



Following the Pledge of Allegiance, a regular meeting of Wickliffe City Council was called to order by Council President Ed Levon on Monday, February 10th, 2025 at 7:00 PM in Council Chambers at Wickliffe City Hall.

The following were present at **Roll Call**:

Council President	Edward Levon
Council Members	Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Salotto, Thielman
Mayor	Joseph Sakacs
Law Director	Jeremy D. Iosue
Finance Director	Chlondra Hunter
Engineer	Peter J. Formica
Service Director	Dave Kroccheck
Building Commissioner	Raymond Sack
Recreation Director	Timothy Stopp
Police Chief	Jonathon Bush
Fire Chief	Christopher Grossman

Excused: None

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Thielman, seconded by Bala, to allow Councilpersons Salotto and Gerhardstein to abstain from voting on the minutes of the Wickliffe City Council Meeting of January 27, 2025.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried.

Motion by Thielman, seconded by Koski, that the minutes of the Wickliffe City Council Meeting of January 13, 2025 be approved as presented.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Thielman
Abstain: Gerhardstein, Salotto
No: None

Motion carried. **January 27, 2025 meeting minutes approved.**

Reports and Communications from Mayor/Safety Director *Written Report Submitted*

Mayor Sakacs noted cities receive a percentage of the excise tax from marijuana dispensaries. The Mayor reported Governor DeWine has proposed that the state keep all of the excise tax, taking away all funds from the municipalities. They Mayor noted he "went into defense mode" and contacted Senator Cirino and Representative Troy. Senator Cirino assured the Mayor this is the beginning of a long process. The proposed budget is currently in the House and will move to the Senate, then there will be an opportunity for the Mayor to go to Columbus to testify. He noted this is very important, since it seems our intake continues to get lower and our pay-out keeps getting higher. He noted he will keep everyone updated as he receives updates.

The Mayor also noted he met with First Energy last week regarding lighting concerns. They are reviewing the wattage and directional placement of fixtures. First Energy's operations will complete a site evaluation and will get back to us. He is aware that Council has discussed replacing street lights as we redo roads. He was made aware that the agreement we have [with First Energy] is that they replace expired lights. If we decide to change out lights that are not expired, the cost to the City will be \$240.00 per light fixture. He wanted Council to know, as this may require an adjustment to the budget. He noted the Engineer may have been aware of this, but he did not know and wanted Council to be aware.

Councilperson Salotto inquired as to the amount of marijuana excise tax, on average, comes in per year. They Mayor noted it just started and he wasn't sure. Finance Director Hunter noted we have not yet received anything. She noted it has not yet been appropriated, as there are still arguments regarding who will receive funds. She stated Governor DeWine's current proposal is to increase the tax to fifteen percent (15%) and keep it all in the State's General Fund. Ms. Salotto asked how much we received last year, and Ms. Hunter noted we have not received anything. The Mayor noted we were to receive a couple hundred or thousand a year, so this will be detrimental to us. Councilperson Koski asked what the State plans to do with it. Mayor Sakacs noted he did not know, but hopes to find out as it gets closer.

There were no additional questions or comments for the Mayor.

Reports and Communications from Director of Law

Law Director Iosue had nothing to report. There were no questions or comments for the Law Director.

Reports and Communications from Council President

Council President Levon noted a Liquor License Transfer was received for 29417 Euclid Avenue. The license is being transferred from: Azol & Tina Tobacco & Beverages LLC DBA Tina's Discount Tobacco & Beverages, to: Nawatara LTD DBA Simans Premier Smoke & Convenience in Ward 2A. Council President Levon instructed the Ward Councilperson, Mr. Gerhardstein, to let the clerk know if there were any objections. Mr. Gerhardstein had no objections.

Additions or Amendments to Agenda

Councilperson Jaworski asked to add Street Dedication of Lincoln Landing to New Business as Item A. Council President Levon added this item to New Business Item A.

Councilperson Jaworski asked that AI Transcription Software to New Business as Item B. Council President Levon added this item to New Business as Item B.

Councilperson Gerhardstein asked that Police Officer Training Reimbursement as New Business Item C. Council President Levon added this item to New Business as Item C.

Administrators

A. Police Chief (Bush)

Chief Bush noted he had nothing to add to his previously submitted report.

There were no questions or comments for the Police Chief.

