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City Council

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Agency: [Cleveland City Council](#)

Date: March 25, 2024

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Summary

- Cleveland City Council passed a Gaza ceasefire resolution.
- Before it did, some public commenters called for one. Other comments included topics such as pedestrian safety.
- Council sent two pieces of legislation, one supporting a universal basic employment pilot and another supporting 3D-printed homes, to administrative and committee review.

Follow-Up Questions

- What led council members to their decision to pass a ceasefire resolution? What moved them? *[Editor's note: Council President Griffin indicated in a different [meeting earlier that day](#) that the United Nations Security Council's vote for a ceasefire reopened the door for City Council to consider one.]*

Notes

Meeting started 7:06 p.m.

Council President Blaine Griffin asked Deputy Clerk of Council Allan Dreyer called the roll.

Council members in attendance:

Blaine Griffin

Kevin Bishop

Kevin Conwell

Deborah Gray

Anthony Hairston

Kris Harsh

Stephanie Howse-Jones

Joe Jones
Brian Kazy
Danny Kelly
Rebecca Maurer
Kerry McCormack
Michael Polensek
Jasmin Santana
Charles Slife
Richard Starr

Jenny Spencer was absent.

Council rose for a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Opening statement by Griffin:

He issued a warning, under section [605.04 of Cleveland Code](#), saying this is a lawful meeting. “No person with purpose or to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting shall do any act which obstructs or interferes with the due conduct of such meeting. Members of the public are invited to speak only under the rules set by this council. Disruptions including but not limited to speaking out of turn, making loud noises and loud utterances, are in violation of the rules and interfere with the due conduct of the lawful meeting. Such disruptions may constitute a misdemeanor and the violation of section 605.04. Anyone who disrupts this lawful meeting in violation of the codified ordinances commits misdemeanors and is subject to prosecution. The following is the first and only warning. It is, if this meeting is disrupted, I will gavel the halt to the proceedings and direct the assembled officers to escort any person participating in the disruption out of the chambers. Once persons participating in the disruption are outside the chambers, the officers will close the doors, and the disruptors will be handled as directed by the director of public safety. The council proceedings will not begin again until those that participated in the disruption have left the chamber and the chamber doors are closed.” They would not be allowed back in after the meeting resumed, he said. He repeated this was the first and only warning.

Dreyer: A motion by Gray that the minutes of the last meeting be approved. It was seconded by Bishop.

Public comment was opened.

Rev. Pamela Pinkney, Cleveland. Her topic was that of bridging gaps. Griffin said she is

representing No Fear but God Fellowship Church and The People's Party. She is being paid to comment, he said.

She spoke and asked for a refrain from the group, asking everyone to say good evening to her back. "Good evening, that means that everybody gonna get along up in this room tonight. Right?" She said, "A wise woman builds her house, and a foolish one tears it down." The women here are not going to let themselves tear down their homes or let anyone else do so. She said we all are concerned about national issues, but the answer isn't violence on top of violence. Bridging the gap between us, meaning racial and gender barriers, is the goal. We have to focus on what we have in common not where we differ, focusing on how each of us has a desire for basic necessities and also a safe community to live in. She said we need to have a conversation at the table and see what we have in common, we need to move forward. She said we have the same concerns for what's happening all over the world, but not to bring that mindset to Cleveland and the United States.

Muna Asraf, from Fairview Park, attended to comment on Gaza.

She is a Palestinian American citizen. She opened by saying, "Shame on you all for standing with Israel and continuing to ethnically cleanse my people for over 75 years." She is from Jaffa Palestine, or [Tel Aviv-Yafo](#) in occupied Palestine. She said she knew of the atrocities and hardships her grandparents faced while surviving the 1948 Nakba. She said because she has American citizenship, she has the privilege to visit parts of Palestine that other Palestinians -- living there and across the globe -- cannot. She is not afraid of being bombed and can sleep peacefully while others are unable.

