

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Called Meeting

January 14, 1978  
12:00 Noon

Parks and Recreation Department

The meeting was called to order with Mayor McClellan presiding.

Roll Call:

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

Absent: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor McClellan stated that this was a Special Called Meeting of the City Council for the purpose of publicly announcing that it will immediately convene in a closed or executive session authorized by Section 2, Paragraph (g) of Article 6252-17, Texas Revised Civil Statutes Annotated, to evaluate the City Manager; and after such closed or executive session any final action, decision or vote with regard to any matter considered in the closed or executive session will be made in open session, should such action, decision or vote be necessary.

COUNCIL MEETING RECONVENED

The Council Meeting reconvened at 5:00 p.m.

Mayor McClellan

EVALUATION OF CITY MANAGER

Mayor McClellan stated that the evaluation with the City Manager had been extensive, thorough and constructive. The primary thrust of the evaluation was a reallocation of the City Manager's time, which the Council would be monitoring monthly.

Motion

Councilmember Cooke moved that the Council retain its current City Manager, Mr. Dan Davidson. Councilmember Goodman seconded the motion.

Statement by Councilman Snell

"I think that this has been a very successful evaluation session. In comparison to the evaluation made a year ago, I think it was well-planned, well-thought out, and I think, a very deserving evaluation. I was able to pinpoint some things that I've been interested in, things that have not been accomplished and things that we have set out in our goals and things to be checked in the next few months that will be accomplished. I am very happy to have this evaluation session end, and I'm looking forward to a very successful, very productive year."

Statement by Councilman Goodman

"I'll say that I found the process enjoyable. You all can tell that by the ease with which I practice communication. And like Mr. Snell, I agree and compliment Mr. Cooke and Mr. Mullen specifically. And, of course, all of us participated in the structure that we followed. It made communication...the facilitating was there. I will vote yes in favor of this motion even though 8 months or so ago I said something different. I said the City Manager ought to be fired. Shortly thereafter I came off that position and told the City Manager in a visit with him that it was a rash comment and I preferred instead to work with him first before making any such determination. Well, I vote today in favor of keeping him because I think that he has done a good job. That job has not been perfect, obviously...has not been all that I would like it to be and all that I want...I have communicated to him in this session. And as I see it, the real test of our relationship comes after this meeting because all seven of us have communicated to him all of the things that bother us and all of the good things he's done and this is often not expressed fully. Obviously, those things outweigh the defects and that's why I am voting yes."

Statement by Mayor Pro Tem Himmelblau

"To me it's been a very valuable experience. I, too, had some criticisms and I look forward to the next few months and the next six months to see how some of these will be handled."

Statement by Councilman Mullen

"I'd like to say that I think there's been a question in some people's minds, Who's running the City? It's a valid question. As long as the Council is not strong enough to take a hand and give direction, the City Manager will run the City. He picks up where the vacuum is. I think this Council, by spending a great deal of hours in time and communication with the City Manager telling him where we thought he was weak and where we thought he was strong, will overcome this problem."

I think he knows and I know that we know as a Council that we are the policy-setting group. We have set the policy. He has heard the policy now. It's completely unfair to criticize the man until he knows our policy. Six months from now if that policy is not followed out, I for one will be very critical. But at the present time, I think he has followed the dictates as closely as he could of a diversified Council. I feel like one of the very good things that's come out of this is that the Council itself has communicated, has gotten together completely. We've given our goals and objectives very directly. The City Manager knows what those are. He's going to have some reorganization coming out of his utilization of his time, and our priorities and goals will be carried out. I think Mr. Davidson has done extremely well working under the circumstances that he's worked under the last few years."

