

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Called Council Meeting
Capital Improvements Program Public Hearing

August 16, 1978
7:00 P.M.

Council Chambers
301 West Second Street

The meeting was called to order with Mayor McClellan presiding.

Roll Call:

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

Absent: None

Mayor McClellan opened the public hearing on the 1978-83 Capital Improvements Program, indicating that the Council has scheduled a special hearing on the Barton Skyway Bridge question and would not hear anything pertaining to that matter at tonight's hearing. She stated that August 30th at 7:00 P.M. has been set aside for a hearing on this one issue. The Mayor stated that there will be another hearing on the Capital Improvements Program on Thursday, August 31st at 7:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers.

Mayor McClellan stated that the Planning Commission has recommended to the City Manager and the City Council a \$562.9 million program. She indicated that \$153.3 million is for general government projects, \$265.5 million for electric services and \$143.1 million for water and wastewater projects. The Mayor stated that this Capital Improvements Program would be important in determining a bond election. She stated that new bonds would be required to finance many of the recommended projects. Mayor McClellan indicated that the City has \$56.5 million in General Obligation Authority Required and \$171.6 million in new Electric Revenue bonds which are needed for the recommended Capital Improvements Program. She stated that the decisions which the Council must address will effect the size of the bond issue as well as the timing. Mayor McClellan indicated that the Planning Commission recommends a program which is investment oriented. She stated that the Commission's proposal would have minimal future impacts on the City's annual operating budget. She also stated that the commission favored projects which do not require future appropriations for staffing and operations. Mayor McClellan indicated that investment projects may have a

low impact on the operating budget whereas consumption projects may require some high level annual appropriation. She stated that investment projects may have a capacity to generate revenue and have a low labor intensity, and that consumption projects are inefficient revenue producers and are labor intensive. The Mayor said that this year each project will have to be analyzed closely in light of its investment potential. She stated that in order to hold down city taxes, the C.I.P. cannot contribute heavily to the growth in the operating budget. Mayor McClellan felt that the Council should provide for those improvements which are absolutely necessary.

Councilmember Cooke felt that the investment oriented program was an excellent way to provide an immediate and systematic approach to planning. He stated that he was in support of the program but felt that the Council should look into slowing down the C.I.P. or considering alternatives to policy making for the program. Councilmember Cooke stated that additional bonding authority would mean additional taxes for the citizens and that they may not want a well-funded continuing planning mechanism for the C.I.P. He stated that he was concerned about reinstated projects in this year's C.I.P. because it made it difficult to obtain a good grasp on the cycle of funding as it is requested. Councilmember Cooke felt that it would be useful in the future to have staff indicate the projects being funded for each year and prior years so that the Council can get a better grasp of the funding cycle.

Mr. David Young, representing the North Oaks Neighborhood Association, told the Council that the residents of the area he represented very much appreciated the Council's efforts to get the State Highway Department to upgrade Highway 183. Mr. Young requested that the proposed area library be located on the west side of Loop 360, south of Highway 183. He asked that sidewalks be considered running into the new Oaks Elementary School. Mr. Young stated that the Parks and Recreation Department be authorized to talk with the Round Rock School District regarding the institution of parks in the area.

Penny Brydson, Reggie Williams and George Polanco relinquished their time to speak to Mr. Bo Byers.

Mr. Bo Byers, President of the Capital Area Tennis Association, expressed appreciation to the Parks Board and the Planning Commission for recognizing the need for a major tennis center. He stated that CATA is primarily concerned with receiving a new 16 court center, at a location suitable for ultimate expansion from 32-40 courts. Mr. Byers stated that the main need for the 16 court center is to begin a significant program of development for junior tennis players at minimal costs to their families. The new center would also increase the availability of lighted courts for those persons who are generally able to play only after 5:00 P.M. on work days. Mr. Byers also pointed out that the new center would make it possible to host major tennis tournaments without having to beg courts from the University of Texas, from the Austin School District, from private colleges and from private clubs. Mr. Byers stated that the costs of private, individual lessons is prohibitive for the vast majority of Austin's 40,000 tennis players. The number of persons who can be served by present group instruction programs is only a minute percentage of those who wish to receive instruction. Mr. Byers then cited some figures on the number of persons who play tennis in the Austin area. He stated that CATA has budgeted

\$900. for a pilot program which will be a follow-up to the 8 week National Junior Tennis League program which is sponsored each summer by the Parks and Recreation Department. He stated that the National Junior Tennis League program is for supervised play and not for instructional development of players. Mr. Byers indicated that they wanted to draw from the ranks of those NJTL children who develop a desire to continue training but whose families cannot afford the cost of instruction. He stated that they wanted to feed in as many as 70 juniors per training period, rotating in new players throughout the year.

