

Up 'til 2 plans an Austin concert before heading overseas. **A6**

An Austin staffer will help Mower County develop a capital investment plan. **A4**

Mostly sunny; breezy. High: 34 | Low: 17



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AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL / POLICE DEPARTMENT



Photos by Scott Jacobson, sjacobson@postbulletin.com

Austin Police Chief Brain Krueger leads a tour Tuesday afternoon of the Law Enforcement Center for Austin City Council members and the media, outlining elements of the remodeling project. Here, he shows a congested office space.

Councilors tour LEC

By Heather Rule
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Austin Police Chief Brian Krueger showed Austin City Council members around the nooks and crannies of the Law Enforcement Center on Tuesday, prior to the planned remodel of the center.

One of the bigger changes for Austin Police Department detectives and the Mower County Sheriff's Department investigators is they will be moving from the basement to the main level, where corrections department offices were before being moved to the new courthouse.

The detectives will move into the seven offices that already are part of the building, he said.

"We hope to do that first," Krueger said of moving the detectives. "We're really excited about the remodel. I think it's going to be a huge improvement,

especially for the investigators."

In the basement where the detectives will move from, the plan is to expand the men's locker room and turn the rest of the offices into storage.

Some possible improvements for the locker rooms include bigger lockers that are two feet wide rather than the current 16 inches wide. Bulletproof vests have to be hung on the outside of lockers because they don't fit inside.

The men's locker room is cramped right now and there aren't enough lockers for everyone.

The dispatch area also is small, providing cramped quarters for the two dispatchers on duty at any given time. It can be busy at times, and the same person takes a phone call and sends the necessary emergency personnel, like police of firefighters, to the scene, Krueger said.

An expansion of the dispatch area is being looked at in the remodel plans.



This is an example of damage and mold in the lower level of Austin's Law Enforcement Center. Mold has been sprayed to limit exposure, but it is still there.

"They hope to at least to double this size," Krueger said.

Council members were curious as to how the construction would affect staff and their work.

"We will be definitely working around it," Krueger said. "We're 24/7. We're not going anywhere."

AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL / INTERACTION

Council strives for way to play nice

By Heather Rule
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"When are we going to start working as a team?"

With that, Austin City Council member Marian Clennon started what became more than 40 minutes of discussion around that subject during the second and final day of the annual council retreat Tuesday at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center.

To answer her question, Mayor Tom Stiehm immediately disagreed with Clennon.

"When are we going to start working as a team?" he said. "I think we do work as a team."

One of the organizational values for the mayor and city council is listed as "working as a team, making decisions collectively." Along with bringing up this value, Clennon also said she feels the council excludes her, another point where the mayor, and later council member Jeff Austin, disagreed.

"I have concerns," Stiehm said. "When you bring up an idea, the rest of the group doesn't accept it, then you shut down everything."

The issue isn't when Clennon votes against items at council meetings, "it's the rationale" that she puts forth in voting against them, Stiehm said. A lot of times, Clennon votes no, and council members don't know why, Austin said.

Clennon also said she wants to be included.

"We need a unified council, and we're split," Clennon said. "We need to unify the city."

One piece of that inclusion would be getting the chance to serve on more committees and an opportunity for her to give her input on what those committees might be. The mayor had his own thoughts

about committees.

"I want people that can work together to accomplish something," Stiehm said. "And I don't see you (Clennon) working with people. You don't have a lot of faith in the system that we're working under."

"We don't need somebody on committees that is going to say, 'Let's do everything different.'"

Council members offered their opinions on working as a team, although that "doesn't mean we're going to agree on everything, either," Austin said. Judy Enright talked about the importance of a majority vote.

"We can't always have our way," Enright said. "I think that we have to let things go and not hold grudges."

Stiehm said it seems as though Clennon makes "everything personal," and it's not. Since she is feeling excluded from the council, Clennon then posed another question for the group: "What is it going to take for you to include me?"

Brian McAlister explained that when he votes against motions, he also gives his reasoning for doing so. If Clennon doesn't do that, he said, then he also can't take her opinion into account. Clennon countered by saying that she did give her reasons each time she voted, for a whole year at one point during her time as a council member.

"If we are not working as a team, how would you like us to change?" Austin asked.

"What can I do to be more included in things?" Clennon responded.

Steve King said the debate was over a difference in style between council members, in their different approaches to how they do their council jobs.

"Nobody's meaning to exclude you, Marian," King said.

The council did not revise its organizational values, but inclusion was still a factor.

Page A4: Council sets seven priorities for 2012



Clennon

Legislators: Let 'the great debate' get under way

First, make jobs; then stump

By Heather J. Carlson
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ST. PAUL — For Minnesota lawmakers, the start of the 2012 legislative session on Tuesday offered the promise of a fresh political start.

"It's a time to start over and say we have a chance to do better," said Rep. Kim Norton, DFL-Rochester.

Last session ended on a sour note when lawmakers and DFL Gov. Mark Dayton were unable to reach a budget deal leading to a historic three-week government shutdown. In the Senate, a new Republican leadership team is in place led by newly elected Senate Majority Leader Dave Senjem. He takes the place of Sen. Amy Koch, R-Buffalo, who stepped down last month after admitting she had an inappropriate relationship with a Senate staff member.



Michele Jokinen, mjokinen@postbulletin.com

Sen. Dan Sparks, DFL-Austin, left, speaks with Sen. Tom Saxhaug, DFL-Grand Rapids, during the opening of the 2012 legislative session on Tuesday at the Capitol in St. Paul.

Standing on the floor of the Senate, Senjem told his fellow senators it was "awesomely humbling" to be in the role of majority leader.

"They built the place for the

great debate, and we can have that great debate and we ought to," Senjem said. "And if we don't, frankly, we're cheating our founders."

Still, the goodwill seemed

short-lived. As part of a deal last year to end the budget stand-off, Republicans on the Senate Rules Committee approved a plan to cut the Senate's operating budget by \$2.6 million. Staff layoffs make up a piece of the plan and include up to 14 DFL employees and none from the GOP side.

Governor: Make jobs

Dayton agreed jobs should be the focus of this year's legislative session. He urged lawmakers to pass a public works construction bill and a Vikings stadium deal to help get people back to work.

"Let's take all the good ideas and put them together because we've got 175,000 unemployed Minnesotans who want to work and can't find work, and it's incumbent upon all of us to do everything we can as quickly as we can," Dayton said.

Rep. Jeanne Poppe, DFL-Austin, agrees that passing a bonding bill is critical to help

boost the state's economy. She supports Dayton's proposal to borrow \$775 million for public works projects — including a \$13.5 million expansion of the Hormel Institute in Austin. She also offered a voice of reality to the mix.

"If you expect smiles across the aisle, I don't think that is going to happen, necessarily. I think we all recognize that we need to get work done this session because we are all heading into an election year, and that is the brutal reality of politics," she said.

Budget surplus

Rep. Greg Davids, R-Preston, said he is relieved that for the first time in several years lawmakers will not be faced with solving a budget deficit. The most recent budget forecast projects an \$876 million budget surplus.

High on his list will be a proposal to phase out the statewide business property

tax. Passing such a proposal would "be a clear signal that we are very serious about helping our businesses create more private sector jobs and create wealth," he said.

Fellow Republican Rep. Rich Murray, of Albert Lea, agrees.

"I hope that we help improve the business climate in this state and help create the atmosphere where we can create jobs grow and expand," he said. "And if we can do that and help people in need, it will be a good session."



Murray

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PUNCHLINE

A: In snow banks.
Joke on Page A2

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