

**City of Maple Heights
Regular Council Meeting Minutes**

Maple Height Senior Center

March 1, 2023

MEETING CAUCUS

Council President Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. with the following Council Members present: Shenett, Jones, Tatum, Anderson and Madden. Councilman Trojanski and Councilwoman Agee were absent and excused. Also present were Mayor Annette M. Blackwell, Law Director Frank Consolo, Police Chief Todd Hansen, Fire Chief Vito Kavaliunas, Human Services Director Linda Vopat, Finance Director Tinita Tillman, Service Director Tony Ciresi, and Council Clerk Leonette Cicirella Johnson. Planning and Development Director Joe Duffy and City Engineer Ed Hren were absent and excused.

Mr. Jackson said there was only one (1) item of legislation on the Agenda for tonight's meeting and asked Law Director Consolo if he would discuss **Resolution No. 2023-17** concerning the Local Government Fund (LGF).

In response, Mr. Consolo said he would defer to Mayor Blackwell since the Mayor introduced this legislation.

Mayor Blackwell said the Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Association was working with our State Representative and State Senator on legislation to restore the percentage of the Local Government Fund (LGF) that was paid to cities back to 2011 levels. The Mayor said then Gov. Kasich reduced the LGF from 3.68% to 1.66%. She said cities had been making an effort to restore the LGF to at least 2.0%. The Mayor said under the current proposed Governor's budget the LGF will only be raised from 1.66% to 1.70%.

Mayor Blackwell said **Resolution No. 2023-17** will urge the Governor and General Assembly to restore the LGF. She said passage of this Resolution will add more voices advocating for the restoration of the LGF to its pre-recession levels.

Mr. Jackson asked what was the time-frame for passage of this legislation.

The Mayor said the State Representative requested that this Resolution be passed as soon as possible.

Mr. Jackson asked if there were any questions or comments from Council.

Councilwoman Jones asked if the Cuyahoga County Executive or Cuyahoga Council had sent or will be sending a letter of support regarding restoration of the LGF.

In response, Mayor Blackwell said that although the County Executive was at the Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Meeting where this resolution was proposed, she was not sure if he would be sending a letter. The Mayor said the County Executive had left before this discussion had ended.

Mr. Jackson asked if there were any other questions.

Councilman Shenett said it was good to see cities coming together as one voice regarding this matter. Mr. Shenett said he assumed it was along party lines though, with Democrats supporting it but Republicans expecting municipalities to pull themselves up.

Mr. Shenett asked to be added as a Co-Sponsor of this legislation.

Ms. Jones also asked to be added as a Co-Sponsor of this legislation.

Mr. Jackson also asked to be added as a Co-Sponsor of this legislation.

It was the consensus of Council that all those present at tonight's meeting would be added as Co-Sponsors.

Mr. Jackson said Councilwoman Madden had the Invocation and would lead the Pledge of Allegiance for tonight's meeting.

Mr. Jackson said there were no Expenditures over \$25,000.00 or Disclosures of Purchase Orders over \$10,000.00 for review at tonight's meeting.

He asked if there were any other questions of comments from Council. There being no other questions or comments, the Caucus Meeting was adjourned at 6:39 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING OF COUNCIL

Council President Jackson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the following Council Members present: Shenett, Jones, Tatum, Anderson and Madden. Councilman Trojanski and Councilwoman Agee were absent and excused. Also present were Mayor Annette M. Blackwell, Law Director Frank Consolo, Police Chief Todd Hansen, Fire Chief Vito Kavaliunas, Human Services Director Linda Vopat, Finance Director Tinita Tillman, Service Director Tony Ciresi, Planning and Development Director Joe Duffy and Council Clerk Leonette Cicirella Johnson. City Engineer Ed Hren was absent and excused.

Councilwoman Tanglyn Madden gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Council Clerk Leonette Cicirella Johnson called the roll.

ADDENDUM: There was no Addendum for tonight's meeting.

MINUTES: Mr. Shenett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Jones, to approve the Regular Meeting of Council Minutes of December 21, 2022.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Shenett: Yes; Ms. Jones: Yes; Mr. Tatum: Yes; Ms. Anderson: Yes; Ms. Madden: Yes. The motion passed by the vote of five (5) ayes to zero (0) nays.

