

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Best Practices

June 27, 2016

Members: Adam Miller, Chair
Russ Iona
Mary Nichols-Rhodes

Mr. Miller called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the May 2, 2016 meeting were approved as written.

Discussion:

Mr. Miller stated that he wanted to make the public aware that they are a working committee. The purpose of this committee was to fix Council's microphone system so the public, media and fellow council members are able to hear at the meetings. The audio has been fixed. The Committee also wanted to discuss and analyze ways to make Council meetings more accessible to the public. He stated that he wanted to thank the committee members and the council clerk for their hard work during this process. Mr. Miller stated that when an audio tape of the Council meetings is made, the City will be creating a new record. There will have to be a retention period assigned to put this in line with the Ohio Public Records Act. The City will also retain the audio tapes until the updated schedule of retention and disposition is approved by the Ohio Historical Society and the State Auditor. The written minutes are the official minutes and will be retained permanently. Mr. Iona stated that what the committee was down to, at this point, is to see if the recording is worth giving to the public, if they'll be able to hear it and understand it. If it sounds good enough and the quality is a high-enough caliber, they ought to proceed and make a recommendation to Council that the Committee feels that allowing the public to hear what transpires at the Council meetings is now available for them to utilize.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that although they had a survey, it was not really a valid survey, because there wasn't a broad cross section of the City or anybody who doesn't use a computer. It was a little taste of what people were thinking. They could even consider the lack of response that maybe people aren't that interested. She stated that she would not be in favor of anything that cost any money, at this point, because the reaction and the feedback that she has gotten since they began this committee has been about what it is going to cost. People don't want money spent on it. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she did a lot of research for other communities that have audio and video. There are many reasons for Council not to pursue that at this time, money being one. Grove City spent \$28,000 on their equipment and installation, and they pay \$1,000 a year. Twinsburg spent \$50,000 on equipment. Then there is upkeep, maintenance, replacement and labor. One thing that has come out of this committee is the realization that this is going to be a great expense to the taxpayers. She wanted to make note that the number of people that answered the survey is a very, very small segment of the residents in Cuyahoga Falls. It comes out to one quarter of one percent of the people who live here that responded. She stated that's why she thinks they should be cautious when looking at the results. They are valid in that small sampling, but it's a very, very, very small sampling. The Committee also learned that if they wanted to do a further survey, there is no money budgeted for any of that right now. So, that's something to sort of put in the future. Another issue is that Council Chambers are not designated specifically and only for

Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Best Practices
June 27, 2016 – Page 2

Council meetings. There are problems that occur with the audio equipment because of it being transported back and forth. Before incurring future expenses, that would be a major consideration to think about how that equipment, which is more expensive, would be transported back and forth and jumbled around.

Ms. Nichols Rhodes stated that she wanted to summarize some of the things that they have learned as they went through their committee. There also is the possibility, in the future, of the FCC rules being changed relating to the frequencies and whether wireless or wired would be the best. She stated that she wanted to point out that Council meetings are scheduled for the first four Mondays of every month. They are open to the public. The Council agenda is published on the City website by the Falls News-Press and on Facebook by the Falls News-Press, in print and online. Council meeting are recorded. There are official minutes that are available online to the public. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she believes that they are a very transparent and open and friendly and welcoming council. Although they have been told, at one of these meetings, that they are kind of boring, a recording of it wouldn't change that. As a committee, they would welcome and love for more people to come to Council meetings. She stated she would only be in favor if there is no cost to the taxpayers and that the recording is clear enough for the public to be satisfied that they can hear what transpires at the meetings.

Mr. Iona stated that although the survey was very small, attendance at Council meetings is infinitesimal. No one come to council meetings, so he is not shocked that there was such a small group response. They are in a situation where they want to give everyone the opportunity to hear the meetings. They want to give everybody the opportunity to show up at the meetings. If they do not want to show up, that is their right not to show up. If they don't want to listen to it, they don't have to listen to it. Even though it is a small survey, it is valid because people did reply. They are citizens. They are dealing with a small number for a population of almost 50,000. If they get 100 people that replied and maybe they put it on the air and get one or two or three more that haven't attended a meeting, then they have done their job. They are doing it so if they can't come to the meeting, they can have the opportunity to listen. If they don't show up and they don't listen, and then they have a complaint, then shame on them for not being just a little bit involved. Mr. Iona stated that he thinks the committee has done a decent job with the research. The bottom line is they don't have the money for a Council building. Rule that out. They don't have the money for audio-visual. Rule that out. If they can get something that doesn't cost money, he doesn't see where it's going to hurt anything.

Mr. Miller stated that he wanted to note that Mr. Konich is willing to work with them to make sure it gets on the radio whenever they would like. Mr. Miller recommended that they probably do it later in the week; maybe a weeknight and even on Saturdays. That really depends on the minutes from the clerk, but she has been gracious enough to work with them and make sure that when the minutes are approved, they can get them uploaded to the City website and work it out with WCFI to get it on the radio. Mr. Iona asked if Mr. Miller was thinking about Wednesday or Thursday. Mr. Miller said he was thinking about Thursday, to give the clerk enough time to prepare the minutes. As soon as the minutes get uploaded, the clerk can upload the audio. It will be available right away, but may take a little longer on the radio. Mr. Iona stated that he thinks simultaneous is too optimistic and that he liked Thursday. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated Thursday sounded good.

Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Best Practices
June 27, 2016 – Page 3

Mr. Iona stated it's still recent, and they still know what's going on. Some of the things that are mentioned are what's going to be happening on Monday.

Mrs. Pyke stated that she liked what Mr. Iona said about Thursday, because if there's something they're voting on on Monday, they would have time to listen to what was at the committee meeting, so they wouldn't have that confusion. She also wanted to make sure it was not broadcast too late, because she had about 20 people from Sutcliffe say they were interested in listening, and if it is too late, a lot of that group won't be awake. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes suggested that maybe they could play it twice on Thursday, once in the early morning. Mr. Miller said that was a possibility. Mrs. Pyke stated that after almost 19 years on council, 100 responses is huge. When she has a ward meeting, she puts out 2,200 fliers, and it's considered a huge turnout when she has 50 people. If they can just touch half a dozen people, and, if they like it, that will spread. Fifth grade is when the kids learn about City government. If kids are interested, they'll come. When does Council have their biggest turnout? Really and truly, it's when a Boy Scout troop does the pledge, because the troop comes and the parents come. So, they can pretty much figure, at that meeting, they're going to be listening to that tape at school, because they're going to listen to Boy Scout Troop 124 from St. Joe's, or whatever that troop is, in the class and think it's funny to hear their classmates saying the Pledge of Allegiance at the City Council meeting. There's a real opportunity out there. Mrs. Pyke stated that when it is said that they don't have money, they don't want to give the perception to the public that they have no money. There is money that could be appropriated for funds for surveys or whatever it is that they need to do. She personally had no one say anything about money; not one person. She said she is excited by it if it gets a couple people involved. When she looks out into the audience, she thinks it's funny to see five people, and four of them are Ward 2 residents. She agrees that if they can touch the lives of just a few more people, give them the opportunity, that will be something as far as being able to say that they are transparent as they can be and that they want to give as much opportunity to people as they can.

Mr. Miller stated that he thinks a big issue for him, in talking to the residents, was making the meetings more accessible. A lot of people can't attend the meetings. They've told him they're not going to listen to every meeting, but if there's an issue that is important to them, they would like an opportunity to listen. If a council member can't make a meeting, they may want to look back and be able to listen to the meeting. Mrs. Pyke stated that everything you do, you do it for a reason. You get something for it. You go to work, because you get paid. You talk to your friends, because you enjoy it. You come to Council, because there's a reason. So, if there is a controversial development, this room won't hold people. If there is talk about handicapped ramps around Sutcliffe, they are going to have to bring an extension cord for the electric wheelchairs. It is passion that brings them down here. It doesn't mean that they're not interested. The passion just isn't high enough to be here. How many phone calls do they get, as councilmen, about street resurfacing? If people knew in advance that Council was going to talk about street resurfacing, and they paid attention to what's in the paper and saw that that was coming, they would be here, because look at the amount of phone calls they receive after it hits the newspaper. Mrs. Pyke stated that she wanted to thank the committee for the work that they put into it. They were sensitive to the residents' wants and needs, and she thinks this will be a good thing.

Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Best Practices
June 27, 2016 – Page 4

Mr. Miller asked if the committee agrees that they should recommend to City Council that they place their audio recording of the meetings online. Mr. Iona stated they would make a resolution to present to City Council that the ad hoc committee recommends that council meetings be broadcast on the radio, time delay without cost, subject to scheduling, whether it's broadcast once or twice, and the minutes are the official record. Mrs. Pyke stated that she wanted to make sure that if there is an incidental cost of \$50, that doesn't stop them from moving forward. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked where the money would come from. Mrs. Pyke stated that if one of them were to be laid off tomorrow and they receive City health insurance, that money becomes available for Council, because it's a necessity. The money is out there; they just have to appropriate if it is over a certain amount. She doesn't think they want to stop this from happening, and if it states, "at no cost," they are truly limiting themselves to not even a quarter. Mr. Iona stated perhaps they should say a minimal cost. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that was a reasonable word. Mr. Miller agreed that a few hundred dollars would be considered minimal, but not a thousand dollars.

Mr. Iona asked if they would have to do the resolution tonight and then vote on it; then Mr. Miller would present it next week if they can get on the schedule. Mrs. Pyke stated that, next week, they would do their final discussion at the committee meeting. They would just bring it out in whatever form they want at the committee meeting. It would probably be best to speak with Russ Bathis to see if it's just a recommendation or if it's an actual resolution. They can do this as a suggestion from their committee that this is what they want to do or they can do it as a resolution where it's actually voted on. Mr. Iona stated that they ought to do it as a resolution to get everyone's opinion. Mr. Miller said to do it to committee. They have minutes and everything else in line. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that they could discuss this again on July 5, have the first reading on July 11, vote it out of committee on July 18, have all of council vote on July 25, and it could happen in August. Mr. Iona stated he thought that was a good timeline. Mr. Miller announced that the next meeting would be Tuesday, July 5, 2016, at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.