Mr. Byers stated that he has tried to make clear the tremendous pressure on public courts in Austin and the serious inadequacy of junior development programs. He stated that this inadequacy stemmed mostly from the absence of a major tennis center. In regard to cost effectiveness, Mr. Byers stated that a report submitted by former PARD Director Jack Robinson to City Manager Dan Davidson indicated that the cost to the City per participant hour was \$.40 for golf, \$.31 for softball, \$.22 for swimming and \$.10 for tennis. He stated that it cost the City four times as much to provide facilities for golfers as it did to provide tennis facilities for tennis players. Mr. Byers stated that cost effectiveness can also be measured as a function of property taxes versus acreage assigned for recreational purposes. He pointed out that the amount of potential property tax the City could collect on the four major golf courses in the city would be \$113,000 as opposed to only \$13,900 that could be collected for the Pharr and Caswell Tennis Centers. Mr. Byers stated that he did not criticize the dedication of such large acreages to golf, but regretted that there has not been equitable treatment for tennis in Austin. Mr. Byers stated that a major tennis center would make Austin a much more attractive tournament city and could contribute to the local economy. He stated that delaying construction of the 16 court center would only incur more cost in the future. In response to a question from Councilmember Goodman, Mr. Byers indicated that his organization would prefer the location for the new center to be somewhere near the river.

Mr. Bob Davis, representing the Allandale Neighborhood Association, spoke before the Council in opposition to the extension of Great Northern Boulevard. Mr. Davis made a visual presentation of the area in question. He indicated that his organization has voted unanimously to oppose the project on the grounds that Great Northern Boulevard is already a busy and dangerous street and that by linking the Boulevard to commercial areas in the north would increase speeding and the number of vehicles along the residential street. Mr. Davis stated that a petition of approximately 200 signatures was submitted to the Planning Commission in opposition to the project. He stated that they have also submitted a letter to Mr. Joe Ternus of the Urban Transportation Department reiterating their opposition to the project and asking him to not reduce the width of the bike lane and to consider a physical barrier to separate the bike lane from the traffic. Mr. Davis quoted Deputy City Manager Homer Reed as stating that failure to extend Great Northern Boulevard would be the death of the shopping center to the north of Anderson Lane. He felt that the shopping center is currently doing a thriving business without the extension and that most of the businesses are specialty shops which are less dependent on neighborhood access than a grocery store. In conclusion, Mr. Davis stated that the shopping center would not die without the extension but that an increase in traffic along Great Northern Boulevard would increase hazards to the neighborhood residents.

Dr. Gary Vliet felt that to maintain the quality of living in Austin it is essential to preserve the residential character of neighborhoods. He said that the extension of Great Northern Boulevard will greatly increase traffic on it and will degrade the quality of residences along it and in the Maryland Road area. Mr. Vliet stated that the extension will also increase the danger to school children in the area. He felt that the area's shopping centers would not be significantly effected by the lack of an extension along the Boulevard. Mr. Vliet strongly urged the Council to vote against the extension of Great Northern Boulevard.

Mr. Bill Brandon, Principal of Gullett Elementary School, felt that if Great Northern Boulevard is extended there would an increase in speeding along the Boulevard, and also an increase in the possibility of a student being hurt. Mr. Brandon asked that the Boulevard not be extended.

Mr. H. B. Moeller, a resident of Skylark Street, spoke in opposition to the extension of Great Northern Boulevard. Mr Moeller indicated that he has observed people driving 40-50 mph through the bike lane along Great Northern Boulevard, and felt that extending the Boulevard would turn it into a raceway. He suggested that the bike lanes be changed from the west side to the east side. Mr. Moeller indicated that by doing this, children would not have to cross from the residential block to the other side of the street. He stated that extension of the Boulevard would be hazardous to residents in the area. Mr. Moeller asked that the Council vote against the extension of Great Northern Boulevard.

* Councilmember Cooke and Mayor Pro Tem Mullen both felt that changing the bike lanes from the west side to the east side of the street would make the situation even more dangerous.

Mr. Bruce Morrison felt that extending Great Northern Boulevard would increase speeding along the Boulevard. He stated that the expense of the extension was not in the best interests of the neighborhood or the city at large because it was an unnecessary and unwanted expense. Mr. Morrison requested that the Council vote against the extension of Great Northern Boulevard.

Mr. Sam Kinch Jr., asked that the Council vote against the extension of Great Northern Boulevard. He felt that if the Boulevard is extended it would greatly jeopardize the safety of children attending Gullett Elementary School. Mr. Kinch suggested that the City save the money for the project by not approving it.