Referencing what she called Israel's atrocities and genocide in Gaza, Asra asked what our city has done to help. "Shame," she said, adding that the city is together with the wrong people. Palestinians have resisted the Zionist occupation for over 75 years. The upcoming generation will not forget what's happening. "Free Palestine," she said.

Adam Bresnahan, from Ward 11, spoke about pedestrian safety. He said pedestrian safety is an issue in Cleveland. He believes it needs to be addressed by city government. The right of way is often violated by drivers in this city. Bresnahan said traffic engineering and infrastructure is the reason for some of the bad behavior. He said these are problematic intersections: East 9th and St. Clair and Superior, Ward 6 Buckeye and East 116th Street, Ward 8 Waterloo and East 156th, Ward 12 Broadway and Aetna, and Ward 14 Denison and Ridge. That last one he considers particularly dangerous, maybe one of the worst on the West Side. He also mentioned a Ward 15 intersection that is bad and said that Jenny

Spencer, the ward's council member, has responded to his messages.

Bresnahan said he's written his Ward 11 council member and made suggestions and solutions he believes may be effective for the issue, such as shorter crosswalk wait times, no extended crosswalk wait times at rush hour, more no right-turn-on-red signs, reduced speed limits, even pedestrian green lights while all traffic lights are red. He said his council member hasn't responded and added that pedestrians are people of the city and they need safety.

Chance Zurub, from Cleveland Heights, spoke about public official accountability. He represented the Palestinian Youth Movement.

Zurub said the group has been attending meetings since last October, pushing council to pass a ceasefire resolution. They've had meetings with council and collected more than 2,000 signatures from Clevelanders on a petition calling on the city to pass a ceasefire resolution, he said.

Since Oct. 16, 2023, the Palestinian Youth Movement has organized over 100 people to speak because they understand the importance of Cleveland to Palestine. He said Griffin pretended to not understand the issue and called this an ["ancient conflict."](#) He continued by saying that members of this council, such as Griffin, have taken trips to Israel, specifically in 2017 and 2019. He also said Griffin has taken photos with known anti-Palestinian agitator [Alec Popivker](#).

He also included Mayor Justin Bibb in his criticism for inaction during what he called a genocide. However, Zurub said, there is a new opportunity for the council to join since the UN Security Council has passed a ceasefire resolution.

Melaak Rashid, from Bay Village, spoke about divestment and international newcomer concerns and was not paid by anyone to speak.

She said she spoke on behalf of Cleveland's newcomer immigrant and refugee community. In our country we currently don't have the fear of war and raids, in contrast to many places around the world, she said. She named Palestine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, Syria and Sudan. She talked about displacement among refugees.

Rashid shared one refugee's family's story. A member of this refugee family came here in 2021 from Syria and is originally from Palestine. His family left a village near Jerusalem during the Nakba in 1948. He still has family in Gaza and last heard he may have lost 35

members of his family. He remembers seeing names of countries on bombs that were dropped in Syria, the United States being one of them. She asked him how he felt about living in Cleveland, and he said every level of U.S. government one way or another is responsible for the support of the very people who are killing his family, and it makes him feel really sad.

She shared this story as an example of how even among their new communities, refugees often find no sense of solidarity, support or safety. The interconnection of global violence is closer than we realize, Rashid said.

She called on the City of Cleveland to divest from any and all financial assets that support Israel, which she said operates on Palestinians' stolen land and sets up colonial settlements. She said we should continue to divest until the apartheid system is taken apart.

Time was called by Council President Griffin.

Ruby Darwish, from Westlake, spoke about a Gaza ceasefire resolution.

Darwish said that public commenters have shown since October that the people of Cleveland are against genocide. Cleveland officials' "lack of understanding, your ignorance and carelessness and blatant disregard of Palestinians" has not discouraged the people to push further, she said. Darwish said she can't tune out the terror taking place in Gaza and maybe the council can. She said she questioned officials' humanity and asked, "Do you really stand with the people of Cleveland?"

