

**CITY OF JACKSONVILLE  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JULY 21, 2022  
6:00 P.M. - 7:29 P.M.**

**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING - CITY HALL - #1 MUNICIPAL DRIVE**

The City Council of the City of Jacksonville, Arkansas met in a regular session on July 21, 2022 at the regular meeting place of the City Council. Council Member Bolden delivered the invocation and Mayor Johnson led a standing audience in the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag.

**ROLL CALL:** City Council Members: Dietz, Bolden, Blevins, Sansing, Ray, Traylor, Twitty, and Rains answered ROLL CALL. Mayor Johnson also answered ROLL CALL declaring a quorum. PRESENT EIGHT (8) ABSENT (2). Council Members Mashburn and Smith were absent.

Others present for the meeting were: Parks & Recreation Director Kevin House, Fire Chief Alan Laughy, Police Chief Brett Hibbs, Public Works Director Jim Oakley, Animal Control Manager Jamie Parker, Finance Director Cheryl Erkel, IT Director Emily Osment, and Johnny Simpson.

**PRESENTATION OF MINUTES:** Mayor Johnson presented the minutes of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting of July 7, 2022 for approval and/or correction at the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.

**APPROVAL AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:**

**Council Member Bolden moved, seconded by Council Member Ray that the minutes of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting of June 2, 2022 be APPROVED. MOTION CARRIED.**

**CONSENT AGENDA: REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Council Member Bolden moved, seconded by Council Member Ray to approve the regular monthly report for June 2022 from the Jacksonville Fire Department, reflecting a fire loss of \$39,000.00 and a savings total of \$511,000.00.

**REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Council Member Bolden moved, seconded by Council Member Ray to approve the Regular Monthly Report for June 2022 regarding annual crime statistical comparisons.

**REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Council Member Bolden moved, seconded by Council Member Ray to approve the regular monthly report as presented for June 2022.

Assigned Calls	98		
Self-Initiated Calls	175		
Follow Ups	93	Apartment Complexes Inspected	0
Three Day Notices	15	Red Tags Issued	2
Seven Day Letters	294	Search Warrants	1
Citations Issued	2	Rehabbed Structures	0
Vehicles Tagged	15	Structures Condemned	0
Vehicles Towed	0	Demolition by City	0
Garbage Cans Tagged	0	Demolition by Owner	0
Basketball Goals	2	Parking Violations	0
Structures Inspected	287	Grass Mowed	128

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ROLL CALL: Council Member: Dietz, Bolden, Blevins, Sansing, Ray, Traylor, Twitty, and Rains voted AYE. MOTION CARRIED.

WATER DEPARTMENT:  
WASTEWATER DEPARTMENTS:  
FIRE DEPARTMENT:  
STREET DEPARTMENT:  
POLICE DEPARTMENT:  
SANITATION DEPARTMENT:  
PARKS & RECREATION:

Council Member Ray, seconded by Council Member Rains to suspend the rules to add an item of business to the agenda. MOTION CARRIED.

Addition to agenda:

PLANNING COMMISSION: FINAL PLAT Jaxon Terrace Phase 16

Public Works Director Jim Oakley stated Jaxon Terrace is on the north end of the City, pointing out this is possibly the last phase in the Subdivision that Dick Jones started and now his nephew is finishing. He explained the roads, curb and gutters, streetlights, water, and sewer have all been installed to City specifications and they see no reason not to accept it.

Council Member Ray moved, seconded by Council Member Bolden to approve the final plat for Jaxon Terrace Phase 16 as presented. MOTION CARRIED.

RESUME AGENDA:  
COMMITTEE(S):

GENERAL: a. PRESENTATION by Rock Region Metro

Director of Public Engagement Becca Green with Rock Region Metro introduced their Chief Executive Officer Justin Avery, relating their excitement to present this update regarding the development of the Metro Connect Jacksonville Microtransit Zone. She noted this is their first time being before the Council and are excited to share the plans. She pointed out that their Senior Transit Planner Boris Palchik with Foursquare ITP is joining them tonight virtually. She explained this is possibly the first time ever where Jacksonville will have transit service within the City taking people where they need to go, adding that Rock Region is offering a one-time infusion of CARES Act funding they received during the pandemic to help kick it off. She detailed that over a five-year period Rock Region will be investing more than half a million dollars to get this started for Jacksonville, which is money the City never has to pay back. She shared that their mission is to provide safe, reliable, convenient, and cost-effective transit service with a skilled team of employees dedicated to their customer's needs. She noted they are governed by a twelve-member Board of Directors, who are appointed by the jurisdictions where Rock Region operates services, adding that in the future, they will be evolving this Board to have representation among their various funding partners. She continued to say

