



CLEVELAND HEIGHTS

Monday, January 3, 2022 Minutes

CITY COUNCIL

7:35 – 8:54 p.m.

Meeting called to order by Clerk of Council

Clerk of Council Himmelein reported results of November 2, 2021 election at which Kahlil Seren was elected as Mayor and Davida Russell, Craig Cobb, Tony Cuda, Anthony Mattox Jr., and Josie Moore were elected as Council Members.

Mayor Kahlil Seren was sworn in by Law Director Bill Hanna

Mayor Seren thanked his partner Natalie, their son Blue, his moms, and his in-laws for their support. He also thanked the residents of Cleveland Heights for entrusting him with the responsibility of being the City's first Mayor. He is excited and energized to get to work this year rebuilding this government in a new form as well as tending to the needs and the priorities of the people they serve. Mayor Seren also thanked the new Council and is looking forward to working with them.

Council Member Craig Cobb was sworn in by his wife, Ruth Maguire

Council Member Tony Cuda was sworn in by Professor Kevin F. O'Neil

Council Member Anthony Mattox Jr. was sworn in by retired Ohio Supreme Court Justice Bill O'Neill

Council Member Davida Russell was sworn in by Ohio Supreme Court Justice Melody J. Stewart

Roll Call: Present: Cobb, Cuda, Hart, Mattox, Russell
Absent: Moore

Staff present: Seren, Hanna, Himmelein, Niermann O'Neil, Trupo

Nominations for President pro tempore

Clerk of Council requested nominations for President pro tempore

Council Member Hart nominated Council Member Cobb as President pro tem, which was seconded by Council Member Cuda

Roll Call: Ayes: Cobb, Cuda, Hart, Mattox, Russell
Nays: None

Motion Passed

Nominations for Office of President of Council

Council Member Cobb requested nominations for Office of President of Council

Council Member Mattox nominated Council Member Hart, which was seconded by Council Member Cuda

Council Member Mattox moved to close the floor, which was seconded by Council Member Cuda

Roll Call: Ayes: Cuda, Hart, Mattox, Russell, Cobb
Nays: None

Motion Passed

President Hart was sworn in by Cuyahoga County Council Vice President Cheryl Stephens

Nominations for Vice President of Council

President Hart requested nominations for Vice President of Council

Council Member Cuda nominated Council Member Cobb

Council Member Mattox moved to close the floor, which was seconded by Council Member Cuda

Before the Vice President vote for Council, Council Member Russell wanted to make a few remarks before voting. In recent months, she had advocated for one of the top leadership positions on Council for various reasons. She had received more votes than any other candidate in the general and special election. Also, she is one of the two most senior members currently on Council and the only incumbent who lives north of Mayfield Road. She is very proud of all she was able to accomplish with the help of her colleagues during her short time on Council. As a natural leader, she understands that leadership comes with making tough decisions. Even though Council Member Russell's qualifications and achievements were not considered, to move Cleveland Heights forward and to build collaboration with her colleagues, she will be voting yes tonight.

Roll Call: Ayes: Hart, Mattox, Russell, Cobb, Cuda
Nays: None

Motion Passed

Vice President Cobb was sworn in by Law Director Bill Hanna

Other business related to Council Organization

President Hart said she will be adding the Housing Committee to the Committees of Council so there will be legislation regarding this at the next Council Meeting. On Wednesday, January 26, there will be a training on the Open Meetings Act. This is mandatory for Council Members and there will be an email sent regarding this training.

Per the City Charter, even though Mayor Seren has already been sworn in, Council needs to formally accept his resignation which was submitted on December 31, 2021.

***MOTION** to approve former Vice President Seren's resignation from City Council.

Moved by President Hart, Seconded by Vice President Cobb

Roll Call: Ayes: Mattox, Russell, Cobb, Cuda, Hart
Nays: None

Motion Passed

Approval of the minutes of the special Council meeting held Monday, November 29, 2021

Minutes were approved without any objections.

Matter of Record

Council Member comments

In the future, President Hart said she will be limiting comments to three minutes. However, since this is a special occasion and a new Council, she will allow more time.

Council Member Mattox thanked the residents of Cleveland Heights for their support and he looks forward to working with this Council and the new administration. He also thanked his family, his neighborhood, and the Empowerment Church where he pastors in East Cleveland for their support throughout this process. He's looking forward to improving areas of the city that have been overlooked, such as the Noble neighborhood where he grew up. He has connections with East Cleveland and believes a partnership between the two cities would be beneficial. Council Member Mattox encouraged residents to hold him accountable and is willing to have those tough conversations that are needed to move the City forward.

