

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Meeting

March 27, 1968

10:30 A.M.

COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL

The meeting was called to order with Mayor Akin presiding.

Roll Call:

Present: Councilmen Janes, LaRue, Long, Nichols, Mayor Akin
Absent: None

Mayor Akin announced that the Special Meeting had been called for the purpose of studying the Model Cities Program, in preparation for submitting an application for funds.

City Manager Robert Tinstman explained that he hoped to obtain from the Council members their initial reaction to the Program. He noted that all comments from citizens would be included in the study of the Model Cities Program for Austin. According to Mr. Tinstman, the final area for the Austin Program was yet to be determined, but the staff had been meeting with residents from the proposed areas. He stated that the following goals had come out of meetings with the residents:

- 1) A minimum of dislocations to the residents of the areas;
- 2) The job or skill training to enable economic achievement by the citizens themselves;
- 3) Low-cost housing leading to ownership by the residents of the Model Neighborhood;
- 4) Effective neighborhood organizations with better communication of all sorts and directions; and
- 5) Adequate commercial facilities and opportunities, such as shopping centers, banks, industries, etc.

Mr. Grover Shaunty gave the main presentation to the Council. He emphasized that the City was applying to the Federal government for funds for the Planning Phase of the program only. Then he described the base area and the three alternate or additional areas under consideration as Model Neighborhoods: Montopolis, the Embassy-Prospect area, and the Palm School area. These areas had different concentrations of minority groups and different social problems. He elaborated on some of the considerations used in selecting the areas. The base area had potential for rehabilitation of structures, vacant land available for construction of new houses or industries, provision for expanded job opportunities and an active and involved citizenry.

According to Mr. Shaunty, the area also had marked social problems, as well as a high percentage of persons receiving Social Welfare Services such as old age assistance and aid to families with dependent children. There was also a high incidence of health problems, including tuberculosis and infant mortality. Many of the homes were substandard structures. The area was 70% Mexican-American.

The Embassy-Prospect area was populated largely by blacks. It had a high crime rate and many deteriorated homes and other facilities.

Mr. Shaunty stated that the Montopolis area had an entirely different situation, being an economically and socially isolated area. His plan was to provide it with closer ties to the rest of the urban area of Austin.

The fourth area, the Palm School area, did not include enough people to actually qualify it for a Model Neighborhood but it could be included with the other three sections. The Federal Program encouraged cities to select areas large enough to have a significant impact on the total community.

In response to a question from Councilman Long, Mr. Tinstman and Mr. Shaunty discussed the ways in which the Urban Renewal Agency and other Federal agencies would work with the Model Cities Commission. Mr. Shaunty stated that Model Cities programs utilized existing programs whenever possible. One example was welfare services.

He added that the funds from HUD could be used for facilities outside of the Model Cities areas, if the facilities provided direct services to the area, as in the case of health services. These facilities would be designed to meet the needs of the residents of the area.

The Council members then discussed the proportion of City funds that would be returned to the City by the Federal government through the Model Cities Program. Councilman Janes was concerned about the City's present obligations. He felt that before Austin got into a new program, the Council should know exactly where funds would be coming from.

Mr. Shaunty stated that the City Council would be the contracting agency with the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He recommended that some type of commission be appointed to make recommendations regarding the content of the planning process and the plans for implementation. According to Mr. Shaunty,

the committee should be composed of one-half area residents and one-half City Council members. He emphasized that the City Council would be the demonstration agency and the City Manager would be the employer of the staff.

Mayor Akin then thanked Mr. Shaunty and his staff for their presentation and asked for comments and questions from the audience.

Mr. Jacobson, a concerned citizen, stated that there was trash in the lots in the 1500 block of East Avenue, some of which were owned by the City. He suggested that the people who came to read the gas meter could make note of such rubbish and report it back to the City authorities.

Mr. Rudy Reyes, of the Informational Referral Center at Montopolis for the Retarded Program, spoke in favor of the Model Cities Program and presented the Council with a petition containing 343 signatures of area residents interested in applying for Model Cities money. He also gave the City Manager a proposal setting out ways to make the program effective in Montopolis.

Reverend Carver also expressed approval of the Model Cities Program and asked the Council to apply for the Planning grant.

Mr. Conway Taylor, chairman of the Model Cities Committee of the Austin Board of Realtors, stated that his committee felt that the Program should be referred to as the Model Neighborhood Program, rather than the Model Cities Program. He felt the program would be successful in Austin only if the staff followed these guidelines:

- 1) The neighborhood should be kept to a small area initially. He urged that a small target area be defined only after a careful study. He was opposed to implementing the entire program allowed under Federal law.
- 2) The Model Neighborhood Program should attempt to coordinate already existing programs.
- 3) All funding should come out of existing funds.
- 4) The entire program should consist primarily of education, including pre-school and advanced teaching methods, vocational training, family planning, and how to own and pay for a home. In addition, he emphasized the need for education in family finances, family health, respect for country, respect for the law, and community participation. He especially stressed the need for education in self-help.
- 5) Participation in programs such as rent subsidy, rehabilitation, and private renewal of neighborhoods, and all other programs designed to give the poor better living conditions in their own homes.
- 6) Business ownership by lower income groups.

- 7) Relocation of business and industry into the area so that the people would not have to depend on failing Federal mass transportation programs.

He felt that large Federal programs would not solve the problems of the poor, and only City programs under the supervision of elected officials would succeed.

Mr. C. W. Heatherly, President of the Association of Home Builders, appeared before the Council to make the following recommendations:

1. That the application to federal authorities be titled: Model Neighborhoods and Demonstrations Program by the City of Austin, Texas.
2. That the program direct its basic consideration and attention to the problems of education, (A) A pre-school (Head Start) program to be started immediately in the neighborhoods selected. (B) That the pre-school program be followed by a kindergarten, both to be supervised by the Austin Independent School District. (C) That still more courses in Junior and Senior High Schools be concerned with technical, social and vocational education.
3. That the City of Austin and Austin Independent School District initiate a concerted public educational program with the aid of public and private organizations to encourage the "pride of home ownership." This Association stands ready to assist in this endeavor.
4. That control of the Model Neighborhoods and Demonstrations Program be kept at the local level under the authority of the City Council.
5. That a "pilot project" be established in a relatively small area. Here we refer to six to ten square blocks, while we are trying to keep the area relatively small, so as to evaluate results and literally "work our problem areas" before a large scale project is begun.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council then adjourned, and at Councilman Long's suggestion, went for a tour of the proposed Model Cities areas.

APPROVED: _____

Harry Ahern
Mayor

ATTEST: _____

Grace Monroe
Asst. City Clerk