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they are also led by eight executive leadership team members, pointing out that Justin Avery is their new Chief Executive Officer and has served as their Chief Financial Officer. She explained that she is a part of this leadership team, along with the rest of the individuals shown on the screen, who make up a group of smart, hardworking, dedicated professionals who are ready to put together the public transit service this region would like to see. She referenced the map of the Little Rock urbanized area in green that includes North Little Rock, Benton, Bryant, Maumelle, Sherwood, Cabot, and Jacksonville, which was determined by the U.S. Census. She related how the Federal Transit Administration, which oversees Rock Region Metro, designated them as the recipient of all federal dollars for public transit for the area in green. She confirmed that any city in the area that wants to put up their transit service can do that with their funds, but if they want to have the power of additional dollars of federal spending, they must work through Rock Region Metro. She pointed out that Conway is the red portion and they are in their own urbanized area because they surpassed 50,000 people. She noted it is also because there is a geographic lessening of population density along I-40 that is enough to put them in their own urbanized area. She stated that a few years ago Conway opted to make Rock Region Metro the designated recipient of their federal public transit funds. She explained that Conway recognized the expertise of Rock Region with them being the State's largest public transit agency and they are also working on some public transit service there as well. She shared Rock Region's history in Jacksonville, adding that in 1986 Jacksonville joined an interlocal agreement that created Rock Region Metro as a transit authority. She detailed that before 1986, transit service was operated by Metroplan, but when the service got so big, they spun off into their own agency with Jacksonville being one of their original interlocal agreement partners. She related that they operated Route 36, an express route that served Sherwood and Jacksonville, up until 2020 when they suspended it due to multiple years of declining ridership and a need to prioritize the highest ridership routes. She related how they engaged in a comprehensive operational analysis study that kicked off in 2019 and Route 36, along with several other low performing routes, were going to be recommended for removal because of low ridership numbers. She affirmed they have been working with the City ever since to figure out what the City would like, as far as what would work best for the public transit needs. She stated that they came up with the idea to launch Microtransit service and signed an agreement in November 2021 with the City of Jacksonville using the aid of a one-time pandemic-related CARES Act funding. She mentioned that the benefit of this partnership is that it engages a somewhat familiar ride-hailing or ridesharing service, such as Uber or Lyft. She mentioned that it's a similar platform that allows Rock Region to monitor and launch it for residents and visitors in Jacksonville to use. She stated that it utilizes and capitalizes on Metro's experience as the largest public transit agency in Arkansas, noting they manage highly robust and technical FTA requirements on a regular basis, resulting in taking a lot of the reporting and compliance burden off of the City. She added that it also addresses multiple transportation needs that the residents have. She explained that they have partnered with

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Foursquare ITP and Mr. Palchik will be speaking about what they have been doing on the transit planning side of things. She explained that the Microtransit software is operated by TransLoc, which is a subsidiary of Ford Mobility, a spinoff of the Ford Motor Company. She related this is technology in a group that has a large, serious backing of established players in the transportation space with a plan that was developed with the input of the City of Jacksonville staff. She explained they have been working for several months, meeting on a regular basis with different members of staff and community, to develop this service. She related how they used data pulled by Metroplan, to look and see where people are going and how they are moving around the region. She detailed that they had stakeholder meetings recently where they took all of this planning work, vetted and refined it with representatives from the Jacksonville community who represent major employers, people from the education and healthcare sector, social services, and others in the community who have populations who might be using public transit. She assured they got good feedback from that group and it was very well-received.

Senior Transit Planner Boris Palchik with Foursquare ITP stated that Microtransit is a shared ride service that provides point to point and accessible ride-hailing transportation. He explained it is a technology-driven demand response service, like Uber or Lyft, where people book rides through a smartphone app while providing more coverage than fixed-route service since it is not limited to particular roadways or corridors, but operates within a designated zone. He pointed out that it is a more immediate and responsive service than the traditional dial-a-ride service where users would have to call up to speak to a dispatcher and have to plan trips days, or even weeks, in advance. He assured that is not what Microtransit is, since it is more of an immediate type of service where people can book trips in real time. He affirmed that it is similar to Uber and Lyft in those regards, but is different in that Microtransit is a shared ride service that allows people to ride together. He detailed an example of one or two people getting on, then another person may get off, then three people get off, and so on, with constant turnover, like on a typical bus service where people are constantly boarding and alighting. He mentioned that unlike Uber and Lyft, it also uses a dedicated fleet of vehicles that are generally designed specifically for transit operations, such as smaller buses, vans, or mini vans. He brought up that with Uber and Lyft, the fares are more unpredictable where there is surge pricing occasionally and you never really know what your fare is going to be until you finish the trip. He affirmed that with Microtransit, the fare is set by a public agency and is a much more predictable fare structure so people know in advance their trip will cost \$2.00 with no surprises. He noted that from a rider's perspective there are a number of key features that make Microtransit appealing with one being easy booking, in the past, to book demand-response type of service, you had to call up and negotiate a pick-up time, but Microtransit allows you to use an app and book almost instantaneously. He stated that it also allows you to see where vehicles are in real time, taking away that fear of the unknown that is sometimes associated with transit service and people not knowing, which is

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sometimes associated with transit service and people not knowing where their bus is or exactly when it will arrive. He clarified that with Microtransit apps you can see where the vehicle is and when it will arrive to pick you up. He affirmed that reasonable wait and travel times are also important from a rider's perspective and past dial-a-ride services required a lot of advance planning or reservation, but Microtransit is much more immediate. He explained that booking is done through the mobile app, but since not everyone has access to a smartphone or mobile technology, there is always a call-in option to speak to a dispatcher and book their trip. He stated that Microtransit supports a variety of trip purposes and is usually operated with a zone structure that provides local circulation regarding trips to shopping centers, job-access, medical trips, etc. He added that it can provide first and last mile connections to other regional services, with this being a future possibility in Jacksonville. He pointed out that it can also serve to close gaps by time of day with some communities using it specifically in the late evening hours or weekends when it does not make sense to operate fixed-route service. He mentioned another important feature of Microtransit is data rich since everything is booked through the app where every trip is saved in a database, making it possible to observe trends over time to gauge demand and know when to upgrade to another type of service. He explained the way they plan Microtransit is by looking at community characteristics and environment where the service is going to operate, noting some of the key features they look at are density, demographics, land use, and regional travel patterns. He pointed out that those help them understand where different service types would make sense, since Microtransit typically works best in a lower density environment. He said as an area becomes more urban, there are more types of transit that could be considered, such as fixed-route service or high frequency bus rapid transit service, but as you get more suburban or rural lower density, the types of services that work best are commuter service, like what Route 36 was, or shared mobility, which is what Microtransit is. He stated that density is the strongest predictor of transit use, they identify areas that have density of greater than five people and jobs per acre. He elaborated that areas that reach that density could be considered for fixed-route service, but Microtransit is a good first step to gauge the market. He shared that areas below that density are where fixed-route service will not work and if you are going to start any type of transit there, Microtransit would be the way to go. He affirmed they look at both population and employment density to understand the concentration of specific population groups that tend to have a high propensity to use transit including zero-vehicle households, people with disabilities, low-income individuals, youth/young adults, and seniors. He shared that they understand where there is a higher concentration of these groups and where they tend to see more transit trips. He continued saying that there are also certain land uses that are good predictors of transit use including multi-family housing, medical facilities, educational institutions, major retail centers, community/civic centers, and major employers. He affirmed those are the types of land uses they look for when they are trying to determine where they

