

**JOINT MEETING OF THE  
COMMON COUNCIL  
AND  
TRANSIT COMMITTEE  
COUNCIL ROOM, CITY HALL  
TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2024  
6:00 P.M.**

Common Council: The Common Council met in special session, Mayor Poeschel presiding. On roll call: all members present.

Transit Committee: The Transit Committee meeting was called to order by Chair William Neville. On roll call: all members present.

Transit Committee: Chair Neville declared the minutes of the June 28, 2024 meeting approved as filed with the City Clerk.

Mayor Poeschel announced that the purpose of this joint meeting is the Taxi Service Public Hearing on proposals for taxi fare increases and hours of service decreases and decreases in extra territorial miles or elimination of service.

Mayor Poeschel stated that the City is looking at serious budget shortfalls; the City of Stanley has pulled its Letter of Support (they have someone who started a private taxi service); under State rules a population of 2,500 is required, the City's population is under that, so we don't qualify.

Mayor Poeschel stated those making appearances will have two minutes in which to speak, please keep proper decorum. This public hearing is declared open.

Jim Arneson stated the taxi service is great, he used it after his surgery when he was unable to drive, his family lives away from here, look down the road ten years, you may need it, a possible rate increase, can we come to a happy medium, once you lose this service it is hard to get back.

Daniel Edelson stated a 182% increase in cost is not sustainable in the budget, Snitemans and the IGA deliver, maybe Door Dash, Uber or Lyft can start up in the City, they charge \$6.50 from point to point, eliminating the taxi can help the entire community by putting those dollars to roads, etc.

Linda Polzin stated she uses the taxi everyday to go babysit her grandchildren, people have to go to the doctor, they may have no loved one to take them, something has to change the big rate increase would cost her \$60.00 per day.

Shelly Schmitz stated those who are disabled need this service to get to and from work, Uber and Lyft don't accommodate anyone in a wheelchair, she has a child who uses the taxi service, it is very much needed.

Kevin Schmitz stated that the City has had a taxi service for 20+ years, if you let it go it will be difficult to get back, retired taxpayers who no longer drive need this service, what has the City done to negotiated with the provider, if you cut the \$135,000 taxi service will taxes be lower, where are the numbers.

Cindy Craig stated she works for Abby Vans, but she is here to speak for her mother-in-law, an elderly woman who does not drive, it's their independence to get groceries or go to the doctor without burdening someone else, a 292% increase hits people on limited income, 75% to 85% of the riders are disabled or elderly, no other taxi service charges the same price for adults and seniors/disabled, it is not a luxury, it is needed.

Shirley Anderson stated she used the taxi after surgery, Uber and Lyft are not for everyone, some people are in wheelchairs.

Patricia Zager stated she had used the taxi when she could not drive, costs and prices go up but do not raise it to \$6.00, she is speaking on behalf of the elderly and disabled.

Jon Counsell stated that he has never ridden the taxi, the City population has decreased, state levy limits, the big price increase, Black River Falls fares are over \$7.00, tough decisions will have to be made-roads, parks, recreation program, what does the City want, we don't know the citizen's preferences, do a survey, send postcards with choices to rank, there has been meetings, lots of financial information has been out there.

Nicole Polzin stated her mother-in-law uses the taxi everyday during the summer to babysit her children, she can understand an increase, there should be a log of rider hours, it is definitely a needed service.

Mark Jones, Abby Vans owner and operator providing City taxi service since 1998, a lot of changes have occurred over the years, changes in funding, since 2020 ridership has been around 10,000 (before that it was around 12,000) of that 8,000 are disabled or senior citizen, he owns multiple properties and he has tenants who moved here because of the taxi, they can function, Black River Falls charges \$7.00 fares, once you lose/discontinue service, you won't get it back, take that into consideration.

6:18 P.M.-Mayor Poeschel called for further appearances-there being none, the public hearing was declared closed.

Council Member Rochester asked that another joint meeting with the Transit Committee be held to discuss this further.

Council Member Petkovsek thanked everyone for coming; the City is faced with State and Federal regulations-levy limits, formula changes; the City of Stanley has withdrawn as a partner, we may not be eligible to continue; is there potential for Abby Vans to take over the taxi service; hardships with fare increases; and extremely tight budget.

Mayor Poeschel stated that this is a very difficult decision; we have looked at hours, riders, etc.; \$134,000 is a lot of money.

Council Member Clough stated we have looked at a lot of numbers; a lot of valid points have been made; can the City afford \$134,000 to have a taxi when we don't have the dollars for the Police force (the Police Department is the lowest paid around); everyone agrees the taxi is a good thing, we are trying to balance services-what is more or less needed; you can have a private taxi, but you can't have a private Police force.

Motion Counsell, second Rochester, to table the taxi service to do more research and meet with the Transit Committee again. All Aye.

Common Council: Motion Petkovsek, second Rochester, to adjourn. All Aye.

Transit Committee: Motion Vine, second Kory Poeschel, to adjourn. All Aye.

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Dewey Poeschel, Mayor

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William Neville, Transit Committee Chair

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Rex R. Roehl, City Clerk-Treasurer

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