

City of Montgomery
City Council Work Session Minutes
March 20, 2024

Present

Brian Riblet, City Manager
Terry Donnellon, Law Director
Tracy Henao, Asst. City Manager
Kevin Chesar, Community Dev. Dir.
John Crowell, Police Chief
Maura Gray, Finance Director
Gary Heitkamp, Public Works Director
Matthew Vanderhorst, Community and Information Serv. Dir.
Paul Wright, Fire Chief
Amy Frederick, Community Engagement Coordinator
Connie Gaylor, Clerk of Council

City Council Members Present

Ron Messer, Mayor
Sasha Naiman, Vice Mayor
Lee Ann Bissmeyer
Catherine Mills-Reynolds
Chris Dobrozsi
Ken Suer

Council Members Absent

Craig Margolis

City Council convened its Work Session for March 20, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall with Mayor Messer presiding.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Messer explained that Mr. Margolis was not in attendance at the meeting and asked for a roll call.

The roll was called and showed all members present except for Mr. Margolis.

Mayor Messer asked for a motion to excuse Mr. Margolis. Vice Mayor Naiman made a motion to excuse Mr. Margolis from the meeting. Mr. Suer seconded. City Council unanimously agreed.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Mayor Messer explained that the scheduled presentation from Judge Jennifer Kingsley has been postponed.

LEGISLATION FOR CONSIDERATION THIS EVENING

There was no legislation for consideration at the meeting.

ESTABLISHING AN AGENDA FOR APRIL 3, 2024 BUSINESS SESSION

PENDING LEGISLATION

There was no pending legislation.

NEW LEGISLATION

An Ordinance Establishing The Schedule Of Municipal Compensation For Employees

Mayor Messer assigned the legislation to Mr. Dobrozsi.

Mr. Riblet explained that traditionally the City's Schedule of Municipal Compensation for non-collective bargaining and exempt employees is adjusted annually in July to be consistent with collective bargaining employee wage rate adjustments. The current Schedule of Municipal Compensation does not specify any wage rate adjustments for July 2024 or beyond; therefore, a new compensation schedule needs to be adopted. He stated that a long-established goal of the City has been to maintain consistency with cost of living adjustments for its collective bargaining and non-collective bargaining and exempt employees. Last year in collective bargaining with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), a contract agreement was reached for full-time bargaining unit Public Works Department employees which included wage increases of 3.00% effective in September 2023, 3.75% effective in September 2024, and 4.00% effective in September 2025.

58 Through a collective bargaining agreement with the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), full-time patrol officers and
59 sergeants will receive a 3.75% wage increase in July 2024. Full-time firefighter/paramedics and fire lieutenants
60 who are under a collective bargaining agreement with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) are in
61 the final year of their contract and staff will be conducting negotiations with this bargaining unit in the upcoming
62 months. Mr. Riblet pointed out that while all classifications remained the same, a mechanic position was added to
63 Range 5 to provide the Public Works department with a full time mechanic replacing the void left with the
64 retirement of Robert Dunham.

65
66 Mr. Riblet added that it should also be noted that a comprehensive position wage survey of comparable local
67 communities (Blue Ash, Forest Park, Indian Hill, Loveland, Madeira, Mason, Sharonville, Springdale and
68 Wyoming) was conducted earlier this year. From the survey results staff were able to determine that with an
69 adjustment to the pay ranges for our position classifications consistent with cost of living adjustment (COLA)
70 increases scheduled for our bargaining unit employees, our pay ranges would remain competitive in comparison
71 to these other communities. With a 3.75% COLA increase for July 2024, and a 4.00% COLA increase for July
72 2025, wage ranges for our position classifications would generally continue to rank among the top third among
73 the surveyed communities.

74
75 Mr. Dobrozsi stated that he was glad a mechanic position was being added. He thanked staff for their work on
76 updating the schedule and supported the recommendation.

77
78 Mr. Suer stated he was fine with the changes and supports keeping all staff up to date on equal cost of living rates.

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80 **An Ordinance Amending Chapter 34, Personnel Policies; Bond**

81
82 Mayor Messer assigned the legislation to Mr. Dobrozsi.