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should draw the zone boundaries for Microtransit service to ensure the Microtransit service has the strongest chance of generating ridership as possible. He stated the last thing they looked at was regional travel patterns, noting that this information came from Metroplan since they maintain a regional travel demand model, which is independent of mode. He clarified that it is looking at how people are traveling, regardless of how they travel, whether it be by cars, bikes, bus, etc. He referenced a map detailing the most prevalent travel patterns in and around Jacksonville and what they see is that the strongest concentrated travel patterns are destinations to and from the Air Force Base. He noted those are trips where you are seeing a critical mass of people traveling to the Base with enough to where you potentially could support those trips with fixed-route transit service. He mentioned there are challenges operating in the Base with fixed-route transit service because of security concerns, but outside the Base travel patterns are pretty dispersed with not a single critical mass corridor. He affirmed that Jacksonville has a much more diverse set of travel patterns, and because of this, Microtransit might be a better fit than fixed-route service since fixed-route service requires a critical mass of people making the same exact trip versus lots of different trips. He related that based on all that he just discussed and various meetings and communications with City staff, the zone for Microtransit service in Jacksonville covers most of the City, it does not cover the Air Force Base, but it encompasses the vast majority of key trip generators such as those land uses and destinations they typically see transit trips being attracted to and produced by. He stated after they determined the zone, they did some modeling to determine the service characteristics. He explained that Microtransit service's success hinges on, one being wait time and travel time, which is very important to attracting riders beyond the most transit-dependent. He surmised if people try this service and find it takes too long to wait for a vehicle, they may not try it again. He detailed that wait time is a function of a couple of things, including how many vehicles you have in service and the size of the zone. He noted that Rock Region Metro has budgeted one vehicle for Jacksonville Microtransit service and that is a fixed variable, therefore, what they have to work with is the size of the zone. He pointed out that Rock Region has the hours of service at twelve hours per day Monday through Saturday and that the zone was determined by an assessment of the transit market. He explained how they took that information to understand what the service characteristics would look like. He affirmed as long as ridership stays below sixty passenger trips a day and remain within the Jacksonville zone, the average wait time, from the point where the person requests the trip by phone to the point they are picked up by the vehicle, would be less than thirty minutes and once they are in the vehicle, the average trip time would be less than twenty minutes. He added that once ridership demand reaches sixty passengers per day, then those times start increasing to the point where the City may need to consider adding another vehicle to the fleet, changing the zone borders, or implement distance-based pricing in order to limit the number of long trips and encourage people to take shorter trips so you can provide more service and trips per hour. He shared that they also did a simulation with the same zone structure but added

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an out of zone destination at McCain Mall, meaning that people could request a trip from anywhere within the Jacksonville zone to and from McCain Mall. He noted as long as ridership remains below sixty passenger trips per day, the average wait time would be below forty-five minutes and the trip time becomes a bit longer with the average of about an hour. He reiterated that once you surpass that sixty passenger trips per day, then it really starts breaking down and your average wait times start to grow to an hour, and sometimes an hour and a half, where some solutions would need to be considered, such as expanding the fleet size.

Ms. Green mentioned that they did the simulation to make it clear that their recommendation is to start with one vehicle that Jacksonville can afford and circulate it within the City. She assured if there is the ability to grow, they want to be able to connect back to the region as they know that is important, but they must find a way to sustainably fund it. She detailed they are offering this zone 1.5 full-time equivalent drivers, adding it is not just one person in a car since that person has to take a vacation day every now and then or gets sick, so they have extra people come in and help operate this service in this one vehicle in the zone. She noted they are also sharing a supervisor with other Microtransit zones to keep tabs and help out when needed and also a dispatcher that is part of the bigger staff behind the scenes at Metro. She continued saying that behind all that is their biggest fixed cost center helping to power this service forward, which is operations management, customer service, maintenance, accounting, HR, marketing communications, legal, and safety. She listed capital expenses that include the vehicles, computers, software, and radios that they use to put this service forward. She stated the service vehicle will be a Lone Star Promaster 3500s, detailing that it is accessible with low floor and a fold-out wheelchair ramp, can accommodate up to seven passengers, and will be owned, maintained, fueled, and insured by Metro. She pointed out that the first three years of the agreement help cover the depreciation period for this vehicle because Rock Region is purchasing it and bearing the brunt of the expense with Jacksonville paying a portion of it over the next three years. She mentioned how their previous interim COO Reese Pearl was here last year and said it was \$1.35 per trip, but unfortunately, he got it incorrect since it is \$2.00 per person per trip. She explained how Mr. Palchik's team helped do a fare analysis of their Microtransit city-wide zones and looked at different cities and states across the country to see what they charge for Microtransit, confirming \$2.00 per person per trip was one of the lowest fares they could find. She noted these are going to be longer trips than the zones that are within Little Rock and North Little Rock since there they cover much smaller geographic areas that are more like neighborhoods. She reiterated these would be longer trips, which mean more gas money involved, so \$2.00 per person per trip is an affordable fee, adding you will not find a \$2.00 Uber trip to get from any point to any other point in this zone. She explained this also helps manage demand to where if it starts to skyrocket and you still only have one vehicle, you could consider raising fares but still keeping it affordable because there is a relationship between fares and ridership, noting higher fares mean lower ridership. She reiterated \$2.00 is

