

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Special Committee to Explore Audio Options
for Council Chambers**

February 5, 2018

Members: Mike Brillhart, Chair
Paul Colavecchio, Vice Chair
Russ Iona
Jeff Iula
Mary Nichols-Rhodes

Mr. Brillhart called the meeting to order at 7:11 p.m. All members were present.

Discussion:

Mr. Brillhart thanked Ms. Nichols-Rhodes for appointing him to chair this committee. He stated that Cuyahoga Falls is the 16th-largest city in the State of Ohio and a progressive city on the move. There's a lot of building going on. Front Street is opening. A lot of people want to come here. Our residents work very hard to maintain their property with a lot of civic pride. I think that's what Council wants to reflect here. It doesn't mean they need to go out and spend a lot of money, but they must decide whether to move where Council meets or stay where they are.

Mr. Brillhart stated that he talked to Mr. John Konich, Director of Information Services, on Friday to obtain a little bit of background as to where they are and what could be done. Mr. Konich had some ideas. If it pleases the committee, in two weeks, he would like to invite Mr. Konich to be here and perhaps even arrange with the Service Director to have a view of the old Council Chambers. He would like to explore some ideas. Personally, he likes meeting at the Natatorium, because it's so accessible to the public, but Council also met in the other place for a long time. Perhaps Mr. Konich will have some ideas to improve the sound system. Mr. Brillhart stated the he would like Council to make a consensus of what they want, and taking their time to stop, look and listen in trying to decide that. At the end, he would like to have something that looks very nice and is reflective of Cuyahoga Falls and how they want to reflect to our residents and visitors when they come to Council. There are a lot of multi-million-dollar companies that come here to make their proposals. It can be made to look nicer.

Mr. Colavecchio stated that he has been to many different Council Chambers, and this one is about the worst. Mr. Pallotta put a lot of effort in trying to upgrade the microphone system but there are still issues with it. If they could have a permanent location out of the Natatorium where there could be permanent, fixed microphones, that is going to solve the microphone problem. By having Council Chambers located in here, the Natatorium is split in half. There could be more room to purpose the Natatorium for what the Natatorium should be purposed for, recreation. He is leaning toward another location. Whether or not the old Council Chambers would fit Council's needs, it is probably the obvious first place to look. There are different committees that also meet here and having a permanent and good sound system would be very beneficial.

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Mr. Reilly stated that he served on Mogadore's Village Council for a brief period before he moved to Cuyahoga Falls. They have permanent and better space than Cuyahoga Falls City Council does, and the size of Mogadore is about the size of Ward one. Mr. Iona stated that he wholeheartedly agrees with Mr. Colavecchio. The microphones usually don't work, so they end up not using them, because it takes too much effort. Residents listening to Council meetings on the radio have commented that the sound quality is poor. Munroe Falls, Tallmadge, Mogadore and many other local communities have permanent spots. He doesn't know how much it will cost. It is not in the budget but trying to fix this is a Band-Aid. There are many other groups using these microphones, and there is no way to keep track of who is going to hurt it. He loves that there is a lot of room at the Natatorium, but, many times, there are two people in a room that seats seventy. No matter what you do, the Natatorium is not a good Council Chambers. It can be dressed up, but it is like putting socks on a rooster. It does not work. Council should move forward in thinking about a permanent location. If Mogadore, Munroe Falls, Tallmadge, Stow can do it, certainly Cuyahoga Falls can.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the poor audio conditions do not just affect Council meetings. The Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, Parks and Recreation, Design and Historic Review committees also use this area. The public uses the sound system when they rent this space. There is a room where the Clerk goes and turns the sound system on 15 minutes before the meeting, because she doesn't have access to the controls from this room. The problem is that the microphones are taken in and out, and, in that process, get banged up. She thinks a permanent place is the solution. Mr. Gorbach stated that he owns roosters. He has not heard the saying, "putting socks on a rooster," but it will be in his repertoire from now on. A few of Councilors at the rail served on Council when they were in City Hall. There were meetings where people were out in the hallway, and that didn't work, but, at the same time, you don't build a church parking lot for Christmas Eve mass, because 50 percent of it would be vacant for 364 days. He is not aware of what else is going on with the City building and the old courtrooms, but there may be other options if the previous Council Chambers doesn't work. He agrees with the comments that were made about the sound system. It makes it hard and it is embarrassing when it doesn't work. There are meetings where there are some emotions and very important topics, and Council wants to be able to receive that in a better manner than it has been. He looks forward to the committee's suggestions and hearing what they come up with.

Mr. Brillhart stated that Councilman Pallotta did spend a lot of time on this. After speaking with Mr. Konich, his understanding is that there were some parts of the microphones that were not updated. That is what Mr. Konich was going to do. He has challenged him to find out what it would cost to upgrade this system and make it work. That's the most important thing.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m.