Council Member Cuda said he's been in Cleveland Heights since 1960 and every two years there are new Council Members sworn in. These are moments in time that are defined by the voters' choice for City Council and the decisions they make. Every municipality faces challenges, many are unique to each city. Some of these challenges are created by external forces such as COVID. Two years ago, Cleveland Heights took on the challenge of changing its form of government to an Elected Mayor form of government after one hundred years of having a City Manager form of government. Council Member Cuda is proud to have been a part of the Citizens for an Elected Mayor team and believes it was a historical moment for Cleveland Heights. He believes this is another historical moment because the new Mayor was sworn in as well as five council members. Next month there will be another new council person sworn in for a total of six new council members. There are also several key staffing positions that need to be filled and questions that need to be answered by this new government. Council Member Cuda wants to create a City Council that serves both as a collaborative partner but also as a strong, independent oversight body that is a check and balance on the Mayor. He spent a lot of time talking to residents and learning what is important to them and what they view as issues in the city. Council Member Cuda identified the following issues that concerned residents the most: housing, high taxes, unsatisfactory City services, crime increase, schools, and lack of responsiveness from City Council and City Hall. He believes the first step to solving these issues is identifying and acknowledging them. Once they acknowledge these problems, they need to take action. They will be most effective if they can collaborate and work as a team. Council Member Cuda thanked the members of Citizens for an Elected Mayor for making this day possible. He also thanked his wife Sandy, his brother Chris, and his mother who passed away eight years ago. He concluded by wishing everyone a Happy New Year and thanked the residents for the honor of serving the community.

Vice President Cobb said this is the third time he has taken the Oath of Office for Council. The first time was on April 15, 2019, after which he gave a lengthier speech, which is still available on the City's YouTube channel for anyone who would like to hear it. He will be brief this time and would like to thank the voters for their trust and faith in electing him to continue to serve on Council. He welcomed the new Council Members and looks forward to working with them and the new Mayor. Vice President Cobb also thanked his wife, Ruth, for her continued support, guidance, and good advice.

Council Member Russell thanked all of the residents for re-electing her to Cleveland Heights City Council. She said she is honored and humbled that she earned the trust of the voters. The New Year is a time of reflection and an opportunity to focus on the future. She is proud of everything she was able to accomplish for the residents with the help of her esteemed colleagues and hardworking staff during her first term on Council. Council Member Russell highlighted many of these accomplishments and stressed that all of this was achieved during a pandemic. She believes 2022 will bring unique opportunities to Cleveland Heights like investing in its treasures, our housing stock, Severance Circle, our distressed communities, like Taylor, Noble, North Coventry, and our business districts. We are one Cleveland Heights. We must live up to our motto. All are welcome. She noted we must begin to look towards the future and how we sustain Cleveland Heights for another 100 years by investing in solar projects, electric or hybrid

vehicles. A good environment is important for the sustainability of our city. We need to continue working with the community on the importance of recycling and having a balance of green space, trees, and development to offset our tax base for a healthy and safe, thriving community. These are some of the things she will be focused on with the help of her colleagues over the next 4 years. She said being an elected official is not easy but serving this community has been a privilege, an honor, and a pleasure. Council Member Russell thanked her husband, her children, her grandchildren, and her mother for their help and support throughout this process. She concluded by thanking the residents for all of their support and reminded everyone that she is only an email or phone call away.

President Hart thanked Council for trusting her to be Council President. She also thanked the residents for their input and trust in herself and her colleagues. She believes today is the beginning of a new era for Cleveland Heights with an elected Mayor and a new Council, all of whom are committed to transparency, openness, and getting things done. They all are here because they want to make a difference in this City. President Hart thanked Vice President Cobb and Council Member Russell for their service in the past and everything they've been able to accomplish. She also thanked the new Council Members for their energy and excitement. Over the next few months, many things will be new since they are working with a new form of government. She stressed that this is one city, not divided by North and South. Members of Council represent all of the residents in Cleveland Heights, not just the South side or the North side. They must all work together to ensure that their vision of one city, a welcoming city, is a reality. She wants to see everyone treated equally and every neighborhood thrive. She is looking forward to working with the new Council and the Mayor to accomplish all of these things. Together, they will accomplish great things.

NEXT MEETING OF COUNCIL: MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022

Respectfully submitted,



Melody Joy Hart
President of Council



Amy Himmelein
Clerk of Council