

## MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF AUSTIN, TEXAS

Recessed Meeting

March 7, 1944  
8:10 P. M.

Council Chamber, City Hall

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

## Roll call

Present : Councilmen Bartholomew, Gillis, Mayor Miller - 3  
Absent : Councilmen Alford and Wolf

The Mayor stated that the meeting was called for a public discussion on the proposal of the National Housing Agency to allow the building of one hundred new housing units by private enterprise, primarily for the housing of war workers engaged in war production plants and essential industries, at a maximum rental of \$50.00 per unit.

Chairman of the City Plan Commission, H. F. Kuehne, submitted the following report:

(REPORT)

"March 7, 1944

Hon. Mayor and City Council  
Austin, Texas

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to the request of the Mayor, a special meeting of the City Plan Commission was called Monday night, March 6, at 7:45 P. M., at the Corporation Court of the City Hall for the purpose of considering the question of the need and desirability of endorsing the construction of 100 new dwelling units by private individuals with private funds for war workers engaged in various camps, war production plants and essential industries in the City of Austin, as programmed by the National Housing Agency under its agreement with the War Production Board, the Army and the Navy as a part of the national housing program.

The meeting of the Commission was open to the public and a number of interested citizens appeared, several of whom expressed a desire to participate in this program as individuals for

personal occupancy, as well as for rental.

The Commission then heard the report of the Subcommittee on Land Use, Zoning and Housing, to whom the matter had been submitted for investigation. The report of this Subcommittee was in favor of the construction of the forementioned 100 dwelling units of the type renting between \$40 and \$50.

Mr. Raymond C. Morrison, representing the Regional Office of the National Housing Agency in Dallas, Texas, was present and explained the nature, limitations and qualifications of this program to the Commission

After a general hearing of the expression of approval or disapproval on the part of the visitors and a full explanation by Mr. Morrison, the Commission thoroughly discussed the matter pro and con.

Thereupon the motion was duly made, seconded and carried by a roll-call vote of 14 to 7 that the Commission endorse the construction of 100 privately-owned and financed dwelling units in the City of Austin subject to all local and State taxes, the rent for these units not to exceed the sum of \$50.00 per month.

Respectfully submitted,

(Sgd) H. F. Kuehne  
Chairman, City Plan Commission"

The report was received and ordered filed.

The Mayor then declared the meeting open to discussion, and called on those in favor of the proposal to express their views first.

The following citizens were then heard in support of the project, substantially as follows:

B. E. GIESECKE stated that he considered there was a need for additional houses if the contemplated increase in personnel at the Magnesium Plant, including large number of soldiers from McCloskey Hospital for vocational training, materializes; but qualified his indorsement with the statement that he was not in favor of government-financing of same, and was not advocating it unless the real estate dealers and the City Council think there is a need for same.

H. F. KUEHNE indorsed the proposal as outlined in the report of the City Plan Commission.

T. A. EVANS, head of the local Carpenters Union, stated that the project would afford employment to mechanics and carpenters who had had to leave this city to find work elsewhere.

COLONEL WEILER, as a citizen and taxpayer, indorsed the project, stating that he proposed to make application to build rent houses of

the type that rents easily.

W. T. CASWELL stated there was a need for one hundred additional houses here, and that the building of same would not be detrimental to the best interests of the City.

BILL COATS stated that there is a real need for additional houses, as evidenced by the fact that his firm has had to move some of its employees to other cities on account of a housing shortage.

C. A. SCHUTZE stated that if the financing of the project is to be left to local people, he favors it, but if same is done by the FHA, he opposes it.

FRANK RUNDLELL stated that he was in favor of the project, declaring that the FHA was the greatest thing that ever happened to this country

The following citizens were then heard in opposition to the project, substantially as follows:

ED CLARK stated that he opposed it on account of a critical shortage of lumber; that there were many cities on the west coast and in Texas more urgently in need of houses than is Austin; that he did not believe the people of Austin would want any house built if it would, in a small way, hamper the war effort by using lumber that is badly needed for that purpose; that he favored the remodeling of old houses if there is a need for same; that he thinks there will be a slack in the demand in the near future on account of the removal of soldiers from nearby army camps; and that there is a probability that the Magnesium Plant may be closed down soon, thereby lessening the demand for houses.

W. L. BRADFIELD stated that the Real Estate Board has consistently opposed the building of houses as it considers the peak of demand has about passed, and that by the time these houses are built, the demand for same will have passed; that as a result of the building boom this City experienced prior to April, 1942, when building was stopped, Austin was an over-built city and the real estate market suffered a slump; and that this condition may exist again when the temporary population leaves.

A. H. OSBURN stated that the project is opposed not only by the Real Estate Board, but also by the Chamber of Commerce, and the construction and material men.

RICKEY KEY opposed the project on the grounds that it would create an unhealthy condition for Austin.

W. C. SCHULLE opposed the project on the grounds that there is no urgent need for same and that after the war is over the temporary population will move away and the houses will be left on our hands.

It was then moved by W. C. Schulle, seconded by C. H. Page, that a vote on the question be taken from the floor. The question was then put by the Chair, those in favor of the project voting aye by show of the hands, those opposed, no by the same sign. The result was:

- Ayes - 12
- Noes - 20

A. H. OSBURN then moved that Mr. Raymond C. Morrison of the Regional Office of the National Housing Agency in Dallas, Texas, and Mr. Blankenship of Washington, D. C., be notified of the action taken. The motion failing of a second was not put to a vote.

Following the discussion, in which all present were given an opportunity to participate, Mayor Miller declared it to be his conclusion that whereas it is possible that it might be a good thing to build one hundred houses, but the enjoyment of building at the present moment, with limitations like they are, would set aside the moral good in the future when free and untrammelled building will be allowed again, with no question of priorities or limitations on work or materials; that at the present time Austin should abide by the rules of construction and not in the present situation build one hundred houses, but should try to remodel that number, that it is the duty of the real estate agents to canvass the situation and if after the one hundred houses are remodeled, the need for additional houses then remains, as a member of the City Council he will be in favor of building more, but until those one hundred houses are reconverted, he will not be; that the real estate men should try and get these houses reconverted as soon as possible, and if the need for new ones then exists, he will vote for it.

Councilman Bartholomew summed up his conclusion in the matter by declaring that he might build a house on a lot he owns but for the fact that he does not believe under present conditions he could build the kind of house he wants.

Councilman Gillis declared that he would not be in favor of any building that is government-financed and controlled.

ED CLARK then moved that the delegation present give the City Council a rising vote of thanks. Which motion carried unanimously.

No other citizen or interested person desiring to be heard, the meeting was then recessed at 11:10 P. M., subject to call of the Mayor.

APPROVED Tom Miller  
MAYOR

ATTEST:

Hollie M. Keenan  
CITY CLERK