

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Special Meeting

May 6, 1963

8:00 P.M.

Kealing Junior High School Auditorium

The meeting was called to order with Mayor Palmer presiding.

Roll call:

Present: Councilmen Perry, Shanks, Mayor Palmer

Absent: Councilmen Armstrong, White

MAYOR PALMER announced this was a public hearing called by the City Council to hear for the first time, along with these citizens, the plan as developed by the Urban Renewal Agency. Austin had voted to go into the Urban Renewal program, and the Agency was appointed and it has worked hard on this plan which will be presented. The Mayor introduced COUNCILMAN EDGAR PERRY, COUNCILMAN LOUIS SHANKS, and the Council elect, MR. TRAVIS LaRUE and MRS. EMMA LONG.

MR. WESLEY PEARSON, Chairman, Urban Renewal Agency, introduced the Commissioners, MR. MILTON SMITH, MR. JACK BALAGIA, MR. HARRY PETERSON, and stated MR. JACK CHILES was unable to attend this meeting. Mr. Pearson said they were ready to go full speed forward on the Urban Renewal Plan which was to be reviewed this evening.

MR. WAYNE GOLDEN, Executive Director, Urban Renewal Agency, introduced his staff, and then expressed appreciation to the citizens living in the area for their fine cooperation in working out this plan. MR. GOLDEN pointed out on the map the area of the Kealing Project, the divisions of the area showing the location of the Conservation and redevelopment sections. In the conservation area those who live there would improve their homes if necessary, and private enterprise would be encouraged to develop apartments in the area. The section for redevelopment involves school and park area, and 20.5 acres for an apartment site. The plan is the result of the thinking of many different groups, and the Planning Commission, School Board, and Parks and Recreation Board. Mr. Golden explained the plan for the school and park area, and the responsibility of the Agency in relocating home owners and tenants who would be required to move when the land is redeveloped. He listed other improvements to be made in the area as relating to upgrading the streets, and extension of utilities. He summarized the proposal of the Urban Renewal Agency.

The Mayor introduced MR. W. T. WILLIAMS, JR., City Manager; MR. REUBEN ROUNTREE, Director of Public Works; MR. DICK JORDAN, Building Official; MR. JIM WILSON, Assistant City Manager, and the Staff from the Planning Department.

Inquiries and statements made are summarized as follows:

MRS. FRANCES B. MAYS, League of Women's Voters, urged the Council to approve the Kealing project without further delay.

MRS. ELLA MAE JOHNSON, representing a Citizens Committee on the Kealing Project, stated there was some reluctance on the part of some to accept the Urban Renewal requirements, but said the Plan should not be jeopardized. The Committee endorsed the Plan and urged its adoption.

DR. J. J. SEABROOK expressed interest in the effects the closing of ANGELINA STREET would have on existing houses, and his concern about the park across the street on Rosewood from the liquor establishments. He urged that this pilot project be an example project. Dr. Seabrook was also interested in Huston Tillotson project. He praised and complimented the City Council on its endeavors in this Urban Renewal Program.

MR. CORNELIUS JAMES was interested in the commercial aspects of the plan and asked how the appraisals would be made.

MRS. O. P. CONNOLLY inquired about her property on Rosewood and Angelina. She stated she did not realize the Urban Renewal Election ever passed.

MR. PHILLIP BAKER objected to ANGELINA STREET'S being closed, as the property owners had too much money invested in the paving, and they wanted a straight street all the way through from 11th to 12th Streets. He said this area was only 10 years old, and the property owners should have been told then they were going to be cut off. The Mayor stated if the property is to be acquired, it would be done so at the market value of the property. Mr. Kinser, Member of the Planning Commission, stated the closing of this street would add to the quietness of the nice residential neighborhood, and there would be no traffic artery in this residential section.

MRS. MARY KEMBLE did not want the back of the apartment units set where those across the street would be facing them; and closing Angelina and opening the alley would put the back yards of the apartments in someone's front yards. She objected to a park across the street from the existing taverns, and inquired what would become of those taverns that would be closed. She wanted to know about the development of Rosewood where the taverns are before the Plan goes into effect, and she was interested in the zoning.

MR. PLUMMER PORTER was interested in the relocation of the Comal Street Church of God, which would be acquired, and asked if the agency would be looking out for a site. The Executive Director stated there was an area marked for church sites between Comal, Angelina and Cotton Streets. Mr. Porter stated that answered his question.

