin energy and customers, so I'm open to that suggestion that we put stability into place for now but then we go into drilling into this and coming up with policies to affect all the areas we're concerned about.

>> Riley: One item is to add the value of solar rate, would shift us from net metering to the value of solar rate.

Some questions about the add kweisi and proposed rate in terms of its likelihood to get us to the goals for developing solar.

So I think it would be worth spending time to talk about that rate and whether any adjustments would be appropriate.

>> Morrison: I appreciate, Larry, some of your folks will come to our committee tomorrow to talk about solar so we can delve into it and out of that might come broader policy issues we want to discuss about solar, because I think there are other things on the table including values.

>> Mayor pro tem, if I may.

>> Cole: Go ahead, Robert.

>> Is a complicated subject that needs a lot of time.

It was just a financial report and we weren't prepared and I don't think you are for that kind of dialogue in a council session.

Perhaps you agree to have that as your topic in the next work session is how do we get with you all and have this kind of in-depth conversation rather than -- I mean, we knew these were already swirling around and we were working on how to give you more data and how we can help, but the question, probably, is how and when and want do we want to do to engage you all with this conversation, and I do suggest that I think you all talked about that earlier.

If we can talk about that together, that would be maybe where we take out the public, then, for public hearings is the next decision point, and you seek more input.

Because you all have gotten an awful lot of input, already, on this, so now we need to do something with it.

You all need to do something with it.

That's probably the conversation is what next step do we take with you, then, to roll up our sleeves and have these great conversations?

>> And I think -- I guess we've heard from everybody.

Let me try to add a little context.

I think, from listening to everybody, clearly, this council has made a decision that they're going to make a decision -- [laughter] -- and that is step one and is a huge decision.

This has been 17 years.

And I also think, from the desire to have more public discussions and from the public discussions that we've had thus far, we've not done a very active role in explaining to the public why this decision is front and center before us.

And I hope to do more on my end just to address that.

And the question of an interim method, a phase-in approach, i think those things haven't fully been vetted, but it's hard to get there without answering the other policy questions that everybody has put on the table.

For me, I considered these in a little broader classes that may help or anybody can comment on.

First, I would like to hear about our financial policy and what is or is not in play, what is or is not -- have been violated or may be violated if we don't act within a certain period of time, because that was created by prior council, and we have the bond rating we have now because we stuck to that.

And, so, we have opportunities to go out for bonds to have debt, to do some of the wonderful things we do because we stuck to those policies.

And that includes our capital purchases, that includes our debt service rating shield, that includes our bond rating, that includes our transfer policy, because I don't want to see us bite off just one piece of the financial picture and not have a good discussion about what it means to every thing else.

So I would like to see that one be front and center and maybe just a special work session or whatever the mayor or anybody else decides we have to discuss that day, because I don't think the public senses the potential urgency of this decision and why we are focused on it and especially when they come before us, it's clear we don't want our rates raised, and we understand that.

But we have another asset on the other end that needs to be taken into consideration.

So I see the financial part needing to be on the table in whole, and then I see the whole issue with -- out of austin rate payers and the legislature and what we're going to do with them and a decision needing to be made on that just front and center and clear.

And then I really appreciate the question that council member morrison raised about our renewables and I would just, you know, expand that to include the climate protection plan because I know, back during those discussions, there was lots of discussions about the push and pull between that policy that we have, and we've adopted it, and I don't know of anybody here that doesn't want to stick behind it, but if we are going to stick behind it, what does that mean, and does the community that stood behind that plan, are they ready to come and stand behind it now.

And, so, I think that is a major discussion to have.

The whole issue of churches, schools and low income, I think, needs to be explored all together in the context that they can't afford the rate increase that we are anticipating and just what can they afford and what does it mean to our weatherization policy and what else could we do or offer to lower those rates, but in the different categories.

We know that the churchs have changed the way they operate over the last 17 years.

The schools have definitely done that.

The whole question that kathie brought up and mike brought up earlier about a low-income payer versus a -- and their use of energy as compared to a low-income payer and their use of energy, does it make more sense to offer customer assistance, weatherization, or what?

Where are we going to get the best bang for our buck?

And, so, I kind of see those in those broad kind of categories.

Does anybody want to add anything?

Okay.

Kathie?

>> Tovo: I don't know if i need a sponsor to put something on next week's work session agenda, and if I do, I will be dilated.