Mr. Shenett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Anderson, to approve the Regular Meeting of Council Minutes of February 15, 2023.

ROLL CALL: Mr. Shenett: Yes; Ms. Jones: Abstain; Mr. Tatum: Yes; Ms. Anderson: Yes; Ms. Madden: Yes. The motion passed by the vote of four (4) ayes to zero (0) nays with one (1) abstention.

COMMUNICATIONS: There were no Communications for tonight's meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: There were no Council Committee Reports for tonight's meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS:

Fire Department – Fire Chief Vito Kavaliunas said the Fire Department calls to date were 911 and that the Fire Department responded to the following structure fires:

On February 7th at 2:40 a.m. in Garfield Heights for a house fire at 4787 E. 84th Street where six (6) pets perished but there were no other injuries;

On February 13th at 4:06 p.m. for a house fire at 14940 Florence Avenue; no injuries reported;

On February 20th at 3:06 p.m. in Oakwood Village, for a factory explosion and fire at 22500 Alexander Road where sadly there was one (1) fatality and a dozen critically injured workers;

On February 27th at 8:04 p.m. in Bedford Heights, for a house fire at 5865 White Pine Drive; no injuries reported.

The Fire Chief said he was happy to report that the refurbishment of the Fire Department's 2002 Sutphen fire pumper truck was completed and that the truck was placed back in service as Engine #2 at the Dunham Road Fire Station today. The Chief said the refurbishment costing less than \$200,000.00 was a tremendous savings of at least \$400,000.00 over the price of a new truck. Fire Chief Kavaliunas said that the refurbishment exceeded his expectations and that the truck should serve the City well for years to come. The Fire Chief said he wanted to give special thanks to Captain Kincaid and Lieutenant Selar who spearheaded this endeavor.

Fire Chief Kavaliunas said it is well known that reducing or eliminating infant mortality was an important goal of Mayor Blackwell. He announced that the Fire Department will be partnering with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health in the DOSE endeavor, to train our medics to recognize and assist new parents in need of assistance with best practices of pre-natal and new born care. The Chief said more information was to come as this program comes to fruition,

Fire Chief Kavaliunas concluded his report by reminding everyone that with this spring and winter fluctuation with high winds residents needed to be aware of any downed lines of any type and promptly contact the Fire Department. The Fire Chief said he would also recommend reporting a power outage directly to First Energy. He said there was a link on the City's website with this information. Fire Chief Kavaliunas said First Energy tracked the calls of a power

outage and prioritized the response by the call volume received. He said First Energy will also offer updates to a phone number of your choice and wake up calls if you so desire.

Law Department – Law Director Mr. Frank Consolo said he had a follow-up to the Truth Social Lounge liquor license transfer that had previously been denied by the Ohio Division of Liquor Control after a hearing on an objection filed by the City of Maple Heights.

Mr. Consolo said that on February 7, 2023 he and Police Chief Hansen attended an appeal hearing that had been requested by the Appellant, Truth Social Lounge. Mr. Consolo reported that the Ohio Liquor Control Commission reversed the previous order of the Division of Liquor Control and ordered the Division to continue the processing of the Appellant’s transfer of ownership application. Mr. Consolo said Truth Social Lounge will be in business shortly.

Mr. Consolo announced that Ms. Dennison, the Mayor’s Court Clerk, was back in the office but will also be able to work remotely part of the time. He said the Law Department will be taking action to have a back-up Mayor’s Court Clerk available.

Mr. Consolo said the City was also looking for a back-up Magistrate to cover for Magistrate George Simon when he is not available. Mr. Consolo said recently Magistrate Dan Williams, the Magistrate in Woodmere, had covered for him.

Police Department – Police Chief Hansen announced that the Police Department has two new hires. He said Jason Ozimek has been hired as a new Corrections Officer and is currently in training and that Auxiliary Officer and part-time employee Ray Feathers has been hired as full-time Evidence Custodian.

