

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Recessed Meeting

February 13, 1947
7:30 P. M.

Council Chamber, City Hall

The meeting was called to order, with Mayor Miller presiding.

Roll call

Present : Councilmen Bartholomew, Glass, Mayor Miller, Councilmen
Thornberry and Wolf

Absent : None

Present also: Guiton Morgan, City Manager; Trueman E. O'Quinn, City Attorney; and a large delegation of citizens, which filled the Council Chamber to overflowing.

The Mayor stated that pursuant to a request in writing from the School Board for a charter amendment to provide more funds for the operation and maintenance of the schools, especially an increase in the salaries of the school teachers, this meeting was called to afford the citizens and taxpayers of the City an opportunity to express their views on the question of a reappraisal and revaluation of property in the City of Austin in lieu of a charter amendment; the School Board having agreed to defer submission of said charter amendment until the results of the reappraisal and revaluation were known.

The Mayor then declared the meeting open to discussion, and the following citizens were heard, substantially as follows:

JIM PRIBBLE, 1702 Exposition Boulevard, stated that he was not opposed to a raise in salaries for school teachers, but asked that when the appraisal is made the appraisers take into consideration the restrictions on property imposed by the Office of Price Administration and set values in accordance with rentals.

O. P. LOCKHART read a communication addressed to the Mayor and City Council in which he stated that he was not protesting a revaluation of property to equalize taxes and not opposed to a raise in school teachers' salaries - which increase, he declared, has long been overdue - but did protest the tax hike that will result from raising the valuations on property from

eighty million dollars to one hundred and ten million dollars, thereby resulting in a tax increase of 30%, and further declaring that the burden will rest on the small homeowners, and that the school teachers can receive their increase without a raise in taxes.

MR. NEILSON declared that if revaluation is necessary, he is in favor of it and especially in favor of more salary for school teachers.

WILSON BROWN stated that values were too low on the tax rolls and cited as an example a piece of property owned by him worth eight or nine thousand dollars and on the tax rolls for eighteen hundred dollars, and suggested that an outside firm of appraisers be hired to come in here and get values up to what they should be; that the Constitution provides that all taxes shall be equal and uniform and the idea is that everybody should pay his part proportionately.

M. L. WHITE, 806 Townes Lane, asked if there were going to be an equal raise in valuations or an equal revaluation, if the percentage were going to be the same for all revaluations, or if there is going to be an adjustment taken into consideration regarding the last values made on city tax rolls, or if it is to be much the same rate as in the past.

In reply to the above question, Mayor Miller stated that a reappraisal of values would mean an inventory of the City's assets - land, personal property, and improvements - a comprehensive plan of all values in the city limits; that if property is not in too low and out of line, it certainly will not be raised - that would not be fair or right.

In reply to a question raised by MR. BLOOR from the floor as to whether or not a reappraisal would result in an increase in the school fund only, or an increase in city taxes generally, stated that if and when a reappraisal and revaluation is made, the City Council will set the proportion of taxes to be levied, which may or may not result in an increase, that the taxes to be levied for general fund purposes is limited by the City Charter to one dollar, but if the values are increased that fund would also receive an additional amount if the levy of one dollar is not cut down and the tax rate not lowered below \$2.50.

EUGENE SANDERS, 1608 Travis Boulevard, declared that the issue is not a raise in school teachers salaries - all agree that they should have a raise in salary - but the issue is: how shall we raise the revenue to pay that increase in salary; that he is in favor of a reappraisal of property for the reason that revaluation is uniform and would tax business property that has not been paying its proportionate part as compared to the small homeowner; and that he is for revaluation on a fair basis and against a high tax rate.

