

MINUTES
City of Mentor
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
March 7, 2017

The meeting was called to order by Council President Dowling at 5:31 p.m. followed by the pledge to the flag.

ROLL CALL:

Janet A. Dowling, Councilwoman-at-Large
Ray Kirchner, Councilman-at-Large
John A. Krueger, Ward 4 Councilman
Bruce R. Landeg, Ward 3 Councilman
Scott J. Marn, Councilman-at-Large
Sean Blake, Ward 1 Councilman
Matthew E. Donovan, Ward 2 Councilman

ALSO PRESENT:

Richard A. Hennig, Law Director
Julie A. Schiavoni, Clerk of Council
Kenneth J. Filipiak, City Manager
Anthony Zampedro, Assistant City Manager
David Swiger, City Engineer
Matt Schweikert, Public Works Director
David W. Malinowski, Finance Director
Kevin Knight, Police Chief
Robert Searles, Fire Chief
Ante Logarusic, Community Relations Administrator

The Clerk of Council confirmed that notice of the meeting was given in conformity with the Ohio Revised Code Section 121.22.

Finalize hiring process of Council employees.

Council President Dowling distributed an outline of the recent appointment process for the Clerk of Council position and noted that it will be kept on file for future Council members' reference. Deferred to Councilman Marn who requested the topics for the work session.

Councilman Marn stated he found it difficult to recall the process from the previous Clerk of Council appointment. Felt it important to have the process in writing for any future Council to reference when necessary.

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Councilman Kirchner stated there was a committee of Council members who did the initial interviews, but there was feedback between all of Council.

Council President Dowling added that each Council member received all the résumés; the committee narrowed down the candidates, but with input from all members. Résumés were not included in the file, just the process.

Finalize appointment process of Committees/Commissions.

Councilman Marn stated that there are quite a few seats with expiring terms this year on various committees and commissions. Commission and Committee members are representing the City, particularly, the Planning Commission. Economic Development is important to the City; the Commission needs to adhere to guidelines. Nothing needs to be done now, but should come up with 6-7 guidelines by the fall.

Councilman Kirchner pointed out that an impressive résumé' may not mean that the person will be a good candidate for a particular position on a board or commission. Need someone who is familiar with the community and will also contribute to the board or commission. There was discussion in the past about actual interviews with Council. Either an open house or interviewing one at a time in front of Council for certain boards, such as Civil Service, Planning Commission and BZA (Board of Building and Zoning Appeals).

Councilman Blake questioned how to advertise and attain good candidates, other than through the Mentor Channel and the newspaper. Believes there are talented citizens that are not being reached.

Councilman Krueger responded if they are interested in the City, they are watching the Mentor Channel and reading the newspaper. The chairman of the committee should speak with a member in private if they are not living up to expectations or are getting off task with their inquiries of an applicant.

Councilman Blake added that perhaps the Chairman could converse with new appointees and advise of the responsibilities of the board or commission.

Mr. Filipiak offered that communities have an orientation for new members before their first meeting with the Law Director for basic parameters of decision making.

Councilman Landeg stated he appreciated Joe Szeman, the Assistant Law Director, guiding the Board when he was on the BZA; believes it an asset that the Law Department provides insight when necessary. Recalled a senior member of the BZA approached him when he was first appointed to the Board and offered information and advice, which was welcomed and helpful.

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Council President Dowling recalled receiving a letter from a Council member asking if she would be interested in serving on a committee or commission in the future. It was appreciated.

Councilman Marn expressed that a board or committee chair may not feel they have the authority to step in, since the members are appointed by Council.

Council President Dowling responded that Council should not intervene. Believes that meeting the applicants may be helpful.

Discussion took place about examples of past appointments as well as possible processes and the possibility of interviewing candidates in person during an open house forum or in a formal meeting. Referenced recent Clerk of Council appointment process as an example of what could be done for boards and commissions appointments.

Law Director Hennig advised that Council could interview applicants in a special meeting that is an open meeting and posted as such; Council could ask their questions to applicants one at a time. Cautioned that others may be able to sit in on other applicants being questioned. Would have to hold a regular or special meeting; could then vote to go into executive session, but suggested Council not enter into executive session. Any committee must have an open meeting.