There is a good section in the navigant report about the financial policies, and so that might follow naturally from our briefing next week on tuesday's work session.

>> I would just add to that, to the extent that there is information in the navigant -- we want a briefing on that, but sometimes I think we get briefings we ask for and we don't get counterpoints.

You know, like, to the extent you don't agree with it, don't just read it.

Tell us why you think it's inaccurate and you should also a member maybe pro and con from the euc present to help with that if they want to comment, because I found them very, very helpful.

But we know there is lots of reports out there you've done and lots of reports that we've received and lots of visitors and we're just trying to get our minds around which one is right and we know that there is some projections and estimates in this, but we need to do the best we can.

>> Okay.

Let's go back, if there's no other comments, to see if there is any other items on the agenda that council would like to discuss.

>> I have a couple of reasonably quick ones.

Do you want to take them in consecutive order?

>> If we can.

>> Tovo: My first question is about item 38.

I had submitted some questions and I guess I have questions about the responses.

So this is an item regarding parking.

>> Yes.

>> Tovo: And I had asked the question about whether the state of texas is going to charge the city for use, but I didn't get a response to that in the response.

I did get a response, but didn't specifically answer that question.

Is the city being charged by the state of texas for the parking?

>> Parking enterprise manager, no.

>> Tovo: And then, let's see.

You said there is no cost comparison.

Could you summarize the responses about how it's going to be used, what revenues will be collected and why there are charges at certain points, not others and what the relationship with the state is with regard to setting the costs or the fees.

>> Sure, would be happy to.

This is in reference to the two surface slats under i-35.

1 million on resurfacing the lots and the light strands.

And those lots are free up until 7:00 p.m. each day.

That was requested the city uses these for municipal court visitors.

Some city employees and also there is some federal, state highway employees that use the lot.

00 monday through thursday, we charge \$7, and this is primarily used for visitors to the sixth street area.

And this is something the state asked us not to have excess charges, but to have charges that would be able to pay back the construction dollars we spent on these two lots.

>> Tovo: So the arrangement with the state is that the fee is being charged to anybody not be excessive?

>> Yes.

>> Tovo: Monday through thursday, the charge after 7:00 p.m. is \$7?

>> Monday through saturday.

>> Tovo: Okay, did say that in the memo.

Monday through saturday, if you park there after 7:00, it's \$7.

If you park after that, it's free, and the fees are used to pay back the cost of the reconstruction?

>> Yes.

>> Tovo: Okay, thanks.

>> From the backup, it looks as the fees have been approved by the state and the federal highway administration.

>> That is correct.

It might appear in the future some adjustments or changes to the rates would be warranted.

Could you describe what steps could be taken to do that?

>> Yes, I would then go back to and ask them what increases we would need to cover those.

>> Supposed we saw a surge of daytime uses and suppose the parking lot were filling up first thing in the morning, and the visitors to the municipal court weren't able to find a parking space because you have a bunch of people parking there and storing vehicles there all day, typically, some fees have been assessed not so much to gain revenue and to pay off expenses, but actually manage the re ensure a turnover occurs so people could secure a parking spot.

The way you'd get there is to monitor the utilization of the parking lot and adjust fees accordingly.

Seems like we'll int somewhat constrained in that as far as these rates seem for more or less written in stone until we go through some procedures to get there.

>> These are not written in stone.

They have given us the flexibility to go back to them and discuss the rates.

They just wanted to make sure they weren't excessive, depending on the market rate and that type of thing.

>> Would further council action be necessary in order to change the rates?

>> That would no be necessary.

>> So straitively, you could go to the state and get approval for an adjustment rate?

>> Yes, sir.

>> And that could be up or down.

>> Yes.

>> Supposing in the evening we're finding that the costs were so excessive nobody was using a lot, made sense to bring it down more in line to respond to the market and you could talk to the state about reducing the fee in order to --

>> that's correct.

>> All right.

So you have flexibility there.

>> Very much so.

>> Okay.

Thanks.

>> Steve, what percentage of the spaces are filled before and after 7:00?

>> I don't know have before and after 7:00.

Thursday, friday, and saturday, they're 80% filled.

Monday, tuesday, wednesday, about 10%.

>> So nobody goes to sixth street on monday, tuesday and wednesdays and parking on the lots.

Do you have any idea how full the lot is filled before 7:00?

