

At 5:33 p.m., Mayor Slamka called the City Council Meeting to order in Council Chambers, Lower Level of the City Building.

ROLL CALL

City Council Members present: J. Carter, S. West, P. Horn, E. Slamka.

EXCUSE ABSENCE

Mayor Slamka moved to excuse the absence of Mr. Ferrell. Mr. West seconded. Motion carried. Ayes: Mrs. Carter, Mr. West, Mr. Horn, Mrs. Slamka.

CONSENT AGENDA

Approve the City Council minutes of November 7, December 12, December 19, 2023

Receive and file the following board and commission minutes:

Library Board- November 15, 2023

Civil Service Commission- November 16, 2023

Confirm the personnel appointment of Travis Banks to the position of Utility Billing Supervisor in the Department of Finance, Division of Sewer Administration; confirm the personnel appointments of Owen Stamper, Tyler Gambrell and Evin Smith to the positions of Firefighter-EMT in the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire; confirm the appointment of Christopher Jones to the position of Patrol Officer in the Department of Public Safety, Division of Police and to confirm the termination of Byron McCauley, Communications Manager.

Confirm the promotional appointments of Ethan Cox to the position of Fire Apparatus Operator in the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire and David Kaiser to the position of Fire Lieutenant in the Department of Public Safety, Division of Fire.

Mr. Horn moved to approve the issues and actions listed on the Consent Agenda. Mr. West seconded. Motion carried. Ayes: Mr. West, Mr. Horn, Mrs. Slamka, Mrs. Carter.

PINNING CEREMONY

Mayor Slamka welcomed Assistant Fire Chief Ludwig to the podium. Assistant Chief Ludwig introduced Lieutenant David Kaiser and commented that, in my opinion this is one of the most difficult transitions to make, to go from being a buddy to a boss. However, I'm sure David has fully prepared himself in this transition and will do well in his new role. David grew up in Fairfield Township and graduated from Fairfield High School in 2002. He completed the Butler Tech Adult Fire Academy in December of 2006. He has a total of 17 years in the fire service, starting as a part-time firefighter with Fairfield Township. David began his career with the City of Middletown in January of 2017 and was promoted to apparatus operator in May of 2022. I had the pleasure of being the training Captain when David was hired and during his rookie orientation program. David has always had a great heart for the job and has always been willing to ask questions and work hard. This is evident by his accomplishments he's had since being hired. Those accomplishments include an Associates of Applied Science Degree through Eastern Gateway Community College in June 2022, he also holds certification as a firefighter EMT, fire investigator, hazmat technician, confined space rescue technician, ice rescue technician, and is a CPR instructor. David resides in the City of Middletown with his family. His wife Melissa will be doing the badge pinning tonight.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Barry Moore

Barry Moore, 1105 Hughes Street, Middletown, Ohio expressed his concerns about the traffic on Verity Parkway. He has a hard time safely pulling out onto Verity Parkway from Hughes Street because the traffic is moving so fast and he can't see the oncoming traffic because of the angle of the road. He provided an SD card to City Manager Lolli so that he could review the video he took by drone.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mrs. Carter

Mrs. Carter wished everyone a Happy New Year and commented that this is my first day and I'm here to listen. I will take a look at that corner that Mr. Moore talked about. Thank you all for attending the meeting.

Mr. West

Mr. West thanked City Manager Lolli and all of the staff for welcoming us and bringing us on board. Thank you to the residents of Middletown for backing me this past year. Holiday Whopla goes until January 13th so let's try and show those fine folks some support and obviously congratulations to Lieutenant Kaiser on his promotion.

Mr. Horn

Mr. Horn wished everyone a Happy New Year and commented that he is looking forward to working with Council and working through the challenges that we have and the goals that we have set. I do want to bring up a health and safety issue, I saw a coyote on the old hospital site and reported this to City Manager Lolli.

City Manager Lolli reported that the Police Department's Animal Control Officer investigated the area and was not able to locate a den. We did receive another report of a coyote last week and we are going to contact the property owner and try to knock down as much of the brush as possible to mitigate the coyote issue in that area.

Mr. Horn expressed his appreciation, we don't want a person or a pet to be injured by one of these wild animals.

