

**BUDGET READING, 9/9/13 – Closed Captioned Transcript**  
**“Local Food Systems Recommendations”**

>> Riley: I have a question for staff in regard to item 2.8, which relates to the local food systems recommendations. And I see Kevin approaching. The figure that we have on that is 200,000. And that includes a number of items. As I understand it, the real pressing need that we have there is actually for the first of those items, which is for our full-time employee to serve as program manager for that program. As I understand it, we don't currently have a manager in program -- in place for that program. So I wanted to see is there any way to scale back that 200,000 to get down to just that program manager position around would that be a worthwhile position for there were no funding beyond just the funding for that position. Is there additional -- is this really just a package deal or can we trim it down to something far less than the \$200,000? [11:05:13]

>> Good question. Kevin Johns, director of economic development. You'll recall that council directed as a result of the sustainable food policy initiative to do an analysis of the food industry and the John Hockenjos study showed it was jobs that made the recommendation of the major recommendation was to create a strategic plan with a lot of citizen involvement and with a lot of the organizations that we're doing food efforts so that we had a thoughtful process of how to grow the industry. And then we also identified two different objectives, one to create a 24 -- kind of a 24/7 public market, like a peeks market, and also a food hub. As the major initiatives. I think having a coordinator, the three departments that are involved in this are the parks department, sustainability office and EGRSO. I think that having a person to lead that none of us have tremendous expertise in developing farmers markets or in the food industry. So I think that it could stand somewhat alone by having that person at least have some consulting services to do the plan. So in looking at the 200,000 there's requested, the division of those dollars probably would be that the 60,000 and 20,000 -- at least the 60,000, which would be for EGRSO to do real estate analysis for the two locations, I think we could pass on that. I think that we could work with the private sector and find people that would be interested in doing that.

>> Riley: I gather we're now down to 39,000, that was the number that's left on the table now? And it seems like that could probably be a stretch. Do you see any way of seeing the F.T.E. position in place in an effective way with funding on that scale? [11:07:32]

>> I believe that there's a half of the f.T.E.'S in place in the parks department. And that that was going to be contributed to the sustainability office so it's really a half-time position, I think that's correct. And so I'm not sure exactly what that cost is but it would draw down the cost fairly significant. >> So if we've already got a .578 f.T.E. In place, then an additional 25 could make it workable. 2.8 the way it was proposed was proposed as a non-general fund change. That we would increase the funding to economic development department to fund these positions via an increase in austin energy's increase in transfer to the department.

>> Riley: I understand that was the recommendation and I had some anxiety about creating a program manager for the food program. And at the expense of austin energy. I'm not -- I think we're trying to -- we've been trying to move away from relying on austin energy to support programs that are not directly related. I understand there is real economic value in developing this program, but I'm not sure it makes that much sense to rely on austin energy for the funding of this particular position, for the program coordinator for the food program.

>> It was the program coordinator that was the recommendation. We didn't have a dog in the fight over where the money would come from. It was just that the council asked to look into and it was discovered that it was a very good area. We do have food deserts, multiple departments are trying to participate in it. Seems like this would be good to go forward. There's a half position available, but I'm not sure where the full-time position then the other half would come from or the consulting money. [11:09:44]

>> Riley: Is there additional staff coming on?

>> My understanding is that the halftime f.T.E. That would be transferred over from pard would offset only by 20,000. The position that was identified for the office of sustainability was a program manager. It was thought to be a more senior position that would coordinate efforts across multiple city departments as well as private stakeholder groups. So it was thought to be a more senior level position, but the part time f.T.E. Would only offset part of that cost and the estimated cost for that full time position was 97.

>> Riley: At this point we do not have adequate funds identified to support that position. So I think we do need to move forward as soon as we can on that position. As y'all know that the local food issues have been of varying significant concern for

this community for some time. We've heard multiple recommendations from the sustainable food policy board about getting that in place. We have urban farm code amendments coming our way that's going to generate a whole new discussion about the role of the food on our local economy. And so I think there is a very strong case to make to get a position in place. So if we were able to identify some additional funds, that would be high on my list as a need that would benefit from the use of those funds.

>> Councilmember, we could look at next year or look at other sources of funding for the real estate analysis of the market study if there was a position created, we could come up with the others are a request over a longer period of time.

>> Riley: So are you saying that there would be value in -- one more time, could you give us the amount that is -- that is currently -- that we're currently at? [11:11:48]

>> I can. This is where it gets a little -- as the puzzle starts to come back together, is gets a little more complicated. Just looking at the general fund we have a 39,000-dollar surplus. But it's starting to feel like the changes to the support services fund maybe have come to a conclusion and right now in our support services fund we have a 490,000-dollar surplus. So we can lower the amount of funds we have to transfer from our general fund to our support services fund to keep that fund whole. We can lower that amount at this point by \$490,000. Again, assuming that the support services fund is largely sitting still at this point. We could make that change, which would free up additional general fund dollars and maybe help with the remainder of our conversation. I believe there's only one item on the support services that hasn't been taken up yet. It's item 2.4 and it would actually lower support services cost even further. So with a little bit of direction there I could get more definitive about where we are with the general fund, but there's a lot of moving pieces.