The Police Chief reported that the Police Department has responded to 4,200 plus calls for service to date. Police Chief Hansen said that at 2:30 p.m. last Sunday Officers responded to a burglary in process on Forest Avenue. He said as Officers were clearing the house, they found evidence of possible drug trafficking. Police Chief Hansen said the Officers secured a search warrant and returned to the house where they confiscated 8 kilos of cocaine, 4 pounds of marijuana, a rifle and \$370,000.00 in cash. The Chief reported that this was the largest drug bust in the history of the Maple Heights Police Department. He said the SEALE Narcotics Unit was also involved. The Police Chief also reported a drug bust on Beech Avenue that came from a citizen complaint. The Chief said 14 pounds of marijuana and \$8,500.00 in cash was confiscated.

Mr. Jackson asked if the City will be able to keep any of the money that was confiscated, to which Police Chief Hansen responded in the affirmative. He said the City will receive a portion of it after the case has gone through the justice system.

Human Services Department – Human Services Director Mrs. Linda Vopat said that the SNAP benefits had been reduced back to pre-Covid levels and that the last payment with increased benefits was in February 2023. She said the Maple Heights Food Pantry and Mobile Farmers’ Market were available to help residents due to the reduced benefits. At this time Mrs. Vopat said

she wanted to take the opportunity to thank the Bedford Eagles for another check of \$1,000.00 to support the Food Pantry.

Mrs. Vopat announced that in April some individuals will also lose their healthcare coverage through Medicaid. Mrs. Vopat said that during the pandemic nearly 20 million people were added to Medicaid since the State was not checking eligibility for this program. She said starting in April the State will now be going back to check for eligibility. Mrs. Vopat said Ohio will be removing ineligible individuals from April through December of this year. She said that children on Medicaid however, will remain on the program. Mrs. Vopat said ineligible adults will be referred to the Affordable Care coverage and that Jaimie at the Senior Center was a licensed counselor who will be able to assist with this application.

Mrs. Vopat asked everyone to save the date for the City's Easter Fest to be held on Saturday, April 1, 2023 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the MHHS Cafetorium which will be a larger venue.

Mrs. Vopat announced that the new affordable senior housing facility at Hazelwood Court has been formally named Beacon Grove Apartments and that interested residents can call the Human Services Department to get on the mailing list with Jennings.

Mrs. Vopat thanked Rev. Evans of Mt. Moriah AME Church on Lafayette Avenue for inviting her to attend their meeting to discuss their Church joining with New Bethel AME in Oakwood Village.

Finance Department – Finance Director Ms. Tinita Tillman announced that the Finance Department closed the month of January 2023 with an unexpended balance in the General Fund of \$6,841,311.67 and an unexpended balance for All Funds of \$16,413,741.85.

Ms. Tillman reported that the Finance Department closed the month of February 2023 yesterday with an unexpended balance in the General Fund of \$8,027,581.79 and an unexpended balance for All Funds of \$18,504,928.55. Ms. Tillman said City revenues were high as a result of two (2) payments the City received as advancements on the property tax collections.

Ms. Tillman also announced that the 2022 Audit and GAAP conversion has begun and that the State Auditors have submitted their engagement letter to the City. Ms. Tillman said she received the letter yesterday so it will be submitted for consideration by Council at their next meeting.

Service Department – Service Director Mr. Tony Ciresi said that as the weather gets warmer the City was getting closer to trapping season regarding nuisance animals. He said residents can contact the Animal Warden via e-mail at: animalwarden@mapleheightsohio.com

Mr. Ciresi said the Service Department has also started tree trimming in the City.

Mr. Ciresi said he wanted to remind residents that they can drop off old computers and other electronics or hazardous household waste including oil-based paints at the Service garage on Dunham Road.

Mr. Jackson asked if the City also collected old tires to which Mr. Ciresi responded in the negative.

At this time Mr. Ciresi said he wanted to introduce Mr. Kevin Smalley from The Illuminating Company to talk with Council about procedures used by the electric companies during severe storms.

Mr. Smalley thanked Mr. Ciresi and Council for allowing him to attend tonight's meeting and said that one of the most frequent issues he was contacted about concerned The Illuminating Company's procedures for power outages during severe weather. He said process used by The Illuminating Company, First Energy and CEI was to first "cut and run" which means that downed wires were cut first and then electric company workers come back to restore the power to the area. He said the restoration of power followed specific prioritized lists including critical facilities first such as hospitals, Police and Fire Departments, pumping stations. Mr. Smalley said the next level of repair will be the areas with the highest concentration or number of customers without power and then the repairs go down the list from there. He said when there are any major weather strikes the company will get that information out to the City as soon as possible.

