



CITY OF MUSCATINE
215 SYCAMORE STREET
MUSCATINE, IA 52761
PH. (563) 264-1550 • FAX (563) 264-0750

CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

For more information contact:

Kevin Jenison
Communication Manager
E-Mail: kjenison@muscatineia.gov
Phone: (563) 264-1550 • Fax: (563) 264-0750

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 2, 2020**

FORMER MAYOR DICK O'BRIEN PASSES ON NEW YEAR'S DAY

Services are Monday at Zion Lutheran for longest serving Mayor in Muscatine history

MUSCATINE, Iowa – Mayor Dick O'Brien, one of the biggest supporters of and cheerleader for Muscatine, passed away at 12:05 a.m. on Wednesday, January 1, 2020. The longest serving mayor in Muscatine history will always be remembered as every bit the definition of a gentleman and a true ambassador for Muscatine.

The funeral service will be held at 10 a.m. on Monday, January 6, 2020, at Zion Lutheran Church, 513 Sycamore Street, Muscatine, where he was a member. Visitation will be from 3-6 p.m. on Sunday, January 5, 2020, at the Geo. Wittich-Lewis Funeral Home, 2907 Mulberry Avenue, Muscatine, Iowa.

O'Brien was a Muscatine native, a graduate of Muscatine High School, joined the U.S. Navy in 1944 and served more than two years in the South Pacific aboard the USS Coucal, a Chanticleer-class submarine rescue ship. He worked in automobile sales upon his return to civilian life and worked his way up to regional sales manager for BMW North America in Dallas.

He returned to Muscatine in the late 1980s and was urged by former Muscatine Mayor and good friend Evelyn Schauland to enter into politics. In 1993 he won a seat on the Muscatine City

Council and in 1995 he was elected to his first term as the Mayor of Muscatine. He served in that capacity for 16 years.

“He really cared about this community and every person in it,” Stephanie Romagnoli, Human Resource Director for the City of Muscatine and a longtime friend of Mayor O’Brien. “He respected and cared about not just City staff, but the community as a whole. If someone had a problem, he would talk to staff about the issue and find a resolution.”

His caring attitude and ability to know what to say and when made Mayor O’Brien an easy person to talk with.

“I don’t think that there was a person in this city, or in this region, who was uncomfortable talking with Mayor O’Brien,” Romagnoli said. “You knew you were talking with a friend who would help when he could, listen as best he could, and keep your discussions confidential when needed.”

Former City Administrator Gregg Mandsager said that it was an honor to work with him.

“He came in every day,” Mandsager said. “He always had a smile on his face and made everyone feel special and welcome.”

Mayor O’Brien cared deeply for Muscatine.

“He was truly the ambassador for Muscatine and, as he would say, ‘good things are happening in Muscatine,’” Mandsager said. “He let everyone know what a great community we have.”

Mayor O’Brien was always quick to point out that many of the improvements and infrastructure investments that occurred under his watch were not his but he was proud of them nonetheless.

At least one item, however, can be attributed to Mayor O’Brien ... the creation of the Community Improvement Action Team (CIAT), a group of community leaders that tackled creating private investment to join with public investment in many projects beneficial to the City of Muscatine.



CITY OF MUSCATINE
215 SYCAMORE STREET
MUSCATINE, IA 52761
PH. (563) 264-1550 • FAX (563) 264-0750

The improvements to Muscatine’s riverfront, the Weed Park Aquatic Center, Musser Park Skate Park, the city’s curbside recycling program, and Millennium Plaza are just some of the other projects accomplished during Mayor O’Brien’s time in office.

“He mentioned many times that Muscatine had a reputation as a ‘dirty river town’ and all that changed under his leadership,” Charles Potter, who covered many city council meetings, said in a Facebook post. “That began with the transforming the riverfront from a rat infested conglomeration of railroad switchyards and grain elevators to one of the most handsome riverfronts you will find between St. Paul and St. Louis.”

When Mayor O’Brien announced he would not seek another term in office, Urbandale City Manager A.J. Johnson, who worked with the mayor from the time he took office until 2009, noted that the mayor had set the bar extremely high for those who will follow him.

“What made him successful was his unwavering commitment to the city and its citizens,” Johnson said. “On a personal note, I will always value our friendship and know that I am a better person for having worked with him.”