CIRCLEVILLE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES 1/6/2026

Circleville City Council convened in Council Chambers Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. Council members present at Roll call: President Barry Keller, At Large Members Katie Logan-Hedges, Sheri Theis, and Tom Klitzka, First Ward Jeff Hallinin, Second Ward John Moats, Third Ward Jake Davison, Fourth Ward Tom Duvall, Clerks Melissa Burns and Sarah Kolesar. Invited guests present: Mayor Michelle Blanton, Law Director Kendra Kinney, Auditor Mark Bidwell, Service Director Jim Stanley and Utilities Director Brian Frost.

President Keller called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, and invocation was given by all.

Hallinin motioned to approve City Council minutes from December 16, 2025. Klitzka seconded. Motion carried.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS:
Keller welcomed Jake Davison to his newly elected position. Keller announced that a Committee of the Whole meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. The agenda will include three pieces of legislation for consideration: a tax incentive for HCL, an extension of the marijuana dispensary moratorium, and the appointment of an interim treasurer. Keller also noted that the committee will enter executive session to discuss the wage reopener for the Police and Fire Departments.
Duval noted that he has a couple Ordinance on the Agenda for third reading.

QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS TO ADMINISTRATION:
Law Director Kinney stated that she will attend the Committee of the Whole meeting to present information regarding the ongoing wage reopener negotiations for the Police and Fire Departments.
Mayor Blanton welcomed Mr. Davison and provided several updates that were included in the recent newsletter. The Mayor announced that the City will be participating in the America 250 celebration throughout the year, beginning with January's theme honoring Ohio's firsts and originals. Mayor Blanton also shared that she will host community meetings on the following dates: March 19, 2026, June 3, 2026, and September 17, 2026.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:
Patty Hamilton, of 22798 Morris Leist Road, Stoutsville, Ohio 43154, spoke on behalf of family and friends. Mrs. Hamilton thanked Council for taking action to provide cleaner water for Circleville residents. She expressed concern about the proposed water rate increases and asked whether the increase could be reduced to $6 per month.
Will Thomaschek, of 1631 Atwater Avenue, Circleville, Ohio 43113, also voiced concerns regarding the monthly water rate increase.
Aaron Barthelmas, of 430 Holiday Lane, Circleville, Ohio 43113, inquired whether the water rate increase is specifically to fund the installation of the new filtration system, how the City plans to sustain the long-term operation and maintenance of the system, whether grants will be pursued to help offset the monthly increase for residents, and what the expected lifespan of the new system will be.

COMMUNICATIONS: City Council received three pieces of correspondence.

1) Council received a letter of resignation from the elected City Treasurer Justin Arnold. Mr. Arnold has moved outside of City limits and will not be able to serve for that purpose.

2) Columbia Gas sent a letter stating that after infrastructure replacement in 2025, they will submit an application in February for recovery cost. The Infrastructure Replacement Program replaces aged cast iron, wrought iron, unprotected coated steel, and bare steel distribution pipe as well as hazardous customer service lines. Anyone can view the pre-filing notice on PUCO's website at www.puco.ohio.gov, and review the filing made for case No. 25-1058-GA-RDR.

3) Council received a letter from the Mayor thanking Richard Liston for accepting reappointment to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Liston's new term will expire on December 31, 2031.

Discussion: Keller spoke regarding the City Treasurer resignation. Keller stated the issue will go to the Republican Central Committee to handle the application process, review resumes, and handles interviews.

MOTION & ROLL CALL VOTE:

Hedges motioned to add the correspondence on record for City Council. Theis seconded. Roll call. (7 Yeas- 0 Nays).