MRS. JULIA SAWYER inquired what would happen to the elderly people living in the project on a pension, as they would not want to borrow money to rebuild, as they could not pay it back. She stated the plan provided a playground, and the children were being put across from the beer joints, and Rosewood Avenue is a race-track for traffic. She stated 1600 Rosewood had just been zoned for a liquor store across from the playground, and asked why it was zoned when it was known there was to be a playground there.

MR. JASPER GLOVER expressed opposition to the liquor store across from the Park, and asked that the south side of Rosewood be condemned from "C-1" and "C-2" uses before the Park goes in. He asked that the zoning be stopped now. He questioned the closing of Angelina Street, stating it would affect the value of the property and peoples' homes would be facing the rear of the apartment houses.

MR. W. L. MORRIS stated the project was fine, but it is necessary to remove such areas as Rosewood from the front of the school. Those on 12th and 13th Streets did not want the liquor store to go in just three blocks from that school, and it is bad to have it there.

MRS. MARY KEMPLES inquired about the number of bedrooms in the units.

MRS. PICKINS stated she had owned her home and did not want to go in debt to buy other property. She said they had received letters urging them to improve their property in the Kealing area. She remodeled her house and yard and lives in a lovely neighborhood, and wanted to know where she would be moved to.

MR. I. Q. HURTLER was interested in the standards set for market value in the neighborhood.

MRS. JEWELL DOBBINS stated she was caught in two locations--one on Hackberry and one on Angelina. She wanted to know what a "slum area" was, stating the area on Hackberry or Angelina was not a slum area. She said she came from an old Austin family; paid taxes and supported Austin. People endorsing this plan do not live in the area. She stated they had tried to do away with the blighted area on Comal, and there are other places in Austin worse than this area, and she did not think the start had to be in this location. She did want the blight area cleared. If people did not want to sell their property, they should have the right not to. She did not believe the people knew what Urban Renewal meant.

MR. BOOKER T. BONNER inquired who was going to own the private property projects. He stated this area already had sewer, water and lights, and Urban Renewal is designed to improve--not to dislocate one. A school is being located a short distance from a highway, and the houses are being moved out. As people are moved from the school it becomes inaccessible to students. He asked then if the area around the school would become more congested. He wanted to know who would own the private project apartments. He insinuated the people living in the area could not rebid on their property, that it would be available only to those in Enfield. He stated he did not think the people being affected in the area knew what was best for them, and they should oppose the way the Urban Renewal is being handled. He said they should have had someone from the area included on the Board to study this program. Mr. Bonner stated he was not taking a position against or for Urban Renewal--then he said he was against the project.

MR. BIGFORD inquired about the Lots on Angelina and San Bernard stating they were deep, and asked if the proposal was to extend the alley from Comal. He said the alley would not run in line with the original alley, and there might be a few feet left over on the south side. The Mayor stated this would be checked out.

Each inquiry and comment was answered and explained by the Executive Director of the Urban Renewal Agency and the Mayor.

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The Mayor asked for a show of hands of those owning property within the project. A majority of property owners raised their hands.

Mr. Pearson stated it was hoped that not only the people in the project would be proud of it, but that all of Austin would be proud. He said he had received many calls from others asking that a urban renewal project be started in their community. He noted many of the people here tonight had fine homes, but it is the little rent-shacks beside their homes that are ruining the homes. He discussed hardship cases; also the area mentioned several times just across from the Playground south of Rosewood, stating this was outside of the project and was privately owned property. He explained the property purchased would be offered to the original owner; and if he did not want to buy it back, it would be offered to the highest bidder. Mr. Pearson stated Mr. Phillip Baker was the only person who objected to any part of the project, and his opposition was on the closing of Angelina. That would be up to the City Council. The Mayor stated many people and buildings are being relocated; that the State is expanding and taking in property and causing people to relocate their churches, homes, etc. He believed after the readjustment in this program, the people would all cooperate, and it would be a fine asset to the City. He stated he wanted to enlarge the Urban Renewal Agency and add a Negro and a Latin American as well as to appoint a woman on the Agency. He stated the upgrading of this area would be a contagious thing. The Mayor stated the Council would study this and move as fast as it could.

There being no further business the Council adjourned subject to the call of the Mayor.

APPROVED

Wm. T. E. Palmer
Mayor

ATTEST:

Elise Hosley
City Clerk