

CITY OF MUSCATINE
IN-DEPTH CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
Council Chambers – 7:00 p.m. – October 13, 2011

Mayor Dick O'Brien called the In-Depth City Council meeting for Thursday, October 13, 2011, to order at 7 p.m. Councilmembers present were LeRette, Fitzgerald, Shihadeh, Bynum, Roby, and Lange. Also present were City Administrator Gregg Mandsager and Finance Director Nancy Lueck.

The first item on the agenda was a presentation by the Riders Club of Muscatine. Anne Greene, representing the Riders Club, stated it is a non-profit organization that will provide transportation for the elderly and those in need. She stated the current fee required under the city's taxi licensing permit is \$30 per vehicle.

Councilmember Shihadeh voiced his concerns about the competition with MuscaBus.

Ms. Greene outlined the fees that will be charged. She stated these fees would pay for administrative costs. She stated the Riders Club of Cedar Rapids currently has 250 clients.

Ms. Greene stated the most difficult part of the program will be keeping the volunteer drivers. She stated they will be reimbursed \$.23 per mile. She stated that prior to driving for the Riders Club, they will be required to provide proof of insurance and a driver's license, and a background check will be done.

Ms. Greene stated that currently the home office is located in Illinois City; however, if the program is successful, the office may be relocated to Muscatine.

Councilmember LeRette asked if the \$30 fee could be removed from the taxi licensing permit application. He was told it would not be appropriate to do so.

Councilmember Shihadeh stated he feels this matter needs to be discussed further with the residents of Muscatine. He cautioned against setting a precedent for this type of activity.

Councilmember Roby stated that Cedar Rapids only has 250 riders. She stated that Muscatine also has the Musco bus and other means of transportation.

Ms. Greene was asked if the Riders Club has received its non-profit designation yet and she stated it should be received in November.

Councilmember Shihadeh asked Ms. Greene how many clients she was expecting, and she answered she was not expecting a booming ridership.

Councilmember LeRette stated he was happy to see another benefit for senior citizens. He recommended the removal of the \$30 fee because he felt it created a barrier to starting the program in Muscatine.

Ms. Greene's partner stated the Riders Club could be likened to a Y membership.

Ms. Greene stated her biggest concern is keeping volunteers.

Councilmember Fitzgerald asked how many vehicles will be operating.

Ms. Greene stated the goal is to have five to six vehicles operating per week.

This topic will be brought back at a future meeting for further discussion.

The next item on the agenda was a budget basis financial review for fiscal year 2010/2011. Finance Director Nancy Lueck gave a power point presentation highlighting items contained in the budget basis document that had been distributed to City Council.

The final item on the agenda for discussion was the National Citizen Survey.

City Administrator Gregg Mandsager reviewed some of the findings, discussion, and comments that have come in concerning the National Citizen Survey which asked about services and amenities in the City of Muscatine.

Councilmember Shihadeh stated Muscatine is a great community but the city cannot close its eyes to what the survey is saying.

Councilmember LeRette stated a plan is needed to market Muscatine. He stated Muscatine has a lot of good things to offer. He stated the citizens of Muscatine need to be part of the efforts to address the issues found in the survey.

City Administrator Mandsager pointed out the survey was discussed at City Council's recent goal setting session. He stated the survey will be discussed with residents as the Planning and Zoning Department works to update the city's Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Lange asked what percentage of those surveyed responded.

City Administrator Mandsager answered 38%. He stated that number was not good; however, he pointed out that many times the negative folks are the ones who often respond to surveys of this type. He stated he feels it would be good to do the survey on a regular basis.

Councilmember Lange stated that Muscatine is often compared to the Quad Cities; however, he did not feel that was a fair comparison.

Councilmember Roby stated the city needs to do something about the negatives contained in the survey and continue to address them. She stated changes won't happen overnight. She pointed out there are great choices in Muscatine such as its 54 restaurants.

Councilmember Bynum stated what it boils down to is being proud of what we have in the City of Muscatine.

City Administrator Mandsager stated that conversations can continue concerning the survey results. He stated establishing the Council goals is a positive action. He agreed that Muscatine is a great place to live.

Under comments, Councilmember Lange stated he was glad to see the work on Cedar Street get underway.

Councilmember Roby stated that the election forum held by the League of Women Voters will be held on October 18, 2011 in the City Council Chambers. She encouraged citizens to attend and ask questions.

Mayor O'Brien urged residents to attend the forum as well.

#21820. Councilmember Shihadeh moved the meeting be adjourned at 8:17 p.m. Seconded by Councilmember Fitzgerald. All ayes; motion carried.

Gregg Mandsager, City Administrator