



## Critters cause problem at airport



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By Cynthia Beaudette | Posted: Thursday, July 8, 2010 2:00 am | (8) Comments

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MUSCATINE, Iowa - Groundhogs and coyotes have been messing with the lights at the Muscatine Municipal Airport and Steve Boka, Muscatine's director of Planning, Zoning and Building Safety wants to put an end to their mischief.

Tonight, at the Muscatine City Council's monthly in-depth meeting, Boka will discuss the need to keep the groundhogs off airport property, where they have been burrowing and gnawing into the underground lighting system.

The lights are needed to keep the airport runway visible and safe, said Boka.

Coyotes make the holes larger when they dig into them to get at the rodents, said Boka.

The problem can be corrected by removing the animals and installing an encased lighting system that cannot be penetrated by gnawing rodents.

Boka said the city can access Iowa Department of Transportation's Division of Aviation's wildlife mitigation program to manage the animals.

Boka said he hopes work on a new lighting system could begin by the spring of 2011.

The project will cost approximately \$350,000 and approximately 95 percent of that would be paid for with accrued annual funds from the Federal Aviation Administration.

Boka said repairs will continue being made to the present lighting system to keep the area safe for aircraft activity.

In other business:

Muscatine Fire Chief Jerry Ewers - update on the relocation of fire station No. 2.

The presentation will include

information on a study the department has conducted on the need for a larger station. The present station, built in 1949, only has room for a firetruck, said Ewers.

The current Southend station was built in 1949 and has room for one firetruck, Ewers said.

The department received \$200,000 for a new station from the Iowa Department of Economic Development as part of the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure fund last year which would help pay for a new station in Muscatine's South End.

It will cost approximately \$1.2 million to build a larger firehouse that can accommodate more modern vehicles and equipment, said Ewers. The station could be built in phases.

If the City Council decides not to build a new station, the \$200,000 will need to be returned after the June 30, 2011, deadline.

The Council will also hear from staff members at the Muscatine Art Center about a plan to reorganize staff upon part-time education coordinator Maria Norton's retirement.

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