>> I don't.

I could run statistics on that if you would like.

>> Spelman: I wonder if it's full or close to full.

>> It's municipal court.

The visitors to municipal court fill that up.

>> I think it would be municipal court visitors, but council member riley, there may be people who work in the city and don't have use of a parking lot to store their vehicle.

I can see an argument for a moderate charge for folks who weren't going to municipal court to regulate the use to make sure there is space pore those who are using the court.

>> Would you like for me to get back to you on that?

>> Spelman: That would be good and to council member riley, too.

>> My interest is making sure we're keeping an eye on the lot to make sure the spaces are used appropriately and there is parking for people at the municipal court and not being used to store vehicles at the expense of the state.

We need to keep an eye on it to make sure we're managing it effectively.

>> Okay.

We'll do.

Thank you.

>> Any other items, council?

Laura?

>> Morrison: I have a question on a couple of items.

Item 10 about the new central library, there is an extension and expansion for a contract for pre-construction.

I the city manager there.

Basically it's an amendment to a contract for preconstruction services for the new central library, to add 450,000.

So it seems like quite a large an expansion of the contract, and then there was some discussion in the back of about why the different tasks and the scope was expanding.

I wondered if you might be able to discuss that a little bit for us.

>> We have john gillem from director of facilities with the library that can give you the detail, but, as you recall, to give you background and context, part of this will have to do with the actual time frame through which we went through the process where we had the \$90 million and had to identified the add its thele funding sources to be able to get to the point where we could actually have the full amount of funding to move on with the conceptual design of the facility.

So a part of that was built into that extension of timepiece, and then when john gets here --

>> Morrison: He's right behind you.

>> There he is.

Part of that is the time extension based on that delay, and then I think John can talk about some of the other specifics as well.

>> Thank you.

>> Mayor pro tem, council members, city manager, assistant city manager, the new central library project is a home for the creek development district, and we're also driving a bit of other bridge and street expansion or extension project is really a dovetailed project.

And our construction manager at risk has been awarded the construction contract for that project as well.

We have a number of design issues, as you might imagine, to deal with in the redevelopment of this formerly pretty utilitarian area of the city used for waste water and electrical energy production, and the construction manager at risk is really proven to be -- I can't tell you what a help they have been for us.

They have the capacity to help us with scheduling and with modeling of the design we're trying to put together to interface with the park development and street and bridge and that's essentially the reason for the request to enlarge their contract and the design phase for this project.

>> I think a big objective of this project is to fully integrate into the site with not only the second street, but as you recall a big element that we added was also the creek because, you know, we have a lot of different components like the hike and bike trail, you know, the opportunity, really, to integrate the use of the creek into the facility itself as well as just making sure that, like, for example the second street piece was in place when the facility gets eventually constructed.

So I can tell you our team has been really looking at all of these pieces and making sure that we keep that in mind before this facility gets finalized.

>> And I think that's great, that completely makes sense to make sure it's well I want graded.

I guess, since we had to search around and be creative about how we were actually going to fund the total project, it sort of raised a flag for me.

We obviously need to make sure that we're going to come in on budget after we've already increased the budget or beyond what the bond covered.

So I just wondered if this is at all a flag that the -- you know, the total project is going to go beyond the scope or beyond the cost that we've already got budgeted.

>> We understand what the bottom line is, and it is a very complex project with other very complex projects tied into it, but we very much understand what the total amount of the budget is, and we do not think this is going to exceed our budget when we deliver a new central library to you in 2015.

>> That whole integration and the downtown commission and design commission are looking at that pretty carefully, and, so, I can see that it's a risk because we are trying to do the whole integration and to do it right.

So thank you.

>> Any other questions, colleagues?

Chris?

>> Riley: Not on this one.

I have questions about the one right before this one, item 9, which relates to the williamson creek blarewood storm drain improvements.

I don't know if we have anyone from watershed here, but I just want to raise the question generally.

This relates to a bunch of improvements -- actually it's \$6 million contract for storm drain improvements along williamson creek and includes work like stream bank stabilization and a bunch of gutter replacement, repair of culverts and so on, and my question relates to whether we have explored -- whether there are any opportunities for promoting a trail along the creek.

There has been a lot of interest in a trail along williamson creek.

I know both in the oak hill area and further east between, say, manchak and i-35, in the flood plains, there are opportunities for trails and existing trails along segments of williamson creek.