Jenna Muhieddine, of Lakewood, also spoke about Palestine.

She began by reading text messages she said were from Alec Popivker.

She said they have been asking to be recognized. She described some of the horrors that she has seen of children dying in Gaza. At this point she started crying for a moment but continued on to say a ceasefire resolution is the easiest and least controversial thing to request, considering the [United Nations Security Council demanded a ceasefire in Gaza](#). She stated that she knows that a ceasefire will benefit people locally and internationally yet the Cleveland City Council has said it wasn't a local issue.

Muhieddine also said some council members need to be held accountable for how they've treated public commenters since October. She said Cleveland is no longer a

welcoming, inclusive city, and it has been council's job to fix that. "Free Palestine," she said.

James Lamb, Ward 3, spoke about his work.

Lamb said he has lived in Cleveland 54 years. Lamb, who said he was born with a disability, expressed concern with being put out of a job previously given to him by former Mayor Frank Jackson. He said his council member praised him for the work he did and called him the "Mayor of Tremont." But then all of a sudden, he lost his job, he said, adding that it's because he asked to meet Mayor Bibb. He said he went to see about being added to the calendar but was told he was not going to see the mayor. James said taxpayers run the city. Griffin said council would follow up with him.

Atef Zurub, Cleveland Heights, talked about Palestine.

He addressed the mayor and said he has lived in the area for 42 years. He said Bibb hasn't done anything for Cleveland so far. He said that 2025 (an election year) is coming and Bibb will be let go. Atef said that he works for Building Laborers' Union 310 and the mayor and elected officials, who come to the union for support. But when the people ask for a small thing such as the ceasefire resolution, officials "kick us out." He spoke about how some council members ignore the public commenters and look at their phones like it's nothing. Atef asked, "What we need you guys for...if you're not going to listen to the people?" We have lost a lot of members in our families, he said, and they are asking for this one thing.

Antoine Tolbert (who also goes by Chairman Fahiem), New Era Cleveland, Buckeye Area, spoke last.

He began by wishing peace and love to everybody. He said he stands with the people of Palestine. He said he represents the demographic of the Southeast Side of Cleveland, whose own children are being slaughtered in the streets. He said, "We have a huge problem right here!" He said context matters, and he defended New Era Cleveland. He said he has had council members reach out to him personally to address issues going on in their neighborhoods to assist families and youth. He said his organization, a [community patrol group](#), was labeled a criminal organization by Council Member Deborah Gray. He said this organization feeds families and has helped search for and find sex-trafficked children. He said to look at the state of the youth if you want to see how a society is doing.

Watch and read transcripts of the full public comments from this meeting:

<https://pubcomment.org/cle/meeting/20240325/>

Emergency ordinances

Council passed:

- [A Gaza ceasefire resolution](#)

Council introduced:

- [329-2024](#) to hire security at recreation facilities, including outdoor pools, for one year.
- [332-2024](#) to apply for a grant for an energy conservation program for energy-efficient remodeling at up to six recreation centers
- [333-2024](#) to install a roadway sign on Chester Avenue

Council Member Kevin Conwell spoke about colon cancer awareness.

Council Member Howse-Jones spoke about ordinance [343-2024](#), which was also introduced and is about basic employment. Cleveland has an opportunity to be a nationwide leader and guarantee jobs to help families, she said.

Howse-Jones also spoke about [ordinance 339-2024](#), which was introduced and would help Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries try out building 3D-printed homes in the city.

For the full legislative action, check out the meeting minutes:

<https://cleveland.documenters.org/documents/minutes-147458/>

Absences - Council Member Jenny Spencer was excused.

Time 8:01 p.m.: Meeting adjourned until April 1.

If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at cleddocumenters@gmail.com with "Correction Request" in the subject line.