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an affordable flat fee for a one-way trip across town and they will be monitoring and assessing the fares at appropriate times, just as they do in Little Rock and North Little Rock. She affirmed they have not raised fares in North Little Rock and Little Rock since 2009, so it would not be surprising, with the cost of 2022, that they would be increasing the fares there at some point. She related that as they expand their service they will become more of a regional service provider and when you look across the country at different transit agencies that offer regional service, they have a regional fare structure to go with it, so they will be assessing that along the way. She shared that they have been made aware that when Mr. Frazier was here last August he proposed an initial introductory fare-free service to introduce everyone to it and they are working with the City to put that together to launch the service. She stated the timeline for launching the service is heavily dependent on recruitment, hiring and training drivers, and vehicle procurement, adding they have had hiring challenges and vehicle procurement supply chain issues. She affirmed they do have the vehicles on order and they are supposed to be arriving in early 2023, noting that the launch date is tied to when the vehicles actually arrive. She explained that once they arrive they can get the service off the ground pretty quickly after they put fare boxes on them and wrap them in the Metro brand. She pointed out once they get the vehicles in and have a better idea of when they can launch the service, they will come and do some general public information meetings to tell people how the service operates and how to use it. She noted they also have some behind the scenes operational tasks for example, if the university center near the Air Base has a special place they want Rock Region to always park, they work with them to make sure they are doing what they want on their campus. She related they also do rider app training sessions, recalling when they launched zones in Little Rock and North Little Rock they engaged in training sessions in special populations. She affirmed they would be happy to go to the Senior Center they could aside some time to come out and host a training session. She noted that often it is not that people who use transit do not have smartphones, but a lot them do and do not always know how to use them. She detailed that they help people download the app, book a trip, and even do a test booking to make sure they got it. She reiterated you do not have to have a smartphone to use this service, but can use a dial in number as well. She shared that post-launch they will conduct a rider survey a few months into the service to see how people are liking it and also perform service performance monitoring to look at the number of trips, where they are originating, and where they are going so they can determine how people are using this service. She added they will also be providing financial reporting, noting that whatever is paid for in the fares is taken away from the balance of what the City of Jacksonville will pay to Metro every month so when people pay their fares, they are actually lessening the burden on the City to pay into the system.

Council Member Traylor stated his appreciation for changing the map, but requested that Notting Hill Subdivision, located off of General Samuels, be added to the service zone.

Ms. Green affirmed she will follow up with Mr. Palchik on that.

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Council Member Sansing stated when Council was first introduced to this plan a while back, they said the City would get two vans and have another one as a backup when they first came to speak.

Ms. Green affirmed she cannot speak to that, but what she saw in the agreement was the pricing for one vehicle, along with a spare. She explained that if something happens, such as a flat tire, they would have another vehicle as a spare on standby that they could send out to relieve the other vehicle so there would be minimal to no interruption in service for riders.

Council Member Sansing brought up how he has seen in the paper a lot of cities having issues with this and asked if they are working on solving those issues. He shared that it has the Council concerned when they see Sherwood and North Little Rock both taking a task.

Ms. Green confirmed Sherwood has not signed an agreement, detailing that they want a point of interest at McCain Mall, but it is not Rock Region's professional recommendation they do that with one vehicle, for all the reasons that Mr. Palchik just stated. She pointed out on the slides that compared service designs that you go from an average trip time, within Jacksonville only, of less than 20 minutes compared to if you go to McCain and there is only one vehicle in the zone, that jumps and triples to less than 60 minutes. She noted there is a chance with all of this that your overall wait and travel time would not be an hour and 45 minutes, maybe it is less, but maybe it is not. She explained it depends on what the demand is and where everyone is going, so it is not their professional recommendation, as the transit experts in the room, to do that because the people who are riding are not going to be happy. She surmised they would call Rock Region, but then Rock Region would call the City and tell them they are getting complaints about it because it is not good service. She mentioned that as far as North Little Rock, this is an election year, so please keep that in mind because something that might not be a topic of conversation at a meeting might come up because of that. She told how the area around Shorter College was set up with Microtransit as an emergency response right after the pandemic hit, taking away their fixed route that was falling in ridership. She detailed they used that elsewhere in the system where they needed it at the time to get people to jobs during the pandemic. She assured that it is not the same as rolling out planned service, which is what they recently unveiled in that area. She continued to say they had a follow-up meeting with those same constituents the next week and no one in the room had used the service when she asked if anyone had. She believes the concern was coming from people who do not even normally use transit, so they are unfamiliar of how it works. She admitted there is a learning curve, but you can learn how to use transit since it is not as overwhelming or complicated as it may seem. She said the good thing about it is if you learn to use it here you can use it anywhere, noting that it is a smaller system, but it operates the same way the New York MTA, the Chicago L, the San Francisco Bart, or transit in a foreign country does being pretty much the same concept. She believes it was a lot of the concern and

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they have worked through it since then to get out in the community now that they are not in a pandemic emergency response mode, but are in a normal planned service mode. She told how they are working through all of those neighborhoods and are getting very good reception.

Council Member Ray replied yes when Council Member Bolden asked if his area is included in the proposed zone. Council Member Bolden then asked Ms. Green if they would accept EBT cards, noting there are disenfranchised people who do not have \$2.00.

Ms. Green clarified it is cash or app usage only, however, she and the Mayor have talked about doing something here in Jacksonville similar to what they do in Little Rock. She explained they have agreements with six different academic fare partners, including the Central Arkansas Library system and the Arkansas Homeless Coalition, which has 20-30 partners that engage in homeless services. She detailed what they do is help fund the system by paying a discounted rate to Rock Region for fare passes, then they hand out those passes to their different groups so those populations can ride fare free. She affirmed there are definitely non-profit partners here in the City she believes are interested in doing things like that, adding that some of them attended the stakeholder meeting. She pointed out there are area religious groups here that were interested in doing some programming like that and she understands that the City also had a long running voucher system for the local taxi company, so that could also be an option. She mentioned they have the ability to do it through the fare boxes, which is an important point because you want to make sure when you do something like that, that you do not have a voucher that could be easily replicated to where someone could abuse it. When Council Member Bolden brought up that she mentioned 60 people, she clarified that the service model is for less than 60 passenger trips per day, not necessarily 60 people.