83
84 Mr. Riblet explained that earlier this year, City Administration along with key staff members and members of the
85 Goal F Team of the City of Montgomery 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, began a comprehensive review of Chapter 34
86 of the Montgomery Ohio Code of Ordinances to update many sections to be more adaptive of the current
87 environment locally and regionally, and to be more reflective of the work environment and culture of the City of
88 Montgomery's organization.

89
90 Mr. Riblet stated that as part of the work associated with Goal F of the current Strategic Plan, staff evaluated
91 Chapter 34 to continue the desire of cultivating a "Top Workplace" culture and doing this by increasing the ability
92 to both recruit and retain exceptional employees to ensure that staffing levels and quality of services are meeting
93 the demands of the community.

94
95 Mr. Riblet provided an overview of the changes to City Council. He pointed out that many of the changes were
96 grammatical and updating terminology; however, there were some changes that were more substantive. He
97 highlighted the deletion of a Bonus Program that was established many years ago and never used. He explained
98 that staff supported deleting that from the Code. He detailed updates to the sick leave buy-out clause, adding in
99 employees with 5-9 years of service; the addition of the updated Bereavement Leave; and the new Parental Leave
100 section. Lastly, Mr. Riblet explained the update to the Longevity Pay table that had not been updated for
101 approximately 20 years or more. Again, payout for an employee with one year of service up to four years was
102 added to provide all employees with a benefit from this policy. Mr. Riblet closed by saying that these changes
103 will go a long way in sending a message to new and long-term employees of their value to the City.

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105 Mr. Suer stated that he felt the proposed changes make sense and look reasonable.

106
107 Vice Mayor Naiman asked if Bereavement Leave was allowed only one time a year or for each qualifying event.

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109 Mr. Riblet responded that it was for each qualifying event.

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111 Vice Mayor Naiman stated that something to consider for the future is to allow Bereavement Leave to be used in
112 nonconsecutive days.

113

114 Mr. Riblet stated that the policy specifies that he has the authority to waive the consecutive requirement for special
115 circumstances.

116

117 Mr. Dobrozsi stated that he felt the changes were long overdue.

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119 Mrs. Mills-Reynolds asked if staff were still eligible for a bonus.

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121 Mr. Riblet replied that while the language for bonuses was in Chapter 34 of the Code, it was never used and he
122 felt it was very subjective, not supporting the culture of the City. He stated that with this update the bonus language
123 would be stricken from the section of the Code. He added that every staff member has an annual review that could
124 result in a performance increase and then their annual cost of living increase. He explained that if a staff member
125 has topped out of their pay range, they then could qualify for a 2% merit increase as well. He stated that this was
126 the standard for all staff.

127

128 Mrs. Bissmeyer stated that all the changes were good and overdue and important for recruitment and retention
129 efforts. She asked if the Code would be reviewed annually or biannually.

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131 Mr. Riblet replied that it is his goal to review the Code as a companion piece to the compensation schedule
132 biannually.

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134 ADMINISTRATION REPORT

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136 Mr. Riblet reported the following items:

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138 • A Council Business Session is scheduled for Wednesday, April 3 immediately following a Public Hearing
139 scheduled for 5:45 p.m.

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141 • Staff would also like to request a CIC meeting prior to the Public Hearing at 5:30 p.m. to consider a historic
142 matching grant application for property owned by Ann Henry at 7960 Remington Road. City Council
143 agreed to scheduling the CIC meeting.

144

145 • The Financial Planning Committee will hold their monthly meeting on Monday, April 1 at 4:30 p.m. The
146 Law and Safety has cancelled their meeting for the month of April. Mr. Suer suggested that the Planning
147 Zoning and Landmarks Committee meet on April 1 to conduct interviews for the Landmarks Commission.
148 It was determined that the meeting would meet at 5:00 p.m. with Ms. Gaylor confirming interview times.

