

*City of Olmsted Falls*  
**Minutes of a Council Work Session**  
**Monday, February 17, 2020, at Olmsted Falls City Hall**  
**26100 Bagley Road – Council Chambers, 5:00 p.m.**

Council President Stibich called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. Roll call was conducted. Councilmen Lori Jones (arrived at 5:15 p.m.), Jennifer Jansen, Jay McFadden, Cornel Munteanu, Yvonne Buchholz, and Brian Chitester were present. Others Present: James Graven, Mayor.

**Senior Transportation Connection Contract Discussion**

Mr. Stibich indicated that the legislation for this contract was tabled at the last Council meeting. This is a renewal of the contract at a substantial increase to what the city has paid in the past.

Mayor Graven stated that Council was given a handout. In that handout there is an email from Terry Veloski which states “we are in the process of compiling our rider data and we have requested the detailed billing from January to August of 2019, the detailed billing will help us establish the participates and scheduled locations. We would also like your suggestion about discontinuing the rides to senior center’s outside of the City of Olmsted Falls and we are considering only offering rides for medical appointments. Also, the Mayor asked if it would be possible to request that riders pay the driver’s half the rate which would be \$14.50 per ride, is this practice something that other clients and other communities are using.” He indicated that Janice Dzigiel from Senior Transportation responded: “the city can certainly increase the trip rate co-pay to \$14.50 but I think it would eliminate some trips and could have a potential negative social impact on residents, the highest co-pay in other communities is \$8.00 per trip. Again, we can do whatever your community wants we just need to manage a message with your residents.” He stated that obviously whatever the city decides to do it will cost over \$2,500 so ultimately Council will decide and have to vote on this issue. We have a few options, we can continue with what we did last year and the cost for the year was \$16,000, the problem is that there were only approximately six or seven individuals who utilize this service, so we have to ask ourselves can we justify 8900 citizens helping to subsidize the cost for six or seven people to use this service. The rates for this year will increase 40% which means approximately \$20,000 for six people. Again, we have to consider if Council wants to subsidize and the city would pay 50%, which would be residents paying \$14.50 per ride, would you prefer something lower, or cancel the program. He contacted CTS, Contract Transport Services, located in Cleveland but their rate is \$60.00 per hour and he does not believe this will save the city any money, plus it is hard to compare the two because the comparison is apples to oranges. One company is a cost per trip versus hourly rates.

Mr. Stibich indicated that the question Council is faced with is do we want to renew the contract; the secondary consideration is what alternatives are available. One is no senior transportation subsidized by the City or if there are any other options available. As far as the City is concerned, the Mayor has explained that there is a competitor to our current provider but it would still be a substantial cost to the city at \$60.00 per hour. He stated that the approximate cost for next year would be \$20,000 under the new contract. For the competitor at \$60.00 per hour which equates to 333 hours and divide that by 50 weeks that is approximately six or seven hours of transportation each week, which doesn’t sound like much but it amounts to a huge amount of money. So, at \$60.00 per hour he believes the city

would still be in the tens of thousands of dollars cost range. He is unsure of what else is available to senior's but the costs would be borne by the senior's themselves. If the seniors had to pay the costs themselves do they have medical coverage that would help pay for part of the costs. For instance, if Uber had a medical service, and they took care of the insurance filings for senior's for example with Medicare or Medicaid. With Medicare can a senior get reimbursed for transportation and does that depend on their illness or what kind of supplemental insurance they have. He is sure that Medicaid would cover some of the costs but he doesn't know what or how much as it would be up to the individual and their provider to file the claims. A lot of questions, we want to take care of our senior's but this is a huge amount of money reaching very few people and wonders if it is a productive use of city funds.

Mr. Munteanu stated that there is one individual that was transported to the North Olmsted Recreation Center 38 times. He indicated that one of our residents is one of the biggest users. Mr. Stibich replied that a lot of that is to the Advanced Wound Center so that is a medical transport. Mr. Munteanu stated that he is unsure if an ambulant service could have been utilized for some of those transports, if this is an outpatient service. Mr. Stibich indicated that the places individuals were transported to include Drug Mart and Walmart. Mr. Munteanu replied that it seems as if only seven people utilize this service. Mayor Graven replied yes and we need to ask ourselves is it fair to the other 8,900 residents to subsidize seven people. Ms. Jansen asked how much notice would be given to the residents who do utilize the service if we decide to terminate the program. Mayor Graven indicated that 30 days, or whatever is appropriate. Mr. Stibich indicated that the city's current provider has agreed to continue the service at last year's rates. He asked if there had been any discussions with the seniors to inform them that this service may terminate and determine how they would be transported. Mayor Graven replied no.