B. Fire Chief (Grossman) Written Report Submitted

Chief Grossman noted he had nothing to add to his submitted report.

There were no questions or comments for the Fire Chief.

C. Finance Director (Hunter) Written Report Submitted

Finance Director Hunter noted January is now closed and the General Fund Carry-Over Balance is approximately \$7.3 Million. She stated there were three pays in January.

Councilperson Gerhardstein asked, with regard to the revised budget they received, noting it still shows a projected \$1.4 Million deficit including \$899,000.00 which needs to be payed back to Net Profit Tax, if this is correct. Finance Director Hunter noted this is correct.

There were no further questions or comments for the Finance Director.

D. Engineer (Formica) Written Report Submitted

Engineer Formica noted he had nothing to add to his submitted report.

Councilperson Gerhardstein noted, with regard to the Mayor's comments about street lights and the cost, he believed this was covered last fall when this was discussed regarding replacing street lights. He noted some of the streets only have a few light fixtures and believed the estimate for replacing the lights was included in the cost of the project. Mr. Formica noted it was not part of the contract with any of the contractors. He also noted the former Service Director was coordinating this with the electric company

to have them changed out with whatever NOPEC funds we have. He believes we will continue unless notified otherwise. Mr. Gerhardstein asked if we can include a quote for each of the roads as we go with regard to light replacement so Council can decide if they will spend the \$250 per fixture. The Engineer noted that will not be a problem, and Mr. Gerhardstein thanked him.

Councilperson Bala noted that, while driving on Rockefeller between Euclid and Ridge, he noticed that one side of the road, going south, is torn up, but the other side is fine. Mr. Formica noted he believes that when it was poured, there were two different types of concrete used due to a shortage of cement. He noted he is unsure which is which, but one side did not hold up like the other. Mr. Formica also noted the difference is visible with regard to hue. He noted he will look into this. Mr. Bala asked if both types of concrete were spec-ed up, and Mr. Formica noted they were. He also noted they typically use a faster drying concrete in order to get residents back into their drive as soon as possible. He stated there have not been many issues with this. Councilperson Bala asked if there was anything we could do, and Mr. Formica noted it is fifteen to twenty years old.

Councilperson Gerhardstein asked if there was anything that could be done to address the problem on Harrison. Mr. Kroccheck noted they are not plowing, but only salting. There was one person who was there and was not aware of the problem. He is hoping to use some of the funds from the road/slab projects and stretch it to Harrison. Mr. Gerhardstein asked if this will be addressed in the summer, and Mr. Kroccheck noted it would and that it "definitely needs addressed".

There were no further questions or comments for the Engineer.

E. Service Director (Kroccheck) Written Report Submitted

Service Director Kroccheck noted he had nothing to add to his submitted report.

Councilperson Koski noted there is a pole missing at the end of Rush Road at Twin Lakes and it is very dark. Service Director Kroccheck noted there are actually four poles missing there, and yes, it is very dark in that area. Two of the missing poles were taken down by the tornado. He noted First Energy is aware of the situation. They have it marked out for OUPS to replace the poles.

Councilperson Jaworski asked the Service Director to include the current overtime usage in his monthly report to Council, noting it would be helpful to see the current amount of overtime used.

There were no further questions or comments for the Service Director.

F. Building Commissioner (Sack) Written Report Submitted

Building Commissioner Sack reported the sanitary sewer line has been installed at the Sunset Development property and will be hooked into the line on Bellview Avenue. The next step here will be the water line tie-in to Euclid Avenue which will occur this week. The Police Department will assist with traffic as some lane closures will be necessary.

There were no further questions or comments for the Building Commissioner.

G. Recreation Director (Stopp) Written Report Submitted

Recreation Director Stopp informed Council that Fox 8 News was at the Senior Center today filming a segment for their morning show. The seniors were taped reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, which should air sometime in March.

There were no questions or comments for the Recreation Director.

Audience Participation

Council President Levon opened Audience Participation to those in attendance at 7:16 PM.

He noted this portion of the meeting is intended for the audience to address the Council and Mayor, not the directors. Anyone wishing to address Council should use the microphone as the meetings are being streamed on YouTube; they must be acknowledged and give their name and address for the clerk's record and will be given a five-minute maximum for their comments.

After multiple calls inquiring if anyone would like to address Wickliffe City Council and there being no reply, Council President Levon closed Audience Participation at 7:17 PM.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee Meeting Minutes from the February 3rd, 2025 meeting were presented by Council President Levon.

