

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Austin, Texas

Special Meeting -- August 6, 1963

A meeting of the Commission was held at 7:30 p.m. on August 6, 1963, in the City Council Room, to review and discuss Capital Improvements Program X and to prepare recommendations.

Present

D.B. Barrow, Chairman
S.P. Kinser
W. Sale Lewis
Barton D. Riley
W.A. Roe

Absent

Edgar E. Jackson
Emil Spillman
Howard E. Brunson
Ben Hendrickson

Also Present

Alfred Davey, Assistant Director of Planning
David Houston, Chief Plan Engineering
Leoda Anderson, Planning Department

Chairman Barrow opened the meeting with an outline of its purpose, reminding the Commission that the Charter of the City of Austin requires the Commission to submit a list of recommended capital improvements to the city manager. Mr. Barrow referred to the publication Complete List of Project Proposals, CIP X, 1963-1968, July, 1963, (a copy of which had been mailed to the Commission members previous to the meeting), stating that though the Commission was expected to evaluate the 5-year program, it would be impossible for the Commission to examine each project individually. He stressed the importance, however, of the Commission's exercising some measure of its prerogative, expressing the opinion that the Commission has had some influence in the past, citing the Mo-Pac Boulevard project as an example. Mr. Barrow expressed understanding of the difficulties involved in getting the Capital Improvements information into the hands of the Commission in adequate time for leisurely review, but said the Commission was receiving its information earlier than it had in previous years.

After acknowledgment of Mr. Barrow's remarks, David Houston, Plan Engineer, outlined the Capital Improvements Program in terms of definition, procedure involved in its preparation, its purpose and uses, and the role of the Commission at the present stage of its preparation by virtue of the City Charter requirements.

Mr. Houston defined capital improvements as improvements that are generally geographically fixed, bondable. He represented the Capital Improvements Program as an orderly presentation of the capital expenditures for the next 5 years, a presentation which provides a working tool for the city administration, especially the city manager. He marked that the Commission should be a "sounding board" in the matter of recommending a list of projects to the city manager.

At this point Mr. Houston read a portion of Section 2, Article X, of the City Charter dealing with the Planning Commission--Powers and Duties:

"The Planning Commission shall submit annually to the City Manager... a list of recommended capital improvements which in the opinion of the Commission are necessary or desirable during the forthcoming five year period."

The phrase "necessary or desirable," said Mr. Houston, should be the key phrase for the Commission's concentration, the basis for the Commission's judgment and decisions.

Mr. Houston also read from Section 5, Article X of the Charter: "Legal Effect of Master Plan."

"Upon adoption of the Master Plan by the Council, no subdivision, street, park nor any public way, ground or space, public building or structure and no public utility, whether publicly or privately owned, which is in conflict with the Master Plan, shall be constructed or authorized by the City until and unless the location and extent thereof shall have been submitted to and approved by the Commission."

Mr. Kinser voiced a doubt that this stricture had been faithfully adhered to in the past. Mr. Barrow expressed the viewpoint that there are too many projects to examine to permit the referral of every project to the Commission. He said he felt, moreover, that the administration has, as a matter of policy, been discussing the main projects of the Capital Improvements Program with the Commission and that the Commission has had good cooperation from the city manager.

There was general agreement that the location of major thoroughfares and sites for all other public facilities should be submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration while the project is still in the planning stage. This conclusion was later embodied in recommendations to the city manager.

Mr. Houston raised the question of whether standards, as established in the Austin Development Plan, should be as moot a point to consider as locations. Commission assented.

As a prelude to displaying informative Capital Improvements Program materials, Mr. Houston read Item 5 under Section 2, Article X, of the Charter which states:

"The Planning Commission shall require information from the other departments of the City government in relation to its work."

He displayed the following materials, commenting on the nature of each:

- (1) Project Proposal Sheets, representing over 400 projects proposed by 26 departments of the City, in a book, one of which is in the city manager's office for his use, and one in the Planning Department. Each department head, too, has a copy of all the projects (with all related information) proposed by his department for the 5-year Capital Improvements Program.

- (2) Complete List of Projects, CIP X, which is distributed to City Council, Planning Commission, department heads, Planning Department personnel and to the public on request.
- (3) CIP VIII publication, October 1961. No publication of this type was made for CIP IX, nor will there be such for CIP X.
- (4) Summary sheet: "Fund Source Summary." This sheet Mr. Houston described as the "broad brush treatment" of the financial picture and the special interest of the Finance Director.
- (5) Summary sheet: "Proposed Expenditures and Fund Sources." He explained that this sheet is a breakdown of expenditures by functions as well as fund source.

An examination of the Capital Improvements Program documents followed. Mr. Houston answered questions relating to the use of terms including participation, unknown, fiscal year.

Mr. Houston then discussed the financial implications of Capital Improvements X, saying that the program, as set forth in the Complete List of Project Proposals, CIP X, includes proposals for expenditures totaling approximately \$4-5 million per year. Present financial planning indicated that the following schedule of expenditures is possible without an increase in taxes:

FY'63	\$2 million
FY'64	\$2 million
FY'65	\$2 million
FY'66	\$2.5 million
FY'67	\$2.5 million
FY'68	\$2.5 million

Proposed annual expenditures, he pointed out, are therefore approximately twice as large as the City's present financial capability. Mr. Barrow asked what would be the amount of the possible rate of increase of taxes if increase should be necessary. (The finance director later provided the answer to this question: 2 1/2¢ per \$100,000 or 25¢ per \$1,000,000.)

