

## Taxi service tops city council agenda for second straight month

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In an effort to accommodate Jacksonville Taxi Service — the business that received permission to operate last month but has yet to put rubber to the road — Jacksonville City Council will consider passing an ordinance Tuesday evening that will increase the city's taxi fares.

Samantha Pitcock, owner of JTS, approached the city after receiving her permit to see about getting the rates hiked. She said the city's existing ordinance, which hadn't been updated since 2004, wouldn't allow her to make a profit.

The city of Jacksonville then polled several local communities, and after learning its fares were comparatively low, had City Attorney Joe Angle draft a new ordinance.

"The ordinance that will be before the council next week will increase the taxi's initial fare from \$2 to \$3, will change the charge-per-mile traveled from \$1.65 to \$2 and will change the charge-per-extra-person from \$1 to \$1.50," Raissi said. "It also reduces the liability and causality insurance rates from \$500,000 to \$200,000. We believe these increases should be enough to allow her to operate."

The ordinance would also add a fuel surcharge provision that previously wasn't found on the city's books. If the local median price of gas exceeds \$3, the taxi service will be allowed to charge an extra 50 cents per mile. Raissi said the idea for the surcharge was taken from another East Texas city with a taxi service.

The city is hopeful Pitcock will be able to get her cabs on the road as soon as possible.

Barry Hughes, Cherokee County's representative on the North East Texas Regional Mobility Authority, will speak to the council about establishing the city's transportation priorities.

Hughes made a similar presentation last month before Cherokee County Commissioners' Court. At that meeting, Hughes said there are five major transportation projects being considered locally — the widening of U.S. Highway 69, south of Wells; a roadway to the west of Jacksonville to provide Highway 69 relief around town; a rail spur at the Jacksonville Industrial Park; an expansion of 10.72 miles of U.S. Highway 175; and the widening of U.S. Highway 79 between Jacksonville and New Summerfield.

City Council will also consider sealed bids received for two pieces of property which are of no further use to the city. The properties, 507 Frankston Highway and 309 Commerce St., where both made obsolete when the city consolidated the entire public works department inside the Felix Lane Sr. Public Works Building.

If the bids are not acceptable, the council can choose to reject them.

Other agenda items include:

- approval of previous meetings' minutes;
- an ordinance changing the name of Coleman Avenue to H.V. Jones Street;
- an ordinance changing the name of Park Drive to M.B. Davis Drive;
- an ordinance abandoning an undeveloped portion of Stevens Street;
- a two-year contract with NETPLEA to collect delinquent fines, fees and court costs for the municipal court;
- a request from Don Kirkpatrick to place an aerobic sewer system on city property;
- approval of the District 2 appointment to the Planning and Zoning Board; and
- approval for Dona Ralston to serve as election judge for the May 9 election.

The Jacksonville City Council regularly meets at 6 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Norman Activity Center. All meetings of the Jacksonville City Council are open to the public.