Council Member Blevins acknowledged this was a great slideshow and the presentation was better than previous ones. He noticed that Ms. Green kept emphasizing the "one time" when speaking about the CARES Act money and she said it was \$500,000.00, where in the plan the City agreed to it is broken down for three years, with two years optional. Ms. Green concurred when he asked if after that is done there is no more. He went on saying she mentioned that the \$2.00 was a mistake from the gentleman who came and talked, but he also wanted to say when their last CEO Charles Frazier came, he also mentioned \$1.35 and they also have pamphlets currently being circulated in Little Rock that say \$1.35. He noted that is not what they were told when they talked about it, Council voted on it, and when the City signed it. He feels they told them one thing to get them to sign, but then told them things were not included. He recalled her saying the point of interest was not recommended, then asked if it means it is not included if they decide they want one at McCain Mall. He asked would that happen or would they refuse.

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Ms. Green affirmed her personal recommendation would be to tell them no they are not doing it because she knows they are going to get backlash from riders who are not going to like it. She explained there is no city-wide Microtransit zone in their system right now, so it is unique not having opened one yet, noting that is why all of their pamphlets, fare, and pass information talk about \$1.35. She confirmed they have not launched Conway or Jacksonville yet and Sherwood may never happen, so there is no transit rider who has had the experience of riding from a city-wide Microtransit zone, taking up to possibly an hour to get there, and then waiting for a fixed route bus after that. She affirmed that is not great service at all, but is a very long one-way trip and she does not think anyone here wants to be known for not great service. She related that if the City insists on it she does not think anyone here, leadership-wise, is going to stop them but she would stop them if she could because she does not believe they are going to like the backlash they get. She reiterated she cannot speak to what Mr. Frazier and Mr. Pearl had said before, apologizing that they got it wrong, but \$2.00 per person per trip is very reasonable and affordable for this service. She detailed they are launching it with one-time CARES Act money they could be using elsewhere, but they think it is important for this community to offer this public service, just as schools, libraries, and parks are needed by residents. She mentioned the Mayor telling them he is getting calls every month or week from people who want it, adding that Conway is telling them the same thing. She stated they cannot get the vehicles in here fast enough, noting it is longer trips because these zones are wider than Little Rock and North Little Rock who have stayed at the same rates for more than a decade. She believes it is unreasonable for everyone to expect those rates to always stay the same, surmising they probably will go up in the future.

Council Member Blevins replied that they are raising the rate even before the City gets started. Ms. Green responded no when he asked if they are selling the data they collect to a third party. Ms. Green replied that she can get a quote of the cost when he asked about adding Sundays on.

Council Member Dietz believes \$2.00 is a very affordable fare for people who need a ride, especially with the cost of gas and everything that has gone up. He mentioned sometimes you get information that is not true, but he thought the first time the \$1.35 was too inexpensive. He requested clarification regarding if they will have a way to keep up with the number of trips they run and track the amount of time each trip takes per person so they can report back and let them know if it gets excessive. He affirmed the City wants good service for their citizens and that is why they are considering this, sharing that he wants to make sure they have a way to track it if someone is waiting 40-50 minutes so they can figure out something to do better.

Ms. Green replied yes, that is what the dispatcher's job is, which is to sit and watch the vehicle times, keeping an eye on everything to where if someone has been waiting too long they start calling drivers and moving things around and making things happen.

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Council Member Ray asked if, for example, someone was working in West Little Rock in the Fourche Dam Pike area and pays their \$2.00 to catch the Jacksonville van, where would they transfer and how much more would they have to pay.

Ms. Green responded that currently, in the proposed zone, it is just for Jacksonville, so you would not be able to reach the rest of the system. She reiterated this is Rock Region knowing that Jacksonville needs a different type of service, adding they have been here, saw how Route 36 performed, and know it is not meeting all of the needs. She acknowledged that the regional connection is important, but it has to be sustainably funded, reiterating they have given Jacksonville seed money with the one-time pandemic CARES Act funds they have that the Feds are never going to give to them again because hopefully there is not going to be another global pandemic. She stated it is about building the service, sharing that they believe the best way to do it is to start within the City to get people to the places here, like social services and grocery stores.

Council Member Ray pointed out a previous presentation said they would transfer to McCain Mall and requested clarification on if now it is just Jacksonville.

Ms. Green affirmed their plans have been to launch it within the City first, reiterating that it is not going to be good service for the people riding. She stressed that the City will hear about it if there is only one vehicle operating here with multiple trips coming in at peak times of the day when everyone is going to school, work, etc., and then the one vehicle having to be pulled out all of the way to North Little Rock. She reiterated it will not be good service, noting there might be an opportunity once the City sees how it goes, to talk about how the City might be able to find some funding to get another vehicle, which would be the goal.

Council Member Rains thanked Ms. Green for the presentation because it was very inclusive of all quantitative and qualitative information that would be needed to make a decision. She asked since the only way Jacksonville and Sherwood would say yes is having the point of interest destination, would there be a potential for the two cities to split the costs of an additional transport between both cities.

Ms. Green believes that would be a great idea and there is definitely potential there.

Council Member Rains affirmed it is something that is very much needed for this area, having the majority of Jacksonville being a working town where not all of the citizens work here within the City.

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Ms. Green agreed, noting that the travel patterns suggest it and Rock Region is aware. She believes it is a great idea, adding she will be in Sherwood next week and will take that suggestion to them.