* Councilmember Himmelblau indicated that she wanted staff to find out what it would cost to put down a curb divider down to upgrade the bike lane. Deputy City Manager Reed stated that they would be glad to give a report on this request. Mr. Reed indicated that he had expressed to the Planning Commission that plans should be made with great caution, when those plans have been long standing and when substantial investments have been made based on those plans. He stated that the plans for the extension of Great Northern Boulevard have been in the City records since 1961. Mr. Reed indicated that some \$70,000 has been invested by the public sector primarily as a result of investments by developers in building the extension of Great Northern Boulevard beyond Foster Lane. He stated that \$200,000 is now expended by the Highway Department in plans for the construction of the MoPac overpass. Mr. Reed pointed out that substantial investments have also been made by the private sector. He stated that they shared the concern for

safety in the neighborhood, as was expressed by the residents of the area. Mr. Reed indicated that they would be presenting a report to Council on some of the alternatives in the matter, and that the report would be ready within a week. Councilmember Goodman thanked the neighborhood for attending the meeting. He asked what was the document which contained the extension in 1961. Mr. Reed indicated that the project first appeared in the Cotton Report on MoPac. He stated that no Council has ever decided to extend Great Northern Boulevard.

Mr. Bill Snow, representing the Austin Softball Association, gave a brief history of softball in the C.I.P. He asked that the Council reinstate in the C.I.P. a four field softball complex which has already been started. In response to a question from Councilmember Himmelblau, Mr. Snow indicated that the Association does very little field maintenance but does buy equipment for the various fields, such as fences and scoreboards. Councilmember Himmelblau asked if there was a tremendous amount of maintenance to a softball field in relation to impact on the budget. Mr. Michael Segrest, Acting Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, stated that the maintenance cost for a softball field is not substantially more than for any other park area. Councilmember Himmelblau questioned why the Planning Commission cut the softball complex from the C.I.P. if the maintenance cost was so low. Deputy City Manager Reed pointed out that the Planning Commission has an objective to hold down the total size of the proposed bond issue, and that this may have influenced their judgement. Councilmember Goodman asked what the Parks Board's recommendation for 1979 funding of the complex was. Mr. Segrest indicated that funding for 1978-79 was \$460,000 as previously pointed out by Mr. Snow. The recommendation also included an additional \$200,000 for the 1979-80 period for acquiring another site. Mr. Segrest indicated that the Planning Commission has offered as an alternative, the possibility of reducing this amount down to \$100,000. Mr. Segrest indicated that they were trying to complete the engineering for the complex by the end of this year so that bids for the contract can be awarded shortly after the first of the year. He said that it would probably be Spring of 1981 before the complex is completed. Mr. Snow, at the request of Councilmember Goodman, informed the Council that the Association was proposing to build a concession stand and broadcast booth as one of the complexes using its own funds. He stated that they would also maintain both installations as long as the Softball Association existed.

Mr. G. W. Waldrop, representing the South River City Citizens, spoke before the Council regarding a tract of land south and west of Travis High School known as the Storm Tract. He stated that they wanted to see this tract maintained as a wilderness area. Mr. Waldrop indicated that this area would give to the City a natural greenbelt.

Dr. Charles D. Matthews spoke in favor of retaining the Storm Tract in a natural state. He suggested that the owner of the property be approached with the ideal that a portion of the land be donated to the City of Austin to be named as a park in his honor.

Mr. John Panak, a member of the Allandale Neighborhood Association, spoke before the Council regarding the Upper Shoal Creek Wastewater Interceptor. Mr. Panak relinquished his speaking time to the next speaker. He told the Council that he would be available to address the question of costs.

Mr. Terry Leifeste, representing the Allandale Neighborhood Association, gave the Council a brief history on the Upper Shoal Creek Wastewater Interceptor Project. He indicated that the Planning Commission favored constructing the project down the street as opposed to in the creek. He asked that the Council

not change anything but keep the project as it is currently listed in the C.I.P. Mr. Leifeste submitted to Council a list of advantages there would be in constructing the project down the street. Councilmember Himmelblau asked where this is suppose to tie in. Mr. Leifeste stated that it starts around 49th Street where the Shoal Creek and Hancock branch come together, and goes all the way beyond Northwest Park almost to Silver Leaf. He stated that from a cost standpoint it was competitive to go down the street as compared to the creek.

* Councilmember Goodman asked Mr. Curtis Johnson, Director of the Water and Wastewater Department, what the main considerations were between the two options. Mr. Johnson indicated that it would cost \$150,000 more to go into the street. He stated that constructing the project in the street is more costly because the line would have to be installed at a greater depth. Mr. Johnson indicated that they were in the process of formalizing a report on the various alternatives that have been looked at, along with the various costs. He stated that this report would be submitted to the City Manager's Office within the next two weeks. In response to a question from Councilmember Goodman regarding the environmental impact of the project, Mr. Johnson indicated that an environmental assessment of the project would be very difficult to make and that the question could be addressed a number of ways by different people. He stated that there would be no long range environmental damage incurred by constructing the line in the street. Deputy City Manager Homer Reed indicated that they would be bringing the report to the Council within a very short period of time. Mr. Johnson pointed out that this project did not necessarily have to be a part of the C.I.P. document.