Mr. Stibich asked if the seniors scheduled rides through our senior center or do they contact the provider directly. Mayor Graven replied that they contact the provider. The city has a high cancellation rate which is another issue, since June of 2019 18% of the time the transports are cancelled. Ms. Jones, who was on speaker phone, asked if there was something that we could give the people like an informational booklet, for example, if you were medical appointments call Southwest number or call RTA if you have a handicapped card, to help give them alternatives and guide them. Ms. Jansen indicated that if we have to cancel the service, we definitely need to provide them with alternatives. There is an RTA stop in her development. Mr. Stibich replied not for senior transports. Ms. Buchholz replied that their paratransit does not come to Olmsted Falls. Ms. Jones indicated that RTA will pick you up for medical appointments with a handicapped stop. Mayor Graven indicated that he has information from RTA ADA Paratransit services is for people with functional disabilities who are unable to use RTA fixed route bus or train service. Once they have a valid ID card trips are \$3.25 each way. Ms. Jansen replied that this would be a cheaper alternative than the \$14.50 co-pay with the City. Mr. Stibich asked if this was something the city could do particularly with the current users. Mayor Graven replied that we could contact RTA and see if these individuals would be eligible. Mr. Stibich asked if there was someone that can work with the residents and provide them options. Mr. Chitester stated that he is the only member of Council that has stronger ADA insight, RTA can either be prompt and on time or very late. Mr. Stibich asked if Mr. Chitester had experiences with RTA. Mr. Chitester replied not him personally, but in high school he had a teacher that trained individuals with visual disabilities on travel he did have issues with RTA, so that is something to keep in mind. So, this would be a concern if you have to be on time and advise them that they should schedule the transport sooner and this should be looked into.

Mr. Stibich asked if Ms. Jansen could repeat what Ms. Jones is saying so that it is on the record. Mr. Munteanu indicated that Ms. Jones' opinion is that residents should be given a 45-day notice. Mr. Chitester replied he believes that he believes that should be the minimum along with a packet of information. Ms. Jansen replied that she believes it should be 45 days after we have information compiled for the residents. Mr. Munteanu indicated that if an individual has a wound care, they may not be ambulatory and an ambulate service could provide transport.

Mr. Stibich asked what an ambulate service would consist of. Mr. Munteanu replied that they are private companies and provide van service. Basically, there is an EMT or paramedic driving a van that is wheelchair accessible and transports them to doctor's offices, wound care facilities, dialysis, etc. Mr. Stibich stated that the administration could also research and determine if there are any options for these individuals. Mr. Munteanu stated that Donald Martin's Physicians Ambulance is one of the services.

Ms. Jones stated that the question is if these people can take advantage of other programs, if and when we get rid of this one, can we at least tell them to call these other options or their doctor's office. Mayor Graven replied yes, there is another program Eliza Bryant Village, offers a demand transit program for senior's in the community to transport to medical appointments, grocery shopping and community resource agencies. This service is located in Cleveland and is unsure if they provide services all over Cuyahoga County. Mr. Stibich indicated that research will be needed in order to give the senior's some guidance.

Mr. McFadden asked how long the city has provided this type of service. Mr. Stibich replied that he is unsure. Ms. Jones replied that we have been providing this service for a long time. When she first purchased her home in April of 2006 her friends mother lived in the apartments on Chandlers lane and she would take the bus service and on certain days it would take them to Strongsville's Senior Center and other days to Berea, and other days to North Olmsted and she paid \$1.00 co-pay. Mr. Stibich replied this was not for medical care and indicated that those would be classified more as field trips. Ms. Jones replied that they would drive around and gather a bunch o people and drive into Strongsville. Mr. Stibich replied that the senior program during the Blomquist administration, the senior director was Kathy Lowery, and she would organize a lot of "field trips" for the seniors. Ms. Jones replied that her friends' mother would also get rides to Kmart and she also said that you would wait hours and hours for the bus to make its rounds, but that was in 2006. The number of senior's in our community has increased so it may be something in the future, but if there are so few right now. Ms. Jansen stated that if these numbers are accurate it states that we have over 100 people registered to use the service. Mayor Graven replied that we only have certain ones utilizing them. Ms. Buchholz replied that they may be registered but they do not utilize the service. Mr. Chitester asked if you had to be registered to utilize the service. Ms. Jansen replied yes. Ms. Jones replied yes and it states that there are 111 registered. Mr. Chitester replied that this transport could be a fall back if they do not have any other ride. Ms. Jansen replied that all 111 should be notified that the service is being terminated not just the seven that do utilize the service. She stated that one of the individuals listed, the VA Hospital in Parma is listed, the VA provides reimbursement for transportation. She takes her oldest son to the VA and he swipes his card and in a couple of weeks is provided a check to cover his transportation to the hospital. This individual should be notified of that service.

Mr. Stibich replied that the individual could utilize this service and the city would pay for the trip but he would swipe his card and get reimbursed and theoretically the money should be given back to the city. Ms. Jansen indicated that the email states that residents pay a co-pay. Mr. Stibich replied that it

is hard for the city to make sure that what we are providing is the most effective way of providing this service to people, maybe it is better to let the individual find transportation on their own and will naturally pick the least expensive or reimburses them the most. Ms. Jansen replied that she agrees. She just wants to make sure that they are aware of all the options that are available. Mr. Stibich indicated that he cannot imagine the administrative paperwork of the city reviewing each of the trips to determine if they can be reimbursed and then filing a claim with each entity. It could be more costly than each reimbursement. Ms. Jansen asked if anyone noticed the transportation van in the parking lot, it was a transportation service that she has never heard of, the name was Transport Assistance. She did look the company up who are located in Parma and provide the same type of service, so someone in our community is using this service. Mr. Stibich asked where the vehicle was located. Ms. Buchholz replied in the library parking lot.