Mayor Johnson requested for Ms. Green to elaborate on the long-term goal of Microtransit.

Council Member Bolden shared his concern of people being upset of only riding around Jacksonville and not being able to get to Baptist Health, etc. He recalled Ms. Green saying to try it out then the City could come up with more money, but in City business the money is not there to try it out. He affirmed they got to have what they are going to have from the beginning that is going to represent all of the people and their needs. Council Member Bolden explained that \$2.00 is reasonable for some people, but disenfranchised people are not going to ask for help, but would rather have their EBT card. He acknowledged that Rock Region probably cannot get that converted, but he is just showing her the obstacles we are dealing with. He wants to solidify that the community and constituent's needs are met, pointing out that no one wants to go from Point A in Jacksonville to Point D in Jacksonville. He related if he were to get on a transit, he would want to get to Point A to Baptist Hospital, etc., stressing that is his major concern and from the very first meeting, Council did ask about it and the person Rock Region sent was not well-informed, which is not good in sales.

Ms. Green reiterated that she cannot speak to the people who were here before her and she is not going to try, but she knows there are some people who are interested in making connections outside of Jacksonville, pointing out that they are the transit people who have known that for years. She assured that when they had their stakeholder meeting here with employers and people from the education sector, social services, and healthcare in Jacksonville, they were all pretty pleased the City was starting to give any kind of level of service to get from Point A to Point B in the City. She acknowledged the regional connection is a need, but she thinks that starting out with budget the City has, they are still going to please a lot of people because she did not hear any negativity in the room when she talked to them about it. She stated as far as the point of people who cannot afford the fare, they deal with that all of the time in their regular system. She affirmed that the fare agreements are the way they can make sure they have sustainable funding, because unlike the schools, parks, and libraries, they do not have a long-term local property or sales tax holding up public transit. She explained that Arkansas is one of the lowest states as far as investing per capita for public transit, so they understand there is a need out there and that is why they look for partners to help them carry that burden. She shared that the school districts, for example, help pay the fare agreement so their kids can ride fare free while there is a TAP program that the Arkansas Homeless Coalition pays so their constituents they serve can ride fare free. She affirmed it does work and they are absolutely open to coming up and helping the City establish some of those fare partnerships because she does think there are willing partners here in this community to help with that.

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Council Member Twitty recalled that Ms. Green made a comment that the Council would hear about it going to McCain, but she feels like they would hear a lot about the things Council was told before such as the \$1.35, the three vans, and McCain Mall point of interest.

Ms. Green related that the question to ask themselves is does the City have financial flexibility to, either partner with Sherwood on a second vehicle, or to pay for a second vehicle outright that is just for Jacksonville. She noted it is their understanding that the City is starting from scratch, as far as the funding, since they have not been paying funding for two years, and before that, the City was not paying a rate that was sustainable for Rock Region to carry such a low number of people on Route 36. She affirmed it is a funding issue, adding they are here to help and they believe it is a good, worthy cause or else they would not be, over a five-year period, investing over half a million dollars in it. She stated if they can find a way to get the funding for extra vehicles, she thinks they can get that done.

Council Member Sansing confirmed that Council was sold on having at least two vans running at the same time, and one running to McCain Mall, so there would not be wait times in town. He affirmed this is the way it was presented to Council in the beginning and now Rock Region is changing what they signed the contract on.

Ms. Green recalled the August meeting of last year when Mr. Frazier was here, noting that he is a great visionary and good pitchman, but she thinks what he was talking about was in the future adding on a service to have an on-demand community shuttle with the same software that powers it. She affirmed that in working with Mr. Frazier and knowing him, she does not think his intention was to say that was the ironclad way it was going to be, but that he does believe in fostering regional connections here. She shared that she thinks it is important for this community and for communities across America as we face climate change. She reiterated that she thinks the regional connection is important, but that is not the financial agreement they are moving forward with because they have to be able to sustain it and have money be paid into the system to support it. She noted that more vehicles mean more fuel expenses and labor, adding there is a competitive labor market now and they have to pay their people a livable wage. She affirmed that transit costs money and as long as we can work together to find the funding for it, she believes they can get the City that regional connection they want.

Council Member Rains clarified she did state if Rock Region had the ultimatum of making the point destination between the two cities, or losing this deal between the them, would Rock Region make that decision. She added as an individual who attended a university that partners with Rock Region, with that share program, it is a sticker or a type of identification that is put on the ID of the school or partnering program you are utilizing. She pointed out that just like they did the taxi voucher program, it would be similar, reiterating it would be a sticker that would be easily identifiable and not able to be replicated to be placed on an identification card of some sort.

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Ms. Green agreed that is how the fare agreements work, adding that the partners are the ones who know their constituents and know, for example, if you are a full-time student enrolled, so they would be in charge of creating your student ID or if you are a constituent who is with the Central Arkansas Library system, they would give you a special library-created card they would attach a security sticker to. She detailed that it is called a security sticker because if you try to peel it off and stick it on your next year's ID, you will ruin the sticker and not be able to reuse it. She explained it is a way to prevent fare evasion because in a system as small as theirs, they need every cent they get from fares since it helps power and pay for the system. She mentioned as far as the question about whether they will fight the City on them wanting a point of interest, the City has been warned about how the service will be.

Council Member Traylor made the point that those who voted on this resolution voted to approve it, but did not vote on a plan. He stressed that they voted on a resolution that gave the Mayor the ability to enter into an agreement with Rock Region, reiterating they did not vote on any kind of plan, so now they have a plan that the Mayor undoubtedly agreed to and they need to live with it. He explained what they are doing is providing public transportation inside the City of Jacksonville at a good price to let people move around in, noting that is what it all boils down to. He acknowledged that it would be nice to give everything to everyone, but he believes this is giving the people, who need transportation to go to the doctor or store here in town, the ability to do it at a reasonable price.