Councilman Marn stated that Council should continue to think about the topic, so they are ready in the fall as the terms on boards and commissions expire at the end of the year. Explained the reason for most of the topics came about as a result of citizens inquiring about the topics with him.

Councilman Kirchner interviews will be done with all of Council; will decide at that time if it will be an executive session or open meeting – could depend on the number of applicants. Could stagger the times for the interviews.

Council will consider the possibility of having a meeting of all 7 members on a Saturday to interview the applicants.

A more formal "Communication Process" for this and future Councils to follow.

Councilman Marn stated he would like to have a more formal process for communication; trying to be proactive if Council changes. Would like something in place for this Council and future Councils.

Council President Dowling brought up the issue with email communications.

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Mr. Hennig advised that the Ohio Supreme Court has taken a view that emails look a great deal like 'round robin' meetings. If the legislators would provide an online legislative bulletin board where a Council or Board of Trustees could post their legislation, and the Council or Board could discuss the legislation in real time as a group, anybody in the community could log on and read the comments. This would provide the wanted communication, but would need to be part of the Code. The whole idea behind the public records laws is accountability and transparency; however, much control over it would be up to Council.

Councilman Krueger asked if emails from out of the area could be filtered out.

Mr. Logarusic responded that it would be no problem, from a technical standpoint; could ask people to register as users and could create a filter requiring they are Mentor residents, if that is what Council would like.

Councilman Landeg warned that some may communicate differently in that forum than they would in a private conversation. Some are willing to be interdependent with others than independent on their own; the dynamic is hard to control. Not sure the bulletin board would help; would still need to communicate off line.

Councilman Kirchner stated up front communication with applicants in a meeting is a positive thing that would help with miscommunication.

Council President Dowling added that the bulletin board would accommodate an instance when a Council member receives information that they wish to share with the rest of Council and Council members would in turn be able to comment, as they are not permitted to do so within an email. Inquired about conference calls.

Councilman Landeg inquired, as an example, if he receives information from Atlanta CDC of the feral cats with toxoplasmosis, he is permitted forward it to anyone, but others cannot comment.

Mr. Hennig affirmed the comments of Councilman Landeg. Cautioned the need to not get close to the point of question to preserve public meetings. Conference calls are prearranged meetings, regardless of the mechanism. Cautioned against forwarding emails to others; a discussion could begin; it is a slippery slope and could be challenged. Reiterated round robin meetings to avoid open meetings laws. Cautioned the need to have the legislators comment on the concept.

Councilman Krueger asked if it could be just for Council?

Mr. Hennig responded the public would need to be able to view it, but not necessarily comment.

Council President Dowling suggested they could email Council on the subject matter if they chose to do so.

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Discussion of City's relationship/new direction with the Railroads and Army Corp of Engineers to move in a positive direction.

Councilman Marn stated he did not think to necessarily form a different committee for the entities. Relationships have been created with those that consistently attend Hanover or RECON. Thought it would be helpful to have a Council representative/liason or 2 from Council, such as Councilman Kirchner, who was with the railroad, attend the meetings when the Administration meets with the railroad representatives.

Councilman Krueger responded that he believes the Administration is doing well and would reach out to Council if they felt the need for a Council representative.

Mr. Filipiak stated that he would not characterize the City's relationship with the Army Corp of Engineers or the Railroads as bad; believes they are both good. Sometimes the City's position is different than theirs. When the Administration needs political clout assistance, it is helpful that a member of Council assists. The individual backgrounds of Council are helpful, but, expressed the need for timing.

Council members expressed positive comments regarding Council members assisting the Administration individually, if needed.

Procedure for scheduling work sessions.

Councilman Marn advised this topic is in conjunction with the other items.

Councilman Kirchner stated if there is a request for a work session, it is important that the Council President and Vice President, as leadership, ensure that Council is polled to confirm a consensus prior to the work session being scheduled.

Council President Dowling added that a Council Committee Chairman or the Administration would communicate whether or not they are ready to discuss a topic.

MOTION by Councilman Kirchner, second by Councilman Marn to adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Clerk of Council

President of Council