Mrs. Slamka

Mrs. Slamka expressed her condolences to Fire Chief Snively and his family on the loss of his mother. I want to wish everyone a Happy New Year and a big congratulations to all the new council members, new hires and all of the individuals who were promoted today. Thank you for your commitment and service to our City. I want to thank the citizens who have put me in this chair and for putting their trust in me and I take this opportunity to say that I will represent all Middletown residents, communities and interests. During the campaign, I had the privilege of speaking with residents every day for almost four months. I learned much about what matters to you and I would like to take a brief moment to speak to two of those items right now. First, communication, you feel a disconnect between the city and you. Given the changes in the news media it is our duty to find better ways to communicate with all of you and I intend to work on this. Second, balance, the residents shared with me no matter where they lived in Middletown that they often feel like they have been overlooked, even forgotten. As a city this is an opportunity for us to work on balanced development and investment in all areas of the city. These are just two of the many items I heard throughout my campaign and two of the most fundamental. They are high on my priority list so I look forward to working with the City Council, the City Administration and the community to move Middletown toward our collective dream.

**Ord. No. 02024-01
Compensation
Agreement with
MCSD 2024**

Ordinance No. 02024-01, an ordinance authorizing a comprehensive compensation agreement with the Middletown City School District was read for the first time.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. West proposed that City Council wait until Mr. Ferrell is in attendance before they decide on board and commission appointments.

Mr. Horn moved to wait until Mr. Ferrell is in attendance before they decide on board and commission appointments. Mrs. Carter seconded. Motion carried. Ayes: Mr. Horn, Mrs. Slamka, Mrs. Carter, Mr. West.

Mrs. Slamka announced a City Council work session on aquatics in Middletown on January 9, 2024, at 6 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Mrs. Slamka announced a City Council's annual strategic Planning session will be held on January 20, 2024, at 8 a.m. at Central Connections.

Mrs. Slamka opened a discussion about updating the public comments guidelines for City Council work sessions. She proposed that the public should have time to express their views on topics discussed during work sessions in real time, as council's decisions will affect their lives. I suggest we limit each comment to 2 minutes, this will help ensure focus and efficiency. I suggest that each resident interested in commenting fill out comment cards throughout the duration of the work session and that the public comment segment is built into the end of the work session meeting. I suggest limits for total time as follows: 1-hour work session- 15-minute public comment limit; 2-hour work session- 30-minute public comment limit; 3 hour or more work session- 60-minute public comment limit. In the case of a strong showing of public interest Council may extend the public comments by majority consensus; in case of a weak public showing in which the public comment segment ends before the allotted time amount of time Council may either use this time for further discussion or simply end the meeting.

Mr. Horn commented that he felt that a work session is an opportunity for the public to sit in and see what we're working on and then then they can formulate a comment on the first and second reading before the decision's made by Council.

Mr. Yoder clarified that the work sessions are actually special meetings of City Council and that if City Council creates a public forum allowing people to speak you have to treat everyone equally. You set the rules and you don't discriminate based off viewpoint or other things like that. He further clarified that City Council doesn't have to allow public comments at all but if you want to you are allowed to. City Council can set different rules for public comments at special meetings and at regular business meetings.

There was additional discussion.

Mr. Horn moved to table the discussion on allowing public comments during work sessions until all of the members of Council are in attendance to discuss. Mr. West seconded. Motion carried. Ayes: Mrs. Slamka, Mrs. Carter, Mr. West, Mr. Horn.

Mrs. Slamka asked City Manager Lolli to present information on the City's internal promotion hiring practices for non-civil service employees during an upcoming City Manager's report.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 6:29 p.m., Mr. Horn moved to adjourn to executive session under the authority of O.R.C. 121.22 (G) (2) To consider the purchase of property for public purposes, or for the sale of property at competitive bidding, if premature disclosure of information would give an unfair competitive or bargaining advantage. Mr. West seconded. Motion carried. Ayes: Mrs. Carter, Mr. West, Mr. Horn, Mrs. Slamka.

RETURN

At 6:52 p.m., Mr. West moved to return to regular session. Mr. Horn seconded. Motion carried. Motion carried. Ayes: Mrs. Carter, Mr. West, Mr. Horn, Mrs. Slamka.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:52 p.m., the meeting was declared adjourned until the special meeting on January 9 at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers.


Elizabeth Slamka, Mayor

Attest: 