ORDINANCES FOR THIRD READING:

a) AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH WATER RATES FOR WATER SERVICES TO THE USERS OF THE WATER WORKS SYSTEM OF THE CITY OF CIRCLEVILLE, OHIO AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Discussion: Council Member Duvall explained that he had held the ordinance for three full readings to ensure the public was thoroughly informed about the proposed changes. He emphasized that a key component of the project involves replacing lead and galvanized service lines, which federal regulations require. While the portion of the line from the city main to the property line is typically the homeowner's responsibility, Duvall noted that the City has elected to cover the full cost of replacement as a benefit to residents. Duvall also highlighted that the proposed new membrane filtration system will effectively remove PFAS from the water supply. He pointed out that testing has confirmed the presence of contaminants, including PFAS, in the Teays River. He added that the Service Committee will continue to pursue grant opportunities and, if successful, would propose rate adjustments or decreases for residents if feasible.

Frost responded to questions and concerns raised by the public earlier in the meeting. Regarding the proposed $13 monthly increase in water usage rates, Frost clarified that the adjustment is being phased in gradually over a five-year period. He shared that recent pilot testing results indicate PFAS levels in the treatment stream are increasing, highlighting the urgency of the upgrades. While the City is actively seeking grants to help cover project costs, Frost noted that such funding is never guaranteed and that many other communities are competing for the same limited resources. He stressed that once the water supply is fully protected, the City will revisit the rates; however, the immediate priority is safeguarding public health through clean, compliant drinking water. Frost also reminded the audience that the wastewater treatment plant remains under a 30-year loan and is not yet paid off.

MOTION & ROLL CALL VOTE:

Hedges motioned for passage of the Ordinance. Hallinin seconded. Roll call. (7 Yeas- 0 Nays). The Ordinance is passed and assigned #01.01.2026.

b) A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO APPLY FOR, ACCEPT, AND ENTER INTO A WATER SUPPLY REVOLVING LOAN ACCOUNT (WSRLA) AGREEMENT TO FUND THE UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR WALNUT STREET PROJECT CONSTRUCTION; TO AWARD THE UTILITY IMPROVEMENTS FOR WALNUT STREET TO DARBY CREEK EXCAVATING INC. AND DESIGNATING A DEDICATED REPAYMENT SOURCE FOR THE LOAN.

Discussion: Duvall stated the Walnut Street Project received a grant for the design and now the City is ready to implement that design.

MOTION & ROLL CALL VOTE:

Hedges motioned for passage of the Ordinance. Moats seconded. Roll call. (7 Yeas- 0 Nays). The Ordinance is passed and assigned #01.02.2026.

New Business:

1) Keller announced the Committee Assignments for 2026-207. Keller stated he is creating a new Committee, the Boards and Commissions Committee, to help with the oversight of Council appointed Boards and Commissions. The new committee will help the Boards receive training and additional resources, screening and review applications, developing policies and procedures, and be their liaison. The new Committee Assignments are as follows:
    a. Finance Committee: Chair Hedges with Moats and Duvall.
    b. Safety Committee: Chair Moats with Hedges and Hallinin.
    c. Judicial Committee: Chair Klitzka with Theis and Davison.
    d. Service Committee: Chair Duvall with Hallinin and Davison.
    e. Strategic Planning Committee: Chair Theis with Klitzka and Davison.
    f. Boards and Commissions Committee: Chair Hallinin with Klitzka and Theis.
    g. Committee of The Whole: Chair Keller with all of Council.

2) Keller announced that Sheri Theis has resigned from her position on the PICCA Board. Klitzka will now serve on the PICCA Board representing City Council.

3) Election of Council President Pro-Tem,

MOTION: Hallinin nominated Katie Hedges to serve as President Pro-Tem. Moats seconded.
MOTION: Duvall nominated Sheri Theis to serve as President Pro-Tem. Klitzka seconded.
VOTE: A vote tally was counted and read by Law Director Kendra Kinney. By a vote of 4-3, Sheri Theis is the new President Pro-Tem.

Hallinin motioned to adjourn the City Council meeting. Duvall seconded. Council adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Minutes prepared by: Melissa Burns, Clerk.