Commission Reports

Councilperson Jaworski reported there was a Planning Commissions Meeting held February 6th, 2025. The Commission received an application for consideration and recommendation of requested rezoning from I-R District to R1-75 Residential located at 2688 in an I-R District. The Commission approved a request for Sketch Plat, a request for Preliminary Plat Approval for what is temporarily being called the Lincoln Landing Subdivision, and a request for informal discussion of proposed amended Zoning Map from General Business to Multi-Family and a portion of R1-60 to Multi-Family at Parcel 29B-007-0-00-004. There was also an ARB meeting that night. The discussion had to be tabled and will resume the meeting this Wednesday evening at 6:00 PM.

Old Business

There was no Old Business.

New Business

A. Lincoln Landings Street Dedication

Councilperson Jaworski noted there hasn't been one of these in a while. He would like Mr. Levon to add discussion on the pros and cons of street dedication into the proper committee, especially if the developer wishes to have an HOA, it could save the City some cost if the street is not dedicated and let the HOA take care of everything. Council President Levon added this item to the Improvement Committee for further discussion.

B. AI Transcription Software

Councilperson Jaworski noted the Planning Commission meeting was over four hours and the secretary mentioned it would take her over twelve hours to transcribe. He wondered if there was AI software that would be helpful to the committee secretaries to be more efficient at a reasonable cost. He asked the administration to please look into this. Council President Levon added this item to the Finance Committee for further discussion and instructed the Mayor to look into this and let Council know when they are ready to call a meeting to discuss it.

C. Police Officer Training Reimbursement

Councilperson Gerhardstein wanted to notify Council that OR2025-04 was on their agenda a year ago. After speaking to Chief Bush, it was discovered that an officer that was hired did not have his training. The City paid his training costs as well as his salary and hospitalization, etc. Once the officer's probationary period ended, he took a job in Geauga County. This ordinance failed to pass last year. Since this occurred, Chief Bush is in favor of passing this ordinance. He is frustrated as he has to start all over again. The Chief was not 100% behind this last time, however this time he is frustrated and willing to back this. Mr. Gerhardstein asked the chief if he was correct and the chief responded, "100%".

Mr. Gerhardstein also noted there was discussion last time regarding scaring off candidates with this policy. Chief Bush noted they just gave another test as they are hiring, and of the twenty-two candidates, only four have the Police Academy. He noted at least one of the two he hires will not have the academy. He believes this legislation is a good idea since we have been burned once. Mr. Gerhardstein noted it was brought back not only by his request, but with the support of the Chief, as they both believe the officer walked away with a career that the residents paid for. There is no way to get back the payroll or the healthcare, but we could have at least gotten back the funds for the schooling.

Councilperson Bala asked the Chief what the cost of the schooling is. Chief Bush noted the City paid \$4,800 for Patrolman Ours academy training. Chief Bush also noted that the ordinance will read if the employee leaves within a year, they will be required to re-pay the whole amount, if it is between one and two years, they will owe seventy-five percent back, if between two and three years, it will be fifty percent, if between three and four years, it will be twenty-five percent. Mr. Bala asked if four years was a long time, and Chief Bush noted if they are here after four years, they are going to be here. He noted he didn't ever think this would occur, but this generation comes and goes as they please.

Mr. Bala asked if other cities do the same thing. Chief Bush noted he's never lost someone like this. Council President Levon noted he came up with the formula based on his research on other cities in Ohio; that is how he came up with the pro-rated system when this was originally introduced. Yes, other cities definitely do it. Mr. Bala noted he meant cities around here, as that is what we usually base it on.

Councilperson Jaworski asked Councilperson Gerhardstein if it was his suggestion to introduce the same legislation with the same language as last time. Mr. Gerhardstein noted it is on the agenda and it technically on first reading. He noted he plans to call for suspension of the three readings, since the test has already been administered and he didn't want to take a chance to go beyond that. He noted Council will either pass it or it will fail, adding it has been voted on before. He noted he had a discussion with the Chief who asked for it to come back. Mr. Jaworski noted he fully supported Mr. Gerhardstein and the Chief. Chief Bush noted there is a new set of circumstances now with this generation and he was blindsided by this. Council President Levon noted he asked the clerk to prepare this legislation the same as it was last year with a new number for this year.