When we do stream bank stabilization and culvert repair, there are opportunities.

Recently on riverside, when we were doing some repairs along williamson creek, even though there's not a trail -- not williamson creek -- country club creek, even though there's not a continuous trail, we had the foresight to put in a path under riverside and its there now.

No connections north or south.

Whenever we get the connections in place, we'll be glad we had foresight to anticipate a trail under riverside.

So I wonder if there are any opportunities as we do repairs on williamson creek whether we contemplate pedestrian areas in the future.

I wanted to raise that question.

>> We have your question and make sure we get back with your office as soon as possible.

>> Riley: Great, thanks.

>> Cole: Any other questions?

Kathy?

>> Tovo: A couple of quick ones about item 12.

I apologize for going backwards after we specifically had a discussion about going forward.

>> Dug fowler, chief of austin fire department.

>> Tovo: A couple of follow-up questions.

I'm not sure if there is a fee schedule attached to the online agenda.

So my first question is the fees -- looks like the fees associated with these are the drill field are 350 per four-hour block with abestimated \$700.

Do you know how often they are contemplating using the drill field?

>> It's most frequently used in the fall, one to three times a month in the fall.

In the spring, much lighter.

The seniors will be going training and the juniors still have classwork.

So once a month in the spring, but the fall has the heaviest use.

>> Tovo: If you know if the backup information for the site spells out how many?

>> It does not.

>> Tovo: I apologize.

I know, colleagues, you've discussed this academy in some detail in the past and I wasn't part of the discussions, so I'm probably asking things you've already covered, but was there any discussion about the city either waiving that cost or having that be their in-kind participation.

Is there any cost to the city use the fields on that day?

>> Yes, ma'am.

Typica we have instructors that participate so we're just recuperating costs, trying to for the instructors who have to be there to operate certain areas of the drill field.

>> So the \$700 is for instructors to help operate the drill field?

>> Yes, ma'am.

>> Tovo: And there was a response in the second question that talked about the fire department had anticipated absorbing any and all remaining expansions including funding for instructors for the senior and instructors for the Saturday drill skill field days.

So I guess if that was the intent, I'm wondering why there is a cost being assessed to Aisd.

>> The costs that we're incurring above and beyond is for the supplemental instructors when we have skills that are a high student to instructor ratio such as live fire training.

We committed we were going to see the seniors through and we have this spring semester and then we're done with that.

But in the future, Aisd will be responsible for those supplemental instructors.

>> Tovo: I guess I'm having a little trouble matching up all these pieces of information.

Sounds like Aisd is funding instruction for junior and senior classes.

>> Yes, ma'am, and we help out with supplemental instructors for some of these skills that we have to have.

More instructors in the classroom.

You can have one instructor operating in the class.

When we move out into the drill field, we need to have the mentors and supplemental instructors depending on the skill they're working on.

>> So the 51 thousand-dollar are the anticipated costs to be absorbed by Aisd are the instructors that you talked about, the funding of the instructor for the seniors that are not the supplemental?

>> Yes, ma'am.

Most of that was spent in the fall.

We anticipate another 16,000 in the spring and then will be done.

>> Tovo: What I know of the program, sounds like, you know, a really unique opportunity, and I just applaud the school district and the fire department for working together on it.

Seems like it has a lot of potential and we ought to be continuing the city's investment in it.

But I know, again, that there have been previous discussions about that that I wasn't a part of.

So I'm not sure of the range of considerations that went into this.

But I do want to ask a question about the extent to which data is being collected.

There were a few questions I'd asked about -- and there was information back -- the response back was we don't have any numbers regarding the number of students that went on to take the EMT national registry exam, and then sounds like only anecdotal information about what happened to students once they graduated.

Seems to me, if we're trying to assess the value of the program and sounds on the surface it would have great value, to the students, the city, the community, it's hard to quantify the value if you aren't collecting information about what the students are doing with their training.

Are there plans in the works to collect that data and get some of that accounted.

>> Once the spring is over with, officially the Austin fire department is out of it.

We will be happy to ask and they can look it up for us.

But part of the difficulty is this last go-round to applying for the Austin fire department was the first opportunity in this existence of the 6-year program they could actually apply.

We talked with the mentors, both Austin retired firefighters, to get a sense of what they're hearing, but there is no official contact list to go back to the people who started as early as 2006 to find out did they apply or going elsewhere.

