

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Committee-of-the-Whole
March 1, 2021

Members: Mr. Brillhart, Chair
Mr. Balthis
Mr. Gorbach
Mr. Iula
Mr. James
Ms. Loza
Mr. Miller
Ms. Nichols-Rhodes
Mrs. Penta
Mrs. Spinner
Mr. Stams

Mr. Brillhart called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m. All members were present.

Discussion:

Mayor Walters stated that he would like to announce the appointment of Assistant Fire Chief Chris Martin to the position of Fire Chief effective July 1, 2021.

Mayor Walters stated that he has come before Council to ask for confirmation of the sixteenth Fire Chief in the history of Cuyahoga Falls. Chief Jackson is retiring June 30th, so the appointment will become effective at midnight that night. His appointment is Assistant Fire Chief Chris Martin. He has come up through the ranks, was hired as a firefighter, rose up through Captain, Assistant Chief and now Chief. He exhibits phenomenal leadership. He has experience on the union side, which is helpful on both sides. He is a Cuyahoga Falls resident, graduated from Woodridge High School and has completed the Ohio Fire Executive Program. There was a tough interview process, and Mr. Martin came out on top and is going to be a great leader.

Assistant Fire Chief Martin thanked everyone for all the support, not only tonight, but throughout his entire career. He stated that in looking back 20 years, when he started, he never dreamed that he would be in a position to take this role, let alone be selected. There is no way to deny Mayor Walters' passion for Cuyahoga Falls and the direction of the City, and for him to trust him to run the Fire Department is an honor beyond words. He is eternally grateful for Mayor Walter's support and cannot wait to get started. In working the last couple years with Chief Jackson, he learned that he is passionate for every member of the Fire Department and has put his heart and soul into the department. Chief Jackson's foresight and planning will allow him to pick his brain over the next couple months and build a solid support team.

Assistant Fire Chief Martin stated that he could not ask for more support from his family. He loves them to death, and they are going to be with him every step of the way. The Fire Department is servant-led. They have to have a passion for helping people. There should be a little bit of intimidation in what he is about to endeavor, and he should be a little more nervous, but he is not. He trusts every single member of the Fire Department. He could not ask for a better workforce. They are passionate about what they do. He trusts them with his family's life. With the direction they are going to be going, he knows they have his back, and they should know he has theirs.

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Mr. Brillhart stated that, in Cuyahoga Falls, they have a tradition of great fire chiefs. The City has a great chief in Chief Jackson, and it is going to have a great chief with Assistant Chief Martin. His direction is phenomenal and second-to-none. He is pleased he is going to lead the Fire Department in the city for many years.

Mr. Gorbach stated that he has the highest regard and respect for Mr. Martin. It has been a pleasure getting to know him throughout the years. The City could not be in better hands. It has been in great hands over the years with the chiefs it has had.

Mayor Walters stated that reason for making the appointment now is because, obviously, this is going to create vacancies. In order to be able to promote and backfill, they are going to need time to do that while Chief Jackson is here.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is great that they are doing this now to allow for the opportunity for transition and promotion. There is nothing more important than the safety services provided to the City. They will have more opportunity to talk about Chief Jackson in the future, but he cannot let this opportunity pass by without saying it has been a pleasure to work with him as Law Director and on Council. He will be missed, but the City will be in amazing hands with Assistant Chief Martin. He has no doubt that he will continue the tradition of excellence in the Fire Department.

Mr. Iula congratulated Assistant Chief Martin. He stated that one of the best things is that he has come up through the ranks. He knows of a few cities in Summit County that brought in somebody from the outside. Chief Martin started off as a fireman and moved on up, and that makes it good and keeps this team of firefighters much stronger than others. From Chief Moledor and Chief Jackson and now Chief Martin, there have been great chiefs for quite a while in the City.

Mr. Stams stated that he first met Mr. Martin when their children played Cuyahoga Falls Little League Baseball together going back close to 10 years. Chris was so nice to his family, welcoming his wife and his son Mason. He is a nice guy and has great character. He was always there when they needed a volunteer. He took a leadership role, and he will never forget that. Woodridge High School and the Ward 8 community is proud is proud of their own.

Mr. Balthis moved to bring out Mayor Walters' appointment of Chris Martin to Fire Chief effective July 1, 2021, second by Mr. Iula. Motion passed, voice vote (11-0).

Mr. James moved to adjourn, second by Mr. Iula. Motion passed, voice vote (11-0).

The meeting adjourned at 6:43.