LONDON BRADFELD declared that, as a conservative person, he does not want taxes raised but is willing to bear his just share of taxes, but no more; that he is willing for real estate to bear its just share, but no more; that he would be in favor of revaluation at this time, realizing the needs of the City, provided the subject of that revaluation is both personal property, real property, stocks of merchandise, utility lines, chattels of insurance companies, the pole lines of telephone companies; that he is in favor of a fair and just revaluation in accordance with the best tax practices; and that the revaluation should be made by the Tax Assessor, who is charged by law with the responsibility for it; that he

would recommend the appointment of a citizens advisory committee, which would not necessarily be an appraisal committee - the appraisal should be made by the Tax Office - but this committee would advise with the Tax Assessor on all matters pertaining to revaluation, the fixing of proper basis to determine the proper extent of the revaluation, and that sufficient time should be allowed to do the job thoroughly, event if it takes two years.

M. H. CROCKETT declared that he favors revaluation up to a reasonable point, but that it should be made by the present set of appraisers, who are familiar with the various pieces of property, and that they should be paid more than \$5 per day; that there is much inequality in the appraisal of property but that if values on business property are raised too high it will tend to kill construction.

JOHN T. SMITH declared that he was 100% for raising school teachers salaries and paying them a minimum of two thousand dollars per year; that the law sets out how values can be raised and that Section 20 of the Constitution provides that the Board of Equalization shall not raise property above its fair market value and shall not permit property to go on the tax rolls for less than market value, and that any board, except the Board of Equalization, would be an arbitrary board and would have no authority under the law.

ED CLARK declared that he bought a home in West Austin for \$20,000 and found it was on the tax rolls for \$8,000 and since then he has continued to render it for \$8,000 but does not believe that his taxes in comparison with those of others are equitable and uniform; that the tax burden should be based upon the principle of ability to pay; that he believes the people of Austin have decided and are in favor of paying the teachers in Austin a minimum of \$2400 per year, and the question is, where to get the money. Personally, he favors tax revaluation because he believes there are inequities in our tax structure in Austin - some taxes will go up, others come down and large pieces of property will have to pay substantially more taxes; that he represents large interests in Austin and those corporations and individuals are not objecting to revaluation or having to pay more taxes because they know it is inevitably a part of progress and that the school teachers are entitled to a raise in salary.

PAUL BOLTON, member of the School Board, stated that the School Board had agreed on a pay schedule of \$2400 to \$3600 for teachers salaries, which would cost an additional sum of \$967,000; that they hoped to get \$200,000 from the State, thus leaving \$767,000 to be raised by taxes or some other method; that whatever the appraisal shows will be taken back to the School Board and at that time the Board will decide whether or not to ask for any increase in the tax rate.

BILL MORRIS declared that he is for an increase in teachers pay and for a raise in valuations but does not want to see the committee get in a position where they would raise values and next year increase school taxes and then two years from now divorce the schools from the City and then have to raise values again to pay for the bonds.

JUDGE BEN POWELL declared that he was in favor of a minimum salary of \$2400 per year for teachers; that he is in favor of a fair reappraisal of

values, which should be done every five years; that there are many inequalities although the City has done the best it could to make them uniform; and that the time for reappraisal has come.

JOE DACY declared that he thought everybody wanted to see the teachers pay raised.

W. T. CASWELL, by telephone, stated that he was in favor of a reappraisal of property in the City.

All citizens present having been given an opportunity to be heard on the matter, a motion was then made by Landon Bradfield from the floor, seconded by Joe Dacy, that the group present approve the revaluation of property in the City of Austin, both real and personal, in accordance with the best tax practices, those in favor of the motion to vote "ay", those opposed, "no". The motion carried unanimously.

Whereupon, it was then moved by Mayor Miller that it be the sense of the City Council that the appraisal machinery be set in motion as soon as possible, because to do the job right will take time, and that the City Attorney be instructed to prepare a formal resolution putting it into effect by lawful, legal methods. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes : Councilmen Bartholomew, Glass, Mayor Miller, Councilmen
Thornberry and Wolf

Noes : None

The meeting then recessed at 10:15 P. M., subject to call of the Mayor.

Tom Miller
APPROVED: _____
MAYOR

Attest:

Willie M. Allen

City Clerk