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150 • Mr. Riblet suggested that the Committee meetings typically scheduled for Monday, April 8 be postponed
151 to Monday, April 15 as April the 8th is the Solar Eclipse and there are many activities centered around it
152 that day. He explained that there are agenda items for Government Affairs and asked Mrs. Mills-Reynolds
153 if the Parks and Recreation Committee would be holding a meeting to conduct interviews for a vacancy on
154 the Parks and Recreation Commission. Mrs. Mills-Reynolds replied that if the other Committee members
155 were agreeable to conduct interviews, she would like to schedule the Committee meeting on April 15. Mr.
156 Riblet suggested holding the Government Affairs Committee meeting at 3:30 p.m. followed by the Parks
157 and Recreation Committee meeting to allow time for interviews later in the afternoon. All Committee
158 members agreed to the schedule.

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- 160 • Mr. Riblet formally thanked Amy Frederick and Matthew Vanderhorst as well as all staff for another
161 successful Montgomery Citizens Leadership Academy.
- 162
- 163 • A sign that Spring has arrived is the annual pansy planting performed by the Public Works Department. On
164 Wednesday, 740 pansies were delivered to the public works facility and will be planted over the next couple
165 of days. This is on top of the other “Spring has sprung” duties of prepping parks, restrooms, fountains,
166 ponds, playgrounds, etc.
- 167
- 168 • Staff met today with representatives from the Development Team and Cushman Wakefield to further
169 discuss programming at the MQ. Staff are tentatively targeting Friday, June 7 for a larger event to include
170 a band. Staff anticipates finalizing this in the next two weeks so we can advertise in the May Bulletin.
- 171

172 Human Resources

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- 174 • Dan Pohl and Andy McGuffey will start on April 1. Both individuals come from the Fairfield Police
175 Department.
- 176
- 177 • Emilie Ziese has been hired as a firefighter/paramedic and she will begin employment with us on April 5.
178 Emilie is currently employed by Goshen Township Fire Department.
- 179

180 Events

- 181
- 182 • A reminder that the second annual Mental Health Fair will be held on Saturday, April 6 from 9:00-11:30
183 a.m. at Twin Lakes. There are currently 26 vendors committed for the event.
- 184
- 185 • A reminder that the Volunteer Walk of Fame Ceremony will be held on Wednesday, April 17 at 5:30 p.m.,
186 prior to the Work Session meeting.
- 187
- 188 • Also, the annual Volunteer Dinner is scheduled for the following Wednesday, April 24 at Montgomery Inn.
189 Social hour begins at 6:30 with the program commencing at 7:30.
- 190

191 Mr. Riblet requested an Executive Session for matters related to preparing for negotiations with public employees
192 and also to consider the purchase or sale of real estate for a public purpose.

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194 **LAW DIRECTOR REPORT**

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196 Mr. Donnellon reported that he was working through title issues at the Montgomery Quarter and has one parcel left
197 to complete title work on.

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200 **CITY COUNCIL REPORTS**

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202 **Mrs. Bissmeyer**

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204 Mrs. Bissmeyer reported that she attended a Comprehensive Plan meeting along with Mr. Dobrozsi and Mr. Suer
205 and feels the plan development is on track.

206
207 Mrs. Bissmeyer explained that interviews have been conducted with applicants for the two vacancies on the Board
208 of Zoning Appeals. As a result, she made a motion for the following appointments:

- 209
- 210 • Mark Berliant to the Board of Zoning Appeals with a term ending January 31, 2026
- 211 • Eric T. Roth to the Board of Zoning Appeals with a term ending January 31, 2028

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As this was a Planning, Zoning and Landmarks Committee recommendation, no second was needed. City Council unanimously agreed to the appointments.

Mrs. Mills-Reynolds

Mrs. Mills-Reynolds reported the following:

- The Parks and Recreation Commission has changed their meeting times to 5:30 p.m. Jorge Tameron was voted to be the Chair, Reza Ghoorkhanian is the Vice Chair and John Tholking remains the Secretary. She added that the Montgomery Amazing Race will be held on September 28.
- The Beautification and Tree Commission will hold their next Tree Talk on April 9 and basket planting is scheduled for April 16 at 9:00 a.m.
- She attended a Sycamore Advisory Council and is participating on a Work Force Team as part of their strategic planning session. She stated the Team would present their ideas on April 8, focusing on retention of high school graduates moving on to higher education.

