

MINUTES
CLEVELAND CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL SCHEDULED MEETING
Thursday, August 22, 2019

Members of the Cleveland City Council met in a special meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 22, 2019, in the lobby of the Cleveland City Hall located at 105 W. Caddo, Cleveland, Oklahoma with Mayor Scott Rusher presiding. The agenda for this meeting was posted on the front door of the Cleveland City Hall on August 20th, 2019, at 1:37 p.m.

Notice of this meeting was received by the City Clerk on Friday, August 16, 2019 at 9:20 a.m.


1. **Call to order.** Mayor Scott Rusher called this meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.
2. **Roll Call.** Roll call was taken by Michelle Lehnus, City Clerk, with the following members present:
Present: Scott Rusher, Brian Torres, Lee Merrifield, David Carter, Mike Carroll
Absent: None
3. **Discussion regarding status update and future plans for the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce.** Chamber of Commerce board members Joann McGrew, Miguel Esparza, Kim Myles, Kim Garrison, and Pam Aubrey were present. Councilor Brian Torres asked for an update as to what is going on with the Chamber of Commerce. Ms. McGrew advised that Executive Director Mary Johnson Hardesty is no longer working for the Chamber of Commerce as of August 8, 2019, due to the Chamber of Commerce being in debt. The City of Cleveland has not yet been paid rent; Ms. Johnson-Hardesty had not yet been paid as of August 8, 2019, due to failed fundraisers and lack of membership drive. The Chamber of Commerce board members paid Mary Johnson-Hardesty's salary from their individual contributions. Kim Myles provided financial paperwork to the council, showing that the Chamber of Commerce had paid off half of their debt since Ms. Johnson Hardesty's termination. She also advised that the Chamber of Commerce was expecting an inflow of cash due to the upcoming circus and rent from the current subleases. She advised that the current process allowed the Executive Director to be in charge of the debit card and checkbook and that the Chamber of Commerce Board reviewed financials once a month; however, their review of financials did not allow for them to know what was currently due or being spent, only what had already been spent. Councilor Lee Merrifield noted that Ms. Johnson-Hardesty was only supposed to work 24 hours per week and asked if that was enough hours for that position or if the Chamber of Commerce needed a full-time position. The Chamber of Commerce board agreed that they needed a full-time employee but had never been able to afford it. Pam Aubrey shared that she thought Create Bridges was supposed to help pay for the Executive Director. Councilor Lee Merriman shared her knowledge of Create Bridges as a study of economics and tourism. Mayor Rusher shared his appreciation that the

Chamber of Commerce Board was attending the meeting. He said it was a good opportunity to clear up any misconceptions and that the City of Cleveland wants to help the Chamber of Commerce and have a good working relationship. Mayor Rusher presented the Chamber of Commerce board with an idea. The Chamber of Commerce does not currently have an active 501c3 and the City of Cleveland cannot continue to fund the Chamber of Commerce through an economic development check. Mayor Rusher advised that he had spoken to City Attorney Bryan Drummond and he (Mayor Rusher) was proposing the dissolution of the Chamber of Commerce and the development of the Cleveland Industrial Economic Development Authority (CIEDA). This authority would be structured like Cleveland Municipal Authority, Airport Authority, and the Cleveland Area Hospital Authority. The benefactor would be the City of Cleveland and the Cleveland City Council would appoint a 10 person board to run CIEDA. CIEDA would need by-laws to be written and bank accounts to be opened. The CIEDA board could name an Executive Director that would be a full-time position that would be paid for by the City of Cleveland. Mayor Rusher asked the Chamber of Commerce board to take some time and think about this option. Ms. McGrew asked that if the Chamber decided they wanted to remain a Chamber of Commerce and not participate in CIEDA, would the City of Cleveland Consider reducing the current amount being charged for rent. Mayor Rusher advised that the council could vote on a possible rent reduction. Councilor David Carter asked that the Chamber of Commerce board get together and develop a mission statement, a business plan, and an outline of the things that the Chamber of Commerce is supposed to be doing. Councilor Brian Torres requested this item be placed on the agenda at the next regularly scheduled meeting on September 12, 2019.

4. **Adjournment.** A motion to adjourn was made by Brian Torres and seconded by Mike Carroll. This motion carried with the following roll call vote: (5-0)
Aye: Scott Rusher, Brian Torres, Lee Merrifield, David Carter, Mike Carroll
Nay: None

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 p.m.

Scott Rusher, Mayor


Michelle Lehnus, City Clerk