Council Member Bolden affirmed he voted on the resolution based on the presentation, so if they tell the City they are going to get one thing, but they get another, that is the principal he is looking at. He detailed that the presentation said this and the questions were put forward where he even included about the Air Base, so therefore, that is what was presented. He noted it was presented and they bit on it because of that and accepted it, but now they come back, tell the City they are sorry, and they are not going to be able to afford what they wanted, but here is something else. He pointed out this is what he is looking at, which is the fact of the presentation.

Ms. Green brought up that the CARES Act funding makes the service available, which is service for the citizens. She stressed that when they had the stakeholder meeting, they had people here from Jacksonville that represent Jacksonville employers, schools, social services organizations, and medical clinics. She noted they were all happy to get their constituents to where they need to go, pointing out that Jacksonville has people who go to dialysis every week, there are senior citizens who need to get to the doctor for just a regular health check-up, and there are people going to the university center to get an educational opportunity for a better life. She affirmed this is the start and does not have to be the end of the story, sharing that she believes Rock Region can help to try to find the City some additional money if they see the passenger trips increasing. She assured they can help the City figure out how they can do that, possibly petitioning to get more money for public transit here.

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Council Member Blevins pointed out that the CARES Act money is federal money that was given to Rock Region, not money out of Rock Region's pocket.

Ms. Green responded it is money that Rock Region gets to determine where they want to use it in their system.

Council Member Blevins agreed, noting it can only be used for this, so it is not like it is money that could be used for anything else. He explained that the money was only to be used for transit planning.

Ms. Green replied they do have a city, clarifying they have three primary funder partners they could be using it on, but thought it was important to reestablish service in Jacksonville and that is why they targeted the City for some of this money.

Council Member Blevins mentioned the stakeholder meeting where Rock Region contacted schools and other community members, then asked how many council members or elected officials did she contact.

Ms. Green responded that this is the presentation for elected officials, noting Council Member Traylor was there representing major employers, because Rock Region wanted to hear from Jacksonville's constituents.

Council Member Traylor pointed out it was after the agreement had already been signed, affirming it was not to build up to the agreement, but was a presentation of what the agreement was about.

Council Member Blevins brought up that Ms. Green talked to all of these people after the vote happened, but why did she not reach out to any of the council members.

Ms. Green affirmed this is the opportunity where they are reaching out to the council members.

Council Member Blevins pointed out that Ms. Green mentioned it was an election year for North Little Rock and claimed a lot of things are coming out for that reason. He detailed that there was only one person on that whole city council that was really for this, and he knows of the eight people who were on the city council, seven of them were not up for political election, therefore, he does not believe her claim is 100% accurate.

Council Member Rains requested clarification on whether the CARES Act funding was distributed per county or per city.

Ms. Green believed it was distributed to different transit agencies.

Council Member Rains noted they had Conway in a different area, one for Little Rock, and then another, asking if those total funds came to the Little Rock Metro area.

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Ms. Green explained that everything in the Little Rock urbanized area is under Rock Region Metro's first federal funding, so that comes to their agency and they can do with it what they see fit. She clarified that Conway has a separate pot of CARES Act money because they are in a separate UZA.

Council Member Rains pointed out that Rock Region could put all of that money in a smaller concentrated area within the Little Rock Metro and Ms. Green concurred.

Council Member Bolden thanked Ms. Green for the presentation, noting the agreement has already been signed, however, the first presentation was not thorough enough, but the City does know their constituents need something, so he is with it.

Council Member Rains also thanked Ms. Green for the presentation.

Citizen Keith Weber asked if Sherwood has the bus service currently.

Ms. Green replied no since they were on Route 36 with Jacksonville.

Mr. Weber asked how far does the bus go up Highway 161 and does it go to St. Luke's.

Ms. Green replied it goes to McAlmont, Fairfax Crossing, 46<sup>th</sup> Street over to Highway 161 and then South on Highway 161 to Fairfax, then goes over to McCain Walmart. She did not believe it goes to St. Luke's.

Mr. Weber asked if the service gets sold to Sherwood, can they establish a point of contact between Jacksonville, Sherwood, and Gravel Ridge.

Ms. Green responded possibly, but she would want to send it to Mr. Palchik's team before she could answer that question. She stated she never knows exactly, unless she is looking at it with a professional planner on staff, how far it would work with the distance between the points.

Mr. Weber asked if they could satisfy the people that want to get further out by moving the bus that goes to McAlmont up to St. Luke's, then make a point of contact shelter there so people can take the Microtransit there to get on the regular bus without going all of the way to McCain. He surmised they could do the same thing with Kiehl Avenue if they bring a route to Sherwood.

Ms. Green could not say yes or no completely on whether they could do that, but now that she knows it is an interest, she will add it to the list to have their transit planners look at. She pointed out that one thing you have to know is that in North Little Rock, which is what McAlmont is a part of, is sharing resources among the North Little Rock zones for some of that, so it may not be such a no-brainer since they have to think about where all of those cars are going and the drivers. She confirmed she will take it back to their transit planning team and thanked Mr. Weber for making them aware of that. She shared how they are really excited and she thinks the community of

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Jacksonville is excited as well. She recalled how they talked to people pre-pandemic, in three different senior citizen living centers who were all very excited about getting to have this service with a nice and easy fee for them to pay to go to the grocery store. She reiterated they were excited and enthused with it and hopes the City is excited about it as well.

**Addition to Agenda:**

**Discussion regarding consent agenda**

Council Member Blevins stated he had a question for Finance Director Cheryl Erkel regarding the financial report they received at this meeting. He noticed that it shows so far the City has taken in \$7.7 million and they have spent \$9.9 million, which puts the City at a deficit of \$2.2 million. He noted that has not been the trend of previous years.