That part is difficult.

The other part is when the EMT portion is completed in the spring -- and that's for the seniors -- the seniors graduate and move on and we give them the information to take the national registry exam to get their E.M.T. certification.

But it's completely up to them, and we've lost contact at that point with them.

Again, it would be nice to know if we could follow up and find.

So far, all we have is the one firefighter that works in ESD4, and we know there are two seniors in the current class that have been accepted to Eastern Kentucky and their fire prevention degree program, which includes they work as firefighters as part of the program on campus.

>> Okay.

Thank you.

Chris?

Laura?

>> Morrison: I have a question on a different item.

Mike, you might be able to help me.

Item 29, approve a contract with citele group to secure a security initiative training exercise for the office of homeland security and emergency management.

And, so, basically, what this is a -- we're going to be hiring a company to help us put together an exercise, which is a complicated issue, 350 thousand-dollar, and we do this with the city of austin, city of round rock, travels county, -- travis county, williamson county and hayes county.

I could be wrong, but my understanding before was that the uac was mainly funded through federal funds and perhaps some of those have been cut, now, and, so, I wonder if this is -- if I'm accurate about that and if this is indicating a shift in the way we're going to be funding this organization and whether or not, for instance, with this contract, other -- the other entities will be participating and paying for it, also, or if we're capturing the full cost of it.

So those are basically my two questions about that.

>> I believe although the funds are being cut, this is still part of some of those funds, the federal funds.

>> Morrison: So the funds came into our budget and we're just spending them?

>> Right.

>> Morrison: So maybe byron has the answer to that.

>> Byron johnson, purchasing office.

Yes, he's exactly correct.

These are funds that we got.

This is an exercise that meets the parameters to have the funding, and it's -- parameters of the funding, and it's an exercise done in other communities, and it would be fully funded through the grant program and the extra costs funded through our partners.

>> Right receiving the homeland security fund, we would have some exercises, you know, similar to this regionally and we'd get with our partners and everyone would participate in putting that exercise together.

So that's the way we did it prior to the homeland security funds coming in.

>> I see.

So -- and then I know I've talked with the city manager about this idea before and that is the concept of, at least at some point, having elected officials be part of training exercises for disaster response in general.

I think this is previously terrorism.

So do you know if elected officials are going to be part of this or that's just a different topic to discuss?

>> Well, not part of this particular exercise, but, in fact, today a memo is going to be going out to mayor and counsel for city manager.

We became aware last friday of an opportunity that will involve elected officials that will take place next week.

We apologize, it will be short notice, we just found out about it, but it's going out today and will take place next week on the 2nd or 3rd.

But we'll get that information out to you.

That's one opportunity.

Moving forward in the future, the city manager talked with homeland security and me about, you know, taking advantage of some of those federal opportunities that come in where you eat gore to virginia or they -- you either go to georgia or they come in and do a wide-scale exercise to involve elected officials and staff.

>> Council member morrison, there is a recent attorney general's request for a quorum of council members to maybe participate in these activities.

We don't have guidance on that now but we'll work with the manager's office if some of you want to participate.

>> Morrison: I appreciate that.

That's important for this or just in general.

The experiences over the past year with the wildfires and all, for all of us to have a sense -- I think some people have more than others just because of background on this council, the way things works during a disaster.

It's critical we understand that so we don't get in the way, number one and, number two, so that we can help to make it more productivity and play a particular role.

So whether less than a quorum or whatever, and in the future i think that's very important.

>> Yeah, again, I apologize for the short notice, but a lot of what's going on now is you have different vendors and everything trying to spend the homeland security funds up.

So they got in touch with a short notice.

Of course, we'll take advantage of the opportunity and get that information out to you today.

>> Is it on thursday, a council meeting day?

>> I don't think so.

[Laughter]

>> other items, comments?

>> Briefly, item 46 is sponsoring significant events, a pretty significant event for us a.

The halojeology society secured funds to help us roll out the red carpet in for three days, one day of seminars, one day of parade, which is what we're sponsoring, the parade, and one day of unveiling the monument and festivities around town.

Certainly invite the community out and hope you consider supporting this.

It should be a pretty significant event for austin that weekend and looking forward to sharing it with all of you.

>> Any other comments, colleagues?

No further comments, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

>> Second.

>> No objection.

We're adjourned.