

City of Muscatine, City Council Meeting, Tuesday, March 31, 2026 – City Hall Council Chambers

Mayor Bark called the City Council meeting for March 31, 2026, to order at 05:30 PM.

Councilmembers Present: Brockert, Jindrich, Osborne, Gordon, Lewis, Lampe, Conard.

Councilmember Conard, seconded by Councilmember Gordon, moved to approve the Consent Agenda including City Council Minutes (Feb 26, March 3, 10 and 17) Liquor License (Geneva Golf and Country Club, The Pearl Martini Bar & Lounge, The Crown Liquor & Smoke and Hone Kong Buffet) Ayes - 7 , Nays - 0, Motion Passed.

Discussion Items:

Councilmember Brockert made a statement regarding the budget and how the process has been very difficult for staff and council this year. Ms. Brockert stated that in regards to the Art Center funding, the City staff and Art Center Board need to get together and figure out ways to get the funding from other sources.

Budget Reconsideration for MCSA -

Jason Dornbush was present to request the City continue to fund the MCSA with \$30,000. Mr. Dornbush spoke regarding what the homeless prevention program does and how much it impacts our community.

Councilmember Gordon recommended suspending the City Council Payroll for 2025-2026 to support MCSA and stated she would like to bring it back at a future meeting.

There was a consensus from City Council to move forward with funding the MCSA with \$30,000.

Budget Reconsideration for Muscatine Art Center:

Mayor Brad Bark shared information regarding the budget process and funding of departments. Mr. Bark stated there have been multiple meetings with the Art Center Board to discuss funding. Mr. Bark stated there is no plan to shut down the Art Center, and that every intention is to work together to make a plan to move forward to figure out a way to keep the Art Center open and funded.

The following residents were present to speak in support of the Muscatine Art Center:

Melanie Alexander, Annette Hoveland, Ed Chamberlin, Frank Kelly, Jay Brady, Kathy Hartman, Angela Woodhouse, Karen Cooney, Lori Carrol, Mark Post, John Dabeet, Bob Jensen, Mark Latta, Kristine Conlon, Carol Anthony, Kelly Rushford, Tony Ledtje, KimThompson, Yesenia Cruz, Max Collins, Steven Paulsrud, Mary Alice Sessler, David Meloy, Anny McCarthy, Dan Salzar, Keith Porter, Brianna Rivers.

Councilmember Conard spoke regarding the importance of the Art Center to the community and how the discussions have been going on for several years on how to make the Art Center an Enterprise Fund. He stated there is no plan to close the Art Center or sell any of the artifacts. Mr. Conard stated the reason for this to be addressed at this time is due to the resignation of the current Art Center Director. Mr. Conard stated the Art Center has funds held in trust but have not disclosed to staff or council the amounts or circumstances around those funds and if there is a way to use those funds to temporarily help Bridge the gap for funding.

Councilmember Gordon stated she feels the same percent should be cut from each department across the board for the budget. Ms. Gordon stated the City needs to adopt lien practices.

Councilmember Osborne stated he has had residents contact him regarding not closing the Art Center. Mr. Osborne stated that in the past years other departments have had cuts and this is the first time for the Art Center in years.

Councilmember Lewis stated she grew up in Muscatine and does not want the Art Center to close but also understands the reasons for the cuts and agrees that there needs to be other means of funding the Art Center not from the City General Fund.

Councilmember Lampe stated conversations have been going on for years regarding the Art Center funding and that it should not come as a surprise to anyone. Mr. Lampe stated staff and council are helping to find other ways of funding the Art Center and would like to see it become even bigger and better than it is now.

Councilmember Brockert stated the City cannot keep doing what it is doing now and changes need to be made. She stated all need to work together to find the solution.

Councilmember Jindrich stated all groups need to continue to work together to figure out sources of funding.

City Administrator Mardesen shared a timeline of events regarding the Art Center Funding starting with the resignation of the director. Mr. Mardesen shared information regarding the budget this year and that it will be even worse next year. Mr. Mardesen stated the goal is not to take this money from the Art Center but to hold it back to use over the next 2 years to keep the Art Center open while other options are discussed and worked out.

There was a consensus from City Council to move forward removing the \$200,000.00 funding for the Art Center from the budget.

Presentation on Muscatine Housing Department

Jodi Royal Goodwin - Community Development Director and Melissa Rinnert Housing Supervisor gave a presentation on the History, Structure, Operations and Funding for the Muscatine Housing Department. Questions by City Council were addressed by both staff members.

Councilmember Lampe moved the meeting be adjourned at 08:26 PM.

Cinda Hilger, City Clerk

Brad Bark, Mayor