Mr. Smalley said he also wanted to let Council and the residents know about the upcoming Utility Assistance Resource Fair that will be held at the Garfield Heights Civic Center this Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to Noon. He said First Energy companies will be participating to help residents who need assistance with their bills. Mr. Smalley said there were a number of payment plan options for their customers.

Mr. Smalley asked if Council had any questions while he was at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Shenett asked if the Resource Fair was this Saturday to which Mr. Smalley responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Jackson asked if The Illuminating Company will be doing any tree trimming this year to which Mr. Smalley also responded in the affirmative. Mr. Smalley said electric utility companies do tree trimming every year since it was mandated by the Federal government that the companies trim the trees in all right of ways at least every four (4) years.

Planning and Development Director -- Planning and Development Director Mr. Joe Duffy said that the Career Hiring Fair and Employer Expo with Ohio Means Jobs at the Garfield Heights Civic Auditorium on Thursday, February 23, 2023 had a number of participants and that the City of Maple Heights had a good showing.

Mr. Duffy announced that there would be another joint event between the cities of Maple Heights and Garfield Heights this Saturday, March 4th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Garfield Heights Civic Center. He said the Housing Department has been very engaged with this event. Mr. Duffy reminded residents to bring copies of the various documents they may need including proof of household income, birth certificate(s), photo ID, Social Security card, lease agreement if a renter, supplemental medical insurance, current electric, gas or water and sewer

bills. Mr. Duffy said representatives from the various utility companies will be present to help residents who are having problems paying their bills and that registration was encouraged.

Mr. Duffy also announced that the City will be sponsoring a Traffic Calming Forum on Monday, March 20th at 5:30 p.m. at the Maple Heights Library. He said representatives from ODOT, NOACA and Chagrin Valley Engineering will be joining Police Chief Hansen for this event.

CITIZENS' COMMENTS:

Mr. Thomas Woods of 17030 Maple Heights Boulevard said he appreciated Mayor Blackwell and that the Mayor has done a thousand good things and only one bad thing. Mr. Woods said the Mayor brought residents and businesses back to the City.

LEGISLATION:

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-17

A RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE OHIO GOVERNOR AND MEMBERS OF THE OHIO GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO RESTORE THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND TO PRE-RECESSION LEVELS, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Ms. Jones made a motion, seconded by Mr. Shenett, to suspend the rules and pass this Resolution on emergency. Mr. Jackson asked if there were any questions or discussion on this legislation.

Mayor Blackwell said one of the sources of revenue for municipalities was the Local Government Fund and that in 2011 Gov. Kasich reduced it by 50% from 3.68% to 1.66%. She said that the Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Association has lobbied to increase it to 2.00%. The Mayor said under the Governor's proposed budget it has only moved from 1.66% to 1.70%. Mayor Blackwell said this Resolution is being introduced at the local level to increase support for restoration of the Local Government Fund.

Mr. Jackson asked if there were any other questions or discussion. There being no other questions or discussion, Mr. Jackson asked for the vote to suspend the rules. On the motion to suspend the rules and pass this Resolution on emergency, all voted aye, none opposed, the motion passed.

Mr. Jackson asked if there was any discussion on this Resolution. There being no additional discussion, Mr. Jackson asked for the vote for passage on emergency.

ROLL CALL on the vote for passage on emergency: Madden: Yes; Shenett: Yes; Jones: Yes; Tatum: Yes; Anderson: Yes. The motion passed by the vote of five (5) ayes to zero (0) nays. The Resolution passed on emergency and will become law upon the Mayor's signature.

EXPENDITURES OVER \$25,000.00:

Mr. Jackson said there were no Expenditure over \$25,000.00 or Disclosures of Purchase Orders over \$10,000.00 for review at tonight's meeting.

MAYOR'S REPORT: Mayor Blackwell said **Resolution No. 2023-17** indicated how much money had been lost by the City with the reduced Local Government Fund percentage. She said since 2011 the City has lost \$11 million dollars.