Mr. Houston continued with this reminder, voiced by the city manager:

In preparing a list of recommendations to submit to the city manager, the Commission may be inclined to recommend the advancement of certain projects or to include projects not shown in Complete List of Project Proposals, CIP X. If such recommendations are made by the Commission, the city manager suggests that the Commission choose one of the following necessary alternatives in order to effectuate such rescheduling:

- (1) Increase city taxes
- (2) Defer other projects. (Which ones?)

General discussion ensued in which the complications of evaluating the Capital Improvements Program were reiterated by members of the Commission. It was suggested that Mr. Houston point out the major projects.

To illustrate the impossibility of delineating some projects as "major" and others as "minor", Mr. Houston shared with the Commission brief word-pictures of sample interviews with department heads, underlining the cogency of the needs as seen through the eyes of the department heads being interviewed. Importance pitted against importance posed the question: Which is the more important project?

Mr. Davey suggested that perhaps the task of the Commission in regard to Capital Improvements Program could be facilitated by breaking the group down into smaller units and dividing up the projects to be scanned.

Mr. Lewis observed that background knowledge, possession of the facts, and a scientific approach gives the Planning Department the advantage of being in a more knowledgeable position to assess the projects. He termed the gap in knowledge a "matter of communications", saying the Commission is not in a position to question information that is proffered.

Mr. Houston commented upon the danger in this state of affairs. He cited the example of the Community Hospital and Health Needs Survey as a case in which it was assumed that a technical survey was deemed necessary because of a lack of usable information. Mr. Riley suggested that with regard to the hospital survey the community's current effort in this area should include an attempt to coordinate the proposed Community Hospital and Health Needs Survey with work which Mr. Riley says he understands is being done by the Baptist Foundation.

Mr. Wroe questioned the number of branch libraries being built and being proposed, and their location in residential sections. Mr. Houston called to mind the provision for branch libraries made in the Austin Development Plan adopted in 1961. The basis for the recommendations concerning branch libraries is the established standard of one branch library for each 50,000 population.

Mr. Davey asked about the stated need for relocation of the Carver Branch Library. Mr. Houston read Capital Improvements Program project description which outlined unsuitability of present site and low book-circulation figures.

The Commission turned to the Complete List of Project Proposals, CIP X, scanning in turn the projects as listed under the various functions, and made the following recommendations:

- (1) That the location of sites for all Capital Improvements Program project proposals, including schools, and the location of major thoroughfares proposed in Capital Improvements Program be submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration; and the Planning Commission agrees that standards governing size of site and location of site and standards governing construction of projects as set forth in the Austin Development Plan shall be taken into consideration when judging projects.

- (2) The Commission feels that the Projects listed under Civil Defense function are relatively secondary to other major projects under consideration.
- (3) That the project titled PC-1 "Police and Courts Building Additions" under the function Police and Courts, and the projects titled LB-2 "Site for Main Library Expansion" and LB-3 "Main Library Parking Area" under the function Libraries be given high priority.
- (4) That the site location (bank of Town Lake) proposed for the project titled FV-3 "Fire Prevention Office Building" under the function Fire Prevention be questioned in the light of its type use as contrasted with the recreational and scenic nature of the Town Lake area. The Planning Commission questions the feasibility of a separate structure on the basis of cost involved and alternately recommends that consideration be given to developing the Fire Prevention Office as a part of the Police and Courts function.
- (5) That the site location (600 River Street) proposed for the project titled SY-3 "Street and Bridge Conference and Office Building" under the function Service Yards be questioned in the light of its type use as contrasted with the recreational and scenic nature of the Town Lake area. The project as submitted envisions the development of the existing Service Yards facility. The Planning Commission recommends the disapproval of this proposal and further recommends that, as soon as practicable, the existing facilities be moved to a more appropriate site.
- (6) That cemetery lot charges be proportionately increased to provide adequate revenue for the maintenance and improvement of the cemeteries.
- (7) That the portion of funds from the sale of Hancock Tract, previously allocated for the use of Town Lake area improvement and beautification, be used for this purpose and that these earmarked funds not be diverted to other purposes which are not approved by the Planning Commission and the Town Lake Committee. The Planning Commission recommends a minimum expenditure of \$235,000 for the Town Lake improvement project.
- (8) That the City's financial involvement and obligations in connection with the current Community Hospital and Health Needs Survey, voted by City Council, be carefully considered, particularly as to the City's future financial participation in expanded facilities.
- (9) That the City Council be commended for its recent action in regard to purchasing water districts under conditions as stipulated by the Council in these contracts. The Planning Commission feels that the Council's action in this matter will be a distinct aid to all groups responsible for the planning of this community.

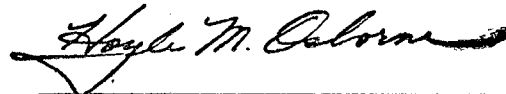
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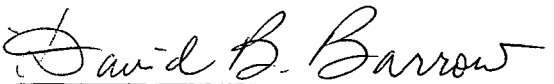
ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Barrow asked the members of the Planning Commission to remain after adjournment of meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.



Hoyle M. Osborne
Executive Secretary

APPROVED:


Chairman