Mr. Stibich indicated that it seems that some of the residents using the senior transportation service are not looking for alternatives. Mr. Munteanu replied that they do not need to. Mayor Graven stated that there is RTA, Provide-A-Ride, MC Mobility Systems, located on the east side, there seem to be a lot of different companies. Mr. Munteanu replied that the individual going to the wound care center could be reimbursed by Medicare or Medicaid if they utilized a ambulant service. He stated that there is also a resident who was transported to the North Olmsted Recreation Center three times. Mr. Stibich replied that Mr. Munteanu also noticed that one of the transports was for a township resident. Mr. Munteanu stated that there is a resident located on Lees Lane. Ms. Jansen replied that street is in Columbia Park.

Mr. Munteanu stated that in his opinion if there were a lot of residents using this service then he believes it would be something the city continues, but when you only have seven or eight people utilizing this service and the city paying \$16,000 for the service it seems a bit steep. Ms. Jansen stated that is just the amount the city covers the individual riders also pay a co-pay per trip.

Mr. Stibich indicated that the legislation is currently tabled. Council can vote to untable the legislation and then vote on whether or not to renew the contract. He believes that if the legislation is not voted on it would be removed from the agenda. Mr. Munteanu indicated that the city would need to keep the service for 45 days so residents can be notified. Mr. Stibich indicated that Council could vote to continue the service for an additional 45 days, but senior transportation may decide that they do not want to continue the contract knowing that the city will not renew the contract. Ms. Jansen replied that she would prefer that the contract end 45 days after the city has information to give residents so technically it could be 60 days from now. Mr. Munteanu replied that the information could be put together and distributed to the senior center by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Mayor Graven replied that he does have some information regarding other transportation services. Ms. Jones replied that the Western Reserve Office on Aging may have some information. Mr. Munteanu stated that he believes if the administration can gather the information to be distributed by March 1<sup>st</sup> then we would have 45 days after that date.

Mr. Stibich replied that he will speak with the Council Clerk to determine how to handle approving the service for another 45 days, even if it is at the increased rate. Ms. Jones replied that she will also do some research and email the Council Clerk. Ms. Jansen replied that she will do the same.

Ms. Jones asked if there was any federal money that the Jenkins Place could apply for. Mayor Graven replied not that we are aware of. Mr. Chitester replied that this would be for long term because of the amount of time to apply. That would have to be something further down the road.

Ms. Jansen asked if Ms. O'Malley was consulted. Mayor Graven replied that he has spoken with her and she provided information regarding other companies. The seven individuals that utilize the services do not attend our senior center so Ms. O'Malley has no contact with them. Mr. Stibich indicated that the city would need to contact them in order to make them aware that the service will be eliminated and they will need to seek alternatives. Ms. Jones replied that by googling she has discovered a company that works with insurance carriers. She will contact some of them in order to provide good alternatives to the residents.

Ms. Jansen indicated that she wonders if this would be a service that Christians in Action would provide since it is such a small amount of people using the service. Ms. Buchholz stated that they need their own volunteers because they deliver food to others. Mr. Stibich replied that based on what he is hearing they would not refer individuals to a service, they would provide the service, which they are not qualified to do because you need a license to transport. Mayor Graven replied that you would also need insurance. Ms. Buchholz replied that they need donations and would probably not be able to help.

Ms. Jansen replied that a lot of surrounding communities use Senior Transportation Connection but there are a few that purchased a vehicle. The stipulation they have for using the service was that you had to have an escort with you and that individual would get you in and out of the car. Mayor Graven replied that he believes Westlake has that type of service.

Mr. Chitester stated that he is unsure if he will have questions at a later date. Mr. Stibich replied that if anyone does have suggestions or completes research and finds possibilities, please pass those onto the Mayor and the Council Clerk. Ms. Jansen asked if there was a deadline for the research to be completed. Mr. Stibich replied by next week. Mr. Chitester asked if the information from Ms. Veloski was submitted in an excel spreadsheet. Mayor Graven replied that he is unsure. Mr. Chitester stated that he would like to get a spreadsheet together for himself, because some of the questions include if the seniors are using the service for local trips or farther and what the travel distance is. Mayor Graven indicated that the wound center is in Westlake. Mr. Chitester indicated that there are also one- and three-mile trips in the list which could be local. If they have 30 miles trips because they have to go to the main campus of the Cleveland Clinic that adds up quickly if you utilize Uber, he has looked at Uber's to go from home to the main campus the cost is \$30.00. Mr. Stibich replied that if you utilize an Uber it would be Uber Medical and should be attempting to get a reimbursement from an insurance company. Mr. Chitester stated that for research he looked into this cost.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Chitester moved to **adjourn**; Ms. Buchholz **seconded**. Voice Vote: 7 ayes; 0 nays. **Motion carried**.

The meeting adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

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*Paul Stibich, Council President*

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*Angela Mancini, Clerk of Council*