The Mayor thanked Rev. Evans for inviting her to the meeting at Mt. Moriah AME in Maple Heights as their members continued to work on the merger between Mt. Moriah with New Bethel AME in Oakwood Village.

Mayor Blackwell announced that on March 20, 2023 the City will be hosting a Traffic Calming Forum to address various traffic issues in the City. The Mayor said speed was a problem in the City and that there have been requests for the installation of speed bumps, STOP signs, and guard rails but these were governed by ODOT regulations. She said these required traffic studies by the City Engineer. Mayor Blackwell said Police Chief Hansen and professionals from ODOT, NOACA and the City Engineer will be in attendance at this forum to come and discuss these issues and answer questions. The Mayor said it will be held at 5:30 p.m. at the Maple Heights Library.

Mayor Blackwell concluded her report by stating that she was proud to announce that the City of Maple Heights had won the Kind Land Kindness Challenge. She said the City received points for each kind act it recorded.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Councilwoman Tanglyn Madden, District 5 announced that the next free Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Distribution will be held next Friday, March 10, 2023 from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Southgate.

Councilman Stafford L. Shenett, District 1 thanked the Fire Department for keeping the City safe and for their assistance with the fire on Florence Drive. Mr. Shenett encouraged residents to not burn trash in their yards.

Mr. Shenett also thanked the Police Department for their thorough work regarding a recent incident in which the perpetrator had been identified and arrested.

Mr. Shenett concluded his report by thanking the Mayor and Council President for attending the Combined Districts 1 and 7 Block Watch and Fellowship Meeting. Mr. Shenett said he was looking forward to the Districts 1 and 7 Fellowship Picnic.

Councilwoman Toni Jones, District 2 announced that the Southeast Quadrant Sewer Project on Dunham Road between Turney Road and Rockside Road should be finished within a week and asked residents to be patient while this work was being completed.

Ms. Jones thanked Mr. Ciresi for the dig jobs being completed in her district, especially on E. 146th Street and Wheeler.

Ms. Jones asked residents in need of utility assistance to participate in the Utility Assistance Resource Fair to be held on Saturday, March 4th from 9:00 a.m. to Noon at the Garfield Heights Civic Center. She said the Resource Fair was being sponsored by the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District and will have representatives from all of the utility companies and also from Cuyahoga County to assist residents with property tax issues and register eligible homeowners for the County's Homestead Exemption program. Ms. Jones said the Homestead Program had both age and income qualifications.

Ms. Jones said she was honored to be invited to sit on a panel for an organization out of Memphis called SCEMA (Strategic Code Enforcement Management Academy) to discuss best practices for strategic property code enforcement. Ms. Jones said there were 24 cities on the call and 8 participants on the panel. Ms. Jones said this was similar to an organization in Cuyahoga County named VAPAC that has been in existence for 14 years. She said the purpose of VAPAC has been to assist cities identify policies that can benefit the City. She said VAPAC has been a safe zone to discuss various housing and property issues.

Councilman Timothy Tatum, District 3 thanked the residents and seniors who attended the celebration of Black History Month at the Senior Center that was well attended.

Mr. Tatum announced that he will be hosting a St. Patrick's' Day Event on Friday, March 17th for seniors at the Garfield Heights Center for Performing Arts on Rockside Road. He said this event will be open to all seniors in Maple Heights and will also feature a Fashion Show.

Mr. Tatum said he will be starting District 3 Block Watch Groups including the selection of captains and will be hosting a Teen Summit at the end of the month to offer resources for teens.

Councilwoman Dana D. Anderson, District 4 said the District 4 Spring Newsletter will be out soon and that the Community Life and Education Committee Black History Event to honor local African-Americans from Cuyahoga County and the City was very successful.

Ms. Anderson concluded her report by wishing everyone a Good Evening.

Council President Ron Jackson said that in honor of March being Women's History Month he wanted to thank all of the women in the audience tonight for all of their contributions.

There being no further business to come before this Council, Council President Jackson thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 7:52 p.m.

Passed: March 15, 2023

ATTEST:

S/S Leonette Cicirella Johnson
Leonette Cicirella Johnson Clerk of Council