

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

March 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 8:10 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the February 5, 2018 Special Committee to Explore Audio Options for Council Chambers were approved as written.

Discussion:

Mr. Brillhart stated that there will be a tour tonight over at the old Council Chambers at the Mayor's Court. Mrs. Pyke stated that, as someone who sat over there for years, it's tight. At times, it was very unfair to the public when Council wasn't aware that something was as important to the public as what it was, and people stood in the hallways and, sometimes, in the parking lot. She cautioned the committee, as they move forward looking at chambers, that Council abandoned it because of the size.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that that is why they are going over there. There are about 40 chairs set up over there, and they are wider than the chairs here. If Council knew they were expecting a larger crowd, they could still call a meeting at the Natatorium. This began as a problem with the sound equipment moving in and out repeatedly for several meetings in addition to Council. They are just looking at options. The goal is for the public to be able to hear better and to participate more in Council meetings. Mrs. Pyke stated that she would suggest visiting some of the other City Council chambers in Stow and Tallmadge. When they had their joint meeting, Stow was able to accommodate three cities, and there were hundreds of people there.

Mr. Gorbach stated that all the comments that have been made so far on the issue are valid. They are not deciding tonight, so they can pursue everything and try to get it right. Mr. Gorbach also stated that a lot of people that came tonight to listen to the Mayor's State of the City address probably didn't know that they were going into Executive Session, so they appreciate their patience in staying tonight and apologize for the extra delay.

Mr. Colavecchio stated that since they are addressing Mrs. Pyke's concerns, as far the size, he doesn't know how feasible it is. There are a couple of old courtrooms. They are not handicapped accessible. He doesn't know if something could be done. Maybe there is a way to have a small elevator to go up to that room, because it's big enough and there are a lot of windows. It's a nicer look. Mrs. Pyke stated that because it was not handicap accessible, that limited Council, in the past, from moving to that location. She would agree that location would probably accommodate their needs. It is just how much do they want to spend.

**Special Committee to Explore Audio Options
for Council Chambers
March 5, 2018 – Page 2**

Mr. Brillhart stated that he agreed. They don't have to rush into any decision. It's a great city. People are improving their homes, building nicer homes, and they need to reflect that in Council Chambers. They don't need to have anything grandiose. It needs to be nice. It needs to be reflective of a city on the move. They need to uncover all the stones to find out what they want to do and what the residents want. If it is made more accessible, maybe more people would show up. He stated he would appreciate if those in the audience would come and look and offer their feedback.

Ms. Catherine Basile, 2220 Maitland Avenue, asked if they wanted to move from this room. Mr. Brillhart stated that it was a thought. The acoustics are not great and there have been problems with the audio. Ms. Basile stated that it is a mighty fine room. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that because the equipment is put away and brought out for every Council meeting and other Board and Committee meetings, it does not work well. Ms. Basile asked if it could be hardwired at less expense than remodeling a new area. Mr. Brillhart stated that they will invite Mr. Konich, Director of IT Services, to come and talk about the possibility of upgrading the audio system. The group, as a whole, wants to take their time to look at everything and make the right decision.

Mr. Miller stated that he would be open to moving. It would be a great opportunity for the public to take advantage of that room. They could host all the Planning Commission and Park Board meetings. If, as Ms. Visner stated earlier, the Natatorium is expanding membership with the new position created, they could hopefully use the current facility in a different way. Mr. Brillhart stated that they need to take into consideration the rent that the Natatorium is losing by not being able to utilize this room. Mr. Iona stated that the reason for considering the move isn't because they don't like the location. This is a temporary facility. They need a permanent facility where they don't have to worry about the sound system not working. People are listening to the broadcast, and they should be able to hear it without screeching and without the voice inflection up and down.

Tom Sullivan, 447 Tallmadge Road, stated that one of biggest problems using the Natatorium is that things get put in and taken out week to week. This furniture is the same age as the furniture down in the Pavilion. It gets taken out and put back together just as many times with just as many setups. In looking at the tabletops, it appears that they are handled by people that don't care. The same way with the audio system. If there was some training possibly, or people that give two hoots about what they were doing, the furniture and the audio equipment would have held up nicely. It's all Audio Technica. They didn't buy junk. A lot of it has to do with the personnel. It's not the same people. The only big difference between this building and the Pavilion is it's been the same four guys and there's accountability. What they've done to this furniture is a crime. There is everything they need here. It's just getting tossed into a box, and it's getting tossed by someone who makes minimum wage. The room is fine, and the equipment was great. The sound system, when Council moved over here, was decent and then the batteries started wearing out. There's no preventative maintenance. The speakers that are up front can be shut off to keep them from feeding back. There doesn't seem to be anybody wanting to do it or having an incentive to do it.

Ms. Basile asked why they don't hardwire the room. Mr. Gorbach stated that Mr. Brillhart suggested to speak with Mr. Konich, the head of Information Services. One of the things that they

**Special Committee to Explore Audio Options
for Council Chambers
March 5, 2018 – Page 3**

are going to ask him is how that can be done and at what cost, but that doesn't address the services, such as Mr. Miller brought up and some other Council members prior to him, of repurposing this room. It is not used just by Council on Monday nights. It is used by a lot of Boards and Commissions. There should be the opportunity to use this room for Natatorium purposes and bring more revenue into the City. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that this is lost revenue. The room that they are talking about is only used two days a week and not even for a full day, so that is a space that has no lost revenue, because it can't be rented out or used for anything else. That's one more factor.

Mr. Colavecchio stated that for a city the size of Cuyahoga Falls to have businesses that come in talking about multi-million-dollar contracts, this is really an embarrassment. Council is meeting in a gym. When people come to make presentations to Council, there should be a proper Council chamber. As has been pointed out, there is a big Natatorium membership. It rents out the one side. They could rent out this side and make revenue and purpose the Natatorium for what it's supposed to be, a gymnasium. It has served its purpose. It's time for Council to move on. They obviously don't want to break the bank. The sound system is horrific. If there is a way to hardwire this room, they still will be meeting in a gym. They need to explore other options. If there is an option where the City owns it already and it's not being used, whether it's a courtroom or where the Mayor's Court is, they must look at those options seriously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.