
City Administrator Report to Mayor & City Council

April 22, 2016, Edition No. 218

WEEKLY UPDATE:

- Drainage District: Please see below.
- Fire: Per Chief Ewers - Ambulance 355 blew a motor over the weekend and was towed back from Iowa City. A factory motor with warranty is about \$7500 to \$7800. This is not the ambulance due for replacement.
- CSO: The next in-depth session will have a presentation by Jim Edmond on the CSO project and specifically the process to identify and review existing trees prior to construction.
- Healthways: Healthways and Dan Burden stopped in town today to meet with staff and look at the downtown. We reviewed some ideas to address parking and aesthetics. The traffic committee is looking at short and long term ways to improve the parking needs in and around the downtown.
- Vacation: My family is planning to take a longer vacation this summer to San Diego/Coronado starting around the second week in June. My brother-in-law is retiring from the Navy.

ANNEXATION

Staff is meeting next week with staff from other area industries and agencies to review this issue. I will report back on the discussion.

Here is a summary from City Planner Fangman:

After a 4.5 hour hearing the DD13 Board of Trustees approved the proposed annexation. Following are a few points of information and observation that I gathered from this hearing:

- There were well over 100 people in attendance, all in opposition.
- Approximately 165 letters of objection were filed.
- The drainage district has an operating budget of \$175,000 per year.
- The board claims that the annexation is not supporting any new spending or projects, but that it would further spread out the \$175,000 across a wider base.

-They claim that they will use the same benefit classification scheme that they currently use, however, they are not legally required to. If they do, the average annual cost to landowners will be about \$6 per acre.

-However the minimum annual assessment per parcel is \$11, the district has a minimum charge of \$5, and the County Treasurer charges \$6 per parcel in administrative fees.

-Under State law the board can approve and assess the costs of projects and improvements of less than \$50,000 without specific notification to property owners within the district, projects costing over \$50,000 can only be approved after notification of all property owners within the district.

-Their pumping station dates to the mid 60's, so this could be a very expensive bill in the not too distant future.

-Voting for election to the Board of Trustees is done in a very unusual manner, each land owner gets one vote for every \$10 of assessment that they pay to the district. This means that after this annexation the City of Muscatine may control one the largest block of votes.

-In determining which properties benefit from the improvements there engineer only identified properties that had a lower elevation than the Island Levee. The actual ability to use the slough for drainage was not considered. This was a major point of objection, particularly from large entities along the levee, such as GPC and MPW, who operate their own infrastructure to pump storm water over the levees.

-No one on the Board of Trustees knew if the drainage district had been audited since 2009, which was the last year that an audit had been filed with the County auditor office. Despite being the official custodian of the drainage districts public records the auditor stated that they had not much on file other than some minutes from board meetings.

-It sounds like today's annexation could very likely result in an appeal to district court by some of the larger impacted land owners.

-The City has a relatively short time to decide if we wish to appeal this annexation in district court.

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Andrew Fangman
City Planner