>> Riley: I would like to move that we provide you that direction that is necessary in order to get a full-time employee position in place to serve as program manager for the sustainable food policy program. Rather, the sustainable food program as recommended by the sustainable food policy board. >> Then we have a at the current time we have a surplus of \$529,835 and then while see what happens with this proposal you're offering. Rhyme rhyme the number that we landed on as the amount necessary to fund that position. I heard a few different numbers and that could be something we could leave to y'all to figure out since it does involve pairing

this funding with an existing .5 f.T.E. And if we -- would you be able to figure that out based on direction from council? [11:13:53]

>> Yes, I think we could figure it out quickly and now the 2.8 would no longer be austin energy, but a general fund cost.

>> Riley: I think I heard 97 from staff. I'm seeing a nod out there. So that would be my motion that we provide \$97,000 to get the program manager in place for the food program.

>> Mayor Leffingwell: So motion to amend by councilmember riley to approve, what is it, 2.8, item 2.8 in the amount of 97,000 for the 200,000.

>> Riley: That's right.

>> Mayor Leffingwell: If we do this this way, are we going to have everything buttoned up tonight so that you can come back tomorrow and give us a final proposal? That we don't have to mess with anymore and just vote on?

>> Absolutely. We'll come back at 10:00 ready to go.

>> Mayor Leffingwell: And now based on approval of this motion, which I don't intend to support either, but based on this, passage of this, we would be in the black on the general fund? So we would be able to vote on the entire package tomorrow when we come back. Hopefully without much fanfare?

>> We do have the details of that whenever you're ready for them.

>> Mayor Leffingwell: I'm ready now. >> Okay. Item 2.10, code compliance. 11:15:54]

>> Mayor Leffingwell: Question by councilmember morrison.

>> Morrison: Thank you. I have two questions about this. One is I'm concerned about the assumption that this new f.T.E. Would have to be a program manager level f.T.E. You know that's one of the issues we've been looking at. See if they have some element of expertise to be able to coordinate things, but they won't be managing anyone as I understand it, is that correct? >> That is true. So they would be working with a number of different city departments and with city community stakeholders.

But no, they won't be managing staff. >> So I guess my question would be more to the city manager or other folks, maybe even our hr, is it appropriate to be adding this as a program manager? I'm fully supportive of it. I want to make sure we do it right. I think it's a great position to fill. I think we should need to question that. >> I don't know necessarily what when we use the term manager that it necessarily has to mean managing people. This person is managing a program that involves a fairly high level interaction across city departments and with other interested parties outside the organization. So I think in the broader definition of manager, meaning it doesn't necessarily have to include supervise of employees, that the title is appropriate. >> Morrison: So to be at that level of sort of coordinating across departments, that's -- that would be that level in your mind, managerial.

[11:17:58] >> Yes.

>> Morrison: Thank you for that. And the other question i have is one of the things this will be focusing on, not that we're going to fund it, is the idea of the public market. And I'm trying to remember, but I thought that the review and recommendations of the report that came back from the sustainable food policy board did not really support that as a priority. Can you -- I want to make sure that we kick this off on the right foot and don't send our staff down a path that's not consistent with the board's recommendation. I see some whispering going on in the back. Hello, margaret.

>> Good evening, councilmembers, margaret shea with the economic development department. You're correct, the food policy board did not rank this that as one of their high priorities, however the recommendation is actually to explore feasibility, so it would be around bringing in experts that can look at vendor capacity. They are supportive of increasing customers for their farmers. So part of the public market component is looking at the feasibility around how we can assist those farmers in growing their customer base and being better connected to institutional buyers such as hospitals, day care centers, even the city. >> Morrison: Right. So I guess I want to make sure that we don't head down that path until it's fully explored and that we won't spend a lot of time and money trying to push a square peg in a round hole, something like that? >> Obviously we are in constant conversation with them around that. As we've said if we get the fundings we work with them to figure out how to have that conversation moving forward. >> Morrison: But to be clear, this motion only covers the program manager, the f.T.E. And it's not going to be putting any

money into the feasibility analysis of the public market that we don't even know if we want. [11:20:11]

>> Riley: Mayor? If I may respond, that's exactly the intent. And in part that's based on a communication we received on september fifth from the vice-chair of the sustainable food policy board who emphasized the need for the staff position saying that that's really what's important at this point.

>> Morrison: Great. I fully intend to support it.

>> Mayor Leffingwell: Well, I'm not going to support this. Not that it's not a good thing, but it's probably the last thing on this long list of \$22 million that the city should be involved in at this point. I mean, so many really needy situations -- and this is -- I just don't think it fits the profile of what the city of austin should be doing. Encouragement, yes, but i don't think funding it directly is appropriate and so I'm not going to support it. In favor say aye? Opposed say no. Passes on a vote of five-one with might self voting no and councilmember spelman off the dais.