Mr. Dobrozi

Mr. Dobrozi reported the following:

- The Government Affairs Committee met on March 11 and discussed the Boards and Commission appointment process. He stated there would be more discussion among the Committee to come and anticipated bringing an update to all of Council in the future. He added that the Committee also discussed Elected Officials compensation and would report back to Council on that in the future as well.
- The Sister Cities Commission did not meet in March due to the elections but is still very busy with Bastille Day planning, securing food vendors and sponsorship.
- The Arts Commission held the annual Improv Show at the Universalist Church. He stated that the group of Sycamore Students that participated in this show were very impressive, and it was a great show. He added that all Live at the Uni shows for 2024 were scheduled and would be shared in an upcoming Bulletin. The Food Tour opened for registration and is already sold out. The Tour is on April 27.
- He added to Mrs. Bissmeyer's comments about the Comprehensive Plan meeting, stating that Yard & Company have led a great process.
- He praised staff again for an awesome MCLA program.
- He will be out of town from April 17 through April 29 so he will miss the Volunteer Walk of Fame Ceremony and the Volunteer Walk of Fame.

Vice Mayor Naiman

Vice Mayor Naiman reported the following:

- She is excited about Asha, the therapy dog, joining the staff and felt that she would be a great support for staff and outreach to the community.
- She stated she also agreed with the compliments regarding MCLA and the graduation, stating how very nice it was run.
- She reported that the Diversity and Inclusion Commission met at which time an update was given on the war in Ukraine and how it is effecting local refugees. She stated that the Commission is also continuing the work of diversifying City marketing materials.
- The Civil Service Commission met and approved a Police Patrol eligibility list.

265 **Mr. Suer**

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267 Mr. Suer added to Mr. Dobrozsi's comments about the Board and Commission appointment process stating that
268 included in the Training Manual is a list of selection criteria that is very detailed and seems to be working well. He
269 stated that there is a good framework for this process but there could be a few things that could be tweaked. Overall,
270 he feels the process works well.

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272 Mr. Suer stated that the Comprehensive Plan process is coming along but there is more to be done. He stated that
273 Mr. Chesar and Ms. Henao have a good handle on it.

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275 **Mr. Margolis**

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277 Mr. Margolis was absent from the meeting.

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279 **Mayor Messer**

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281 Mayor Messer reiterated how great the MCLA program is.

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283 Mayor Messer reported on the Know Your Neighbor program conducted by the group *Equasion*, which is made up
284 of several Diversity and Inclusion members and focuses on bringing all faiths together to work to bring inclusion
285 into the discussion.

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287 **MINUTES**

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289 Mr. Dobrozsi moved to accept the March 6, 2024 Business Session minutes as written. Vice Mayor Naiman
290 seconded. City Council unanimously agreed.

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292 **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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294 Mayor Messer asked for a motion for City Council to adjourn into Executive Session for matters related to preparing
295 for negotiations with public employees and also to consider the purchase or sale of real estate for a public purpose.

296
297 Vice Mayor Naiman made a motion to adjourn into Executive Session for matters related to preparing for
298 negotiations with public employees and also to consider the purchase or sale of real estate for a public purpose. Mr.
299 Dobrozsi seconded.

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301 The roll was called and showed the following vote:

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303 AYE: Bissmeyer, Mills-Reynolds, Dobrozsi, Messer, Naiman, Suer (6)
304 NAY: (0)
305 ABSENT: Margolis (1)

306
307 City Council adjourned into Executive Session at 6:52 p.m.

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309 City Council returned to Public Session at 7:45 p.m.

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311 **ADJOURNMENT**

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313 Mayor Messer asked if there was any further business to discuss in Public Session. There being none he asked for
314 a motion to adjourn.

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316 Mr. Dobrozsi moved to adjourn. Vice Mayor Naiman seconded. City Council unanimously agreed.

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318 City Council adjourned at 7:45 p.m.
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Connie Gaylor, Clerk of Council