Finance Director Cheryl Erkel assured that it has been, explaining that what has happened is they report revenues and expenditures on an accrual basis, therefore, the money they received in January and February from sales tax was recorded as 2021 revenues so that is the reason why it looks that way. She related as far as the cash purposes, this report only shows revenue and expenditures according to how Finance Department posts it. She confirmed it has two months in arrears on sales tax.

**Resume Agenda:**

**b. ORDINANCE 1699 (#18-2022)**

**AN ORDINANCE TO PLACE ON THE NOVEMBER GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT THE QUESTION OF AMENDING JMC § 6.04.045 TO LIFT THE BAN OF THE BULL TERRIER BREED OF DOG, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS PIT BULLS; PRESCRIBING OTHER MATTERS PERTAINING THERETO; AND, DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.**

Council Member Blevins moved, seconded by Council Member Twitty to place Ordinance 1699 on **FIRST READING. ROLL CALL:** Council Member Dietz, Blevins, Traylor, Twitty and Rains voted AYE. Council Member Bolden, Sansing, and Ray voted NAY. **MOTION CARRIED. Whereupon City Clerk Davitt read the heading of Ordinance 1699.**

Council Member Blevins stated he has been trying to see if there was some kind of compromise or something that can be done for the City to repeal the Pit Bull ban. He explained he had been contacted by a large amount of citizens in the City, adding he has brought it up where it has been continuously shot down for varying reasons. He listed one reason claimed was there were not enough people who wanted it and the people who did show up were not an actual good sample size of the citizens of the City, adding that public safety was also mentioned. He related this is something that has been brought up year after year and there are definitely people who want it, but everyone says they have been getting phone calls that they do not. He suggested they put it up for a vote and let the citizens of the City vote, and if they vote for it, then obviously it was something that was wanted by the majority of the City. He pointed out if it is voted down, then it does not have to be brought up anymore, but they should let the citizens decide.

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Council Member Rains affirmed that she does not believe it is the taxpayer's burden to have this on the ballot and does not think that it should be.

Council Member Dietz related he has been in the committee meetings and he goes back to 2007 when they had some educated council members there who were also against it. He noted the reason was because they need to protect the citizens of Jacksonville and he is also against spending the money since we have a lot of greater needs. He feels like we have been dealing with so many issues, such as the Pit Bull ban and chickens, that the Council needs to put these behind them and in the future start focusing on things that will benefit all of the citizens and the City of Jacksonville. He affirmed he is against lifting the Pit Bull ban.

Council Member Sansing stated the citizens voted for them to make decisions for the City and also expect Council to protect them. He affirmed that their highest calling is to protect the citizens in Jacksonville and going backwards to allow a dangerous breed back into the City, is the City Council doing it wrong.

Council Member Twitty shared that Christine Henderson has gotten a lawyer and put in motion to get it put on the ballot, so she suggests they let her go forward with what she has started.

Council Member Blevins understands people think they should not spend the money, etc., but a lot of the things being brought up are from 15 years ago. He assured there are a lot of things that have changed in 15 years, adding that they have had a ban in place and they still know there are Pit Bulls here, yet there have not been any safety concerns or anything to show that there are vicious breeds here. He feels like this is something that should be done and if it is the cost being associated with it that is the problem, he will personally put the money up to reimburse the City for the cost of the election, which would be \$4,500.00, as he has been told. He reiterated he will put up his own personal money if that is the big problem everyone has. He surmised that if Mrs. Henderson from Jacksonville Friends of the Animals does go out and get the signatures getting it on the ballot and it passes, that shows people want this. He affirmed that City Council is supposed to be the ones that say they represent the citizens and it shows a full disconnect from the representation they are supposed to be doing, as opposed to what the vote actually goes through. He reiterated he has been contacted about this and he really does not have a "dog in the fight", adding he is not going to have a Pit Bull, just like he is not going to have chickens at his house. He assured this is something citizens have contacted him about and he knows there have been other council members contacted for it just like he has had people contact him against it. He explained he has swayed both sides and tried compromising with forming a committee, but he believes this is a vote they should just let the citizens make.

Council Member Twitty mentioned that Council Member Blevins said we do not have an issue with the Pit Bulls we have in town right now, but that is because they are banned and those people who have them keep them behind

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closed doors to where we do not see them walking out in the street, taking them for a walk, at our dog parks, or anywhere else. She brought up that if Christine has gotten her lawyer, which she said she has, she has gone through the steps, so then let her finish it. She suggested letting the citizens vote by Christine doing what she said she was going to do.

Council Member Blevins noted it would be a citizen doing it for other citizens, adding that he thinks as council members they should be the ones to give the City a chance to vote, not a citizen.

Council Member Ray stated that the ordinance they have on the books now is sufficient for the City of Jacksonville and their citizens. He recalled that the Police Chief has said that in every meeting and that is good enough.

Council Member Rains clarified they are talking about "potentially" dangerous breeds that are not inherently vicious and they should not describe them with rhetoric thereon. She pointed out that the individuals within Jacksonville, as a whole, are absolutely amazing citizens. She noted there is only a small fraction, adding that in 2007 Dr. Misak stated roughly 10%, that exhibit dangerous behaviors. She wants to be clear that they are "potentially" dangerous and are not vicious. She explained they dealing with managing a city of people, not the dogs.

Council Member Bolden moved to **APPROVE** Ordinance 1699 on **FIRST READING** and **SUSPEND THE RULES** and place Ordinance 1699 on **SECOND READING**. **MOTION DIED FOR LACK OF SECOND.**

**APPOINTMENTS:**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS: Chamber of Commerce Casino Night**

Mayor Johnson announced Casino Night will be on August 5<sup>th</sup>.

**ADJOURNMENT: Without objection, Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 7:29 p.m. MOTION CARRIED.**

Respectfully,

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Susan L. Davitt  
City Clerk-Treasurer

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MAYOR BOB JOHNSON