Mr. Romeo Rodriguez, step-member of Par La Gente newspaper, told the Council that the east Austin community was being punished by moving the Aqua Festival from Fiesta Gardens. He indicated that various facilities were needed in east Austin to accomodate the Aqua Festival. Mr. Rodriguez felt that the City of Austin should make a sincere effort to improve Fiesta Gardens. Mayor Pro Tem Mullen noted that over \$1 million has gone to the area already, and that the area has not been neglected. Mr. Rodriguez stated that they were concerned that there would be a reduction in the amount of money scheduled for Fiesta Gardens.

Mr. C. R. Kerr recommended that the Council strongly consider the acquisition of the Storm Tract as park land.

Mr. Don Jellison, representing the Austin Racketball Association, asked that the Council reinstate to the C.I.P., 6 indoor and 6 outdoor racketball courts as previously proposed. Mr. Jellison indicated that the project had been cut by the Planning Commission, but that as an alternative they were recommending that the 6 outdoor courts be located in the major parks of Austin such as Pease Park, and that the 6 indoor courts be located in the various recreational centers such as the South Austin Recreation Center. Mr. Jellison recommended playing fees which could recover some of the operation costs for the courts.

Mr. Robert Maggiani, representing the Committee for Rural Democracy, told the Council that additional facilities were needed in the Fiesta Gardens area. He pointed out that the west side of Fiesta Gardens was in need of restroom facilities, regardless of how much money has already been spent on the area. In regard to a question from Councilmember Himmelblau, Mr. Michael Segrest, Director of the Parks and Recreation Department, indicated that the restrooms contracted for several weeks ago will be located at the west end of Fiesta Gardens.

Mr. William Garfield, speaking in behalf of Mr. George Humphrey and Austin Citizens for Economical Energy, spoke before the Council in regards to C.I.P. Project No. 79/14-01 concerning the South Texas Nuclear Project. He pointed out that \$83 million would be going for uranium stock piling of nuclear fuel. Mr. Garfield pointed out that this cost has not been included in any of the project cost estimates, nor in any of the overrun notifications. He indicated that it was also questionable as to whether or not bonds could cover the cost, as fuel costs are not capital expenditures. Mr. Garfield stated that to pay this immense fuel cost out of current revenue would be another burden to the taxpayers of Austin. He stated that his organization was asking that the Council schedule a separate meeting to discuss C.I.P. Projects Nos. 74/13-01, 79/14-01 and any other expenditures that may be related to STP but hidden under a general title, such as transmission lines.

Ms. Margene Beckham told the Council that she came as part of a team and deferred speaking to the next speaker.

Mr. Noel Dolce, President of the Austin Natural Science Association, told the Council that there was a need to expand the Natural Science Center and urged the Council to approve funding for the Center in the C.I.P.

Ms. Margene Beckham, President of the Austin Natural Science Associations' Women's Guild, encouraged the Council to approve funds for the new Natural Science Center in Zilker Park.

Mr. Dolce pointed out that the Association currently has \$78,000 for exhibits and equipment to add to the City's \$600,000.

Ms. Barbara Smith spoke in behalf of the junior tennis player in Austin. She stated that more courts are needed to accommodate junior players in Austin. Ms. Smith endorsed the 16 court tennis center. She indicated that increased facilities would make possible new tennis programs to young people. Councilmember Himmelblau pointed out that the Parks Board did not want any more courts located at the Pharr Tennis Center. Ms. Smith stated that the Planning Commission has recommended that 12 more courts be located at Pharr. Mayor McClellan felt that the primary request of the tennis community was for a 16 court complex. Councilmember Himmelblau asked how many courts were needed at one location. Mr. Bo Byers indicated that they needed a minimum of 16 courts at one location in order to draw tournaments, initiate new programs and to alleviate the pressure on the other tennis centers. He stated that they wanted a 16 court center that can be expanded to 32 courts. In response to a question from Councilmember Himmelblau, Mayor McClellan stated that she did not think the Tennis Association wanted to get hung up on site location at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned at 9:15 P.M.

The following persons signed to speak but had to leave:

Eula Matthews
R.M. Tinstman, President, O'Henry Museum Advisory Board (will write)
George Humphrey
James Conrad
Lee Morrison

August 16, 1978

Approved: Carole Keeton McClellan
Mayor

Attest:

Grace Monica
City Clerk