Statement by Councilman Cooke

"Mayor, in regard to the whole concept of an evaluation, in trying to have a systematic evaluation that everyone could participate in, I too have enjoyed this, and I'd like to make some specific comments in areas that we did address during the evaluation. First, with regard to the fact that this particular evaluation and the candid comments, I mean really candid, from both sides of the fence, I believe that there will be some new direction from the Manager as far as how he allocates his time, specifically with regard to the personnel that he's responsible for, and as well as carrying as far as policy execution. I think Mr. Davidson is personally a real credit to this City. As far as his professional skills and his status, I think he's above average, and I think we gave him some direction as far as continuing his professional competence of maybe attending a professional course. You can certainly always improve your management skills. His relationships with this Council have been really excellent. But at times it may be that it is felt that his priorities are emphasized to the Council so much that he doesn't give attention to some of the responsibilities he has with his own personnel. And I believe and hope that we have given him some direction there. I think that there is some definite improvements that need to be made in his reporting to the Council through staff. Citizens' relations have been above average. And his staffing since he's been City Manager..and as he pointed out to us, appointing 17 different department heads over his tenure..I think that's excellent, and I think he pointed out to ~~some~~ of the places where he was very pleased with those and some places that he needs to give attention to. I feel very strongly and I think some of the discussion that permeated the evaluation regarding his supervision ability needs to be directed more on a daily basis, and much stronger communication with his departments as we perceive it. I think one of the real plusses for this City is the fiscal management of the City. I think as we talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the Manager and what's come out of the City management in relation to not only the priorities and goals of this Council which I think has been a plus for all of us for better communication I think that we can take pride in the fact that over this last year we've had the development and approval of a new Master Plan, Lake Austin controls, we've got a rate structure formulated

before us, we've had some positive--believe it--positive things with regard to management made at Brackenridge Hospital, Decker II has come on line, Walnut Creek has come on line. I think that these are some positive things that have come out of City administration as we've talked about in the private session. I would hope though as a summation that there will be more time devoted by the Manager to the personnel in this City and to really more departmental control from his point of view in relation to carrying out the policies of this Council. It's been an excellent process."

Statement by Councilman Trevino

"Just two points. One is I'm glad this Council has continued the policy of annual evaluation of the City Manager which was begun by the previous Council. Without question this evaluation has been much more thorough than the previous one, and I would hope that it will continue as each session takes place. During these three days we have been able to point out in detail to the Manager what the Council individually or collectively felt were strength or weaknesses and for the first time begin to give perhaps a more detailed direction as to what we feel needs to be done, and I emphasize the "we." The second point is something that I think one of the other Councilmembers already touched on and that is in our form of government, that is, City Council/City Manager form of government there is always a danger of a City Manager taking control and running the City, and we must realize that this happens when a City Council defaults, when a City Council fails to give direction and leadership. This will not be the case with this Council. We will not default that obligation. The Manager knows this and we know this. But we must be vigilant that this does not occur. And in being vigilant, we must also be aware that a vacuum doesn't occur, that we will not overstep our boundaries and get into the realms that belong to the City Manager that given to him by the City Charter. I have always stated, previously and publicly, that I felt that Dan Davidson was a very competent administrator. While he and I may have disagreed at points like I have also disagreed with my colleagues I still feel that Dan Davidson is a very competent administrator."

Statement by Mayor McClellan

"I think that we have a very diverse but very dedicated and determined Council, and I think that this Council will continue to work together to collectively give direction to a very competent and highly professional City Manager."

Roll Call on Motion

Ayes: Mayor Pro Tem Himmelsblau, Councilmembers Mullen, Snell, Trevino,  
Mayor McClellan, Councilmembers Cooke, Goodman  
Noes: None

Councilmember Goodman added that during the evaluation process, it became clear that the Council was in full control and running the City. That fact would become clearer in the future. Running the City was a responsibility shared by the Council and City Manager, who acted under the Council's policy direction.

Councilmember Mullen stated that in the evaluation the City Manager understood and liked it that way.

#### ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjournedd at 5:20 p.m.

APPROVED

*Carole Keeton*  
Mayor

ATTEST:

*Grace Monroe*

City Clerk