Councilperson Salotto asked if there was any concern that this would deter new officers. She also asked if, around here, other cities have a similar policy. Chief Bush noted he believes there are a few, including Willoughby Hills. He has conversed with other chiefs on this topic and they have noted they would have asked for the money back regardless of a policy. He also noted he spoke with our Law Director about doing this as well. He noted they were able to recover some money, about \$1,500.00 for contractual things/equipment. Ms. Salotto noted she wanted to be sure as there was a lot of discussion about how it would be a deterrent. Chief Bush noted until it happened to him, he was on the other side, but he does not want to get burned again.

Councilperson Thielman noted he agrees with Councilperson Bala that the time frame could be shorter. He suggested one year, as he does not like the idea of four years. Council President Levon noted he believes it depends on how long it truly takes to train a police officer, and asked Chief Bush how long he believes it takes. Chief Bush noted that in this situation, the gentleman was here longer than a year. He was not "cutting it", so his probation was extended. He had six months of the academy, then another four months of field training, then a year of probation. He recommends that this extend at least until the probationary period is over, as in this situation, the gentleman was still on probation when he left. Mr. Thielman asked what the cost of the academy was, and it was noted it is \$4,800. It was noted we cannot ask for other money back, as those are hours worked. We would only ask for the academy money back. Chief Bush noted he tries to send candidates to the State Patrol Academy as it is free, and he believes it is a better program.

Ordinances

OR2025-02 AMENDED By Title Only An ordinance accepting a highway easement granted by 28825 Euclid Avenue, LLC. unto the City of Wickliffe, Ohio as to a portion of the property located at 28825 Euclid Avenue in said city **FIRST READING**

OR2025-04 By Title Only An ordinance enacting Chapter 149.06 Officer Training Payment and Reimbursement of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Wickliffe, Ohio **FIRST READING**

Motion by Gerhardstein, seconded by Koski, the rules of Wickliffe City Council be suspended and Ordinance 2025-04 be placed on third and final reading.

Discussion: Councilperson Bala noted he believes the ordinance should require reimbursement after two years, noting four years is too long, and adding it is only \$4,000.00.

Roll Call:

Yes: Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon

No: Bala, Salotto, Thielman

Motion failed. Legislation moves to Second Reading

OR2025-05 By Title Only An ordinance authorizing the Mayor of the City of Wickliffe, Ohio to enter into a contract with the Ohio Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (Clerical); and declaring an emergency

Motion by Bala, seconded by Salotto, the rules of Wickliffe City Council be suspended and Ordinance 2025-05 be placed on third and final reading.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried.

Motion by Gerhardstein, seconded by Thielman, that Ordinance 2025-05 be adopted as presented.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried. **Ordinance 2025-05 adopted.**

OR2025-06 By Title Only An ordinance providing appropriations for current expenses and other expenditures of the City of Wickliffe, Ohio for the period beginning January 1, 2025 and ending March 31, 2025; and declaring an emergency

Motion by Gerhardstein, seconded by Thielman, the rules of Wickliffe City Council be suspended and Ordinance 2025-06 be placed on third and final reading.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried.

Motion by Gerhardstein, seconded by Thielman, that Ordinance 2025-06 be adopted as presented.

Discussion: None

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried. **Ordinance 2025-06 adopted.**

Resolutions

There were no Resolutions.

Other Legislation

There was no Other Legislation.

Miscellaneous

Council President Levon noted he will be out of town on business next week and asked Councilperson Koski which day she would prefer for the Finance Committee Meeting. It was noted the Finance Committee Meeting will be held Monday, February 17th, 2025 at 7:00 PM at Wickliffe City Hall in Council Chambers to review the budget adjustments that were provided by Finance Director Hunter at tonight's meeting based on the suggestions at the February 3rd Budget Meeting. If approved, this item will be reported out to Council.

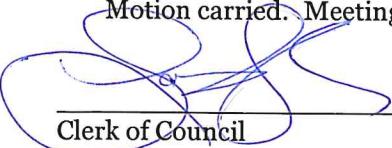
Adjournment

Motion by Gerhardstein, seconded by Jaworski, to adjourn the meeting.

Roll Call:

Yes: Bala, Gerhardstein, Jaworski, Koski, Levon, Salotto, Thielman
No: None

Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.


Clerk of Council


Ray Matora
Council President and Presiding Officer