



# Allentown

435 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, Pa. 18101

## Minutes - Final

### City Council

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Monday, October 28, 2019

5:30 PM

Council Chambers

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#### Confirmation Hearing - Fire Chief

#### Roll Call

**Present:** 6 - Candida Affa, Roger MacLean, Courtney Robinson, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, and Ed Zucal

**Excused:** 1 - Julio Guridy

#### RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-3235](#)

R88

Appointment of Fire Chief - James Wehr

**Attachments:** [R88 Fire Chief Appointment - James Wehr](#)

[Memo from Mayor Ray O'Connell regarding Nomination of Interim Fire Chief James Wehr](#)  
[Resolution #29872](#)

Mayor Ray O'Connell thanked City Council and stated that it is with great enthusiasm that he is submitted the name James Wehr to become the city's permanent Fire Chief. Jim joined the Fire Department in 1994, after serving in the US Air Force. He was promoted to Fire Specialist in 2005 and later promoted to Lieutenant in 2006 and was promoted to Captain in 2010. Wehr was promoted to Battalion Chief in 2012. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree from the Fire Administration from Columbia Southern University. Chief Wehr is in his 26 year with the Allentown Fire Department. In February 2016, he was named Deputy Chief of the department and was recognized as Firefighter of the year in 2009. Chief Wehr earned the Alfred Fischl Service Award in 2014. The award is presented to an individual who has served the department for at least 20 years and has exemplified himself with consistent work habits during that period. He stated that he is honored to submit Wehr's name for this position.

Chief James Wehr thanked Mayor O'Connell and the Managing Director Joe McMahon for their faith in his ability to lead the Allentown Fire Department. He stated that he will be honored to be officially appointed to the Fire Chief. He thanked his wife and two children for their support over the last 25 years. As a Firefighter, you are often called upon to miss

numerous holidays, a lot of family events, and special occasions. This is not easy on family and they have supported him throughout his career. He thanked his parents for raising him to be the person that he is today which is a great thing. He thanked all who are in attendance who came out to show their support, including members of the Local 302. The men of the Allentown Fire Department are some of the finest first responders you would find anywhere. He would be remiss if he did not acknowledge his friend and mentor going through Deputy Chief, retired Chief Lee Laubach. He stated that when he and Lee Laubach took over the Fire Administration over three years ago, the focus was to upgrade the technology equipment. While the department has come a long way since then, there is still more work that needs to be done. As Chief he plans on continuing that work that was started to enable this department to better serve community. He stated that he plans on developing stronger relationship with the community with educational programs focused on fire prevention. He thanked City Council for their time tonight and consideration as Fire Chief.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated to City Council that attached to his memo are Mr. Wehr's resume and all his qualifications and certifications which are quite lengthy.

Mr. Roger MacLean asked if there were any questions from Council.

Ms. Cynthia Mota thanked Chief James Wehr. She stated that she was running late because she was still dealing with the family of Fountain Hill who lost everything. She stated that the Fire Department did an amazing job. Thanks for tackling everything really fast. It was amazing. Thanks a lot for all the hard work.

Chief James Wehr stated that there are a lot of great guys in the department who knows their job and do a wonderful job at doing the job that they do.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he is not going to say anything about the Chief's resume, although it is very impressive. He commented on Chief Wehr's willingness to cooperate. He stated that he has been involved with a feeding program for children after school and Firehouse Fridays, every Friday at Hibernian Fire Station. He stated to Chief Wehr that he appreciates the support he has given. The Union President Jeremy Warmkessel was very active and willing to help out on the taskforce. He stated that he is there on many Fridays and many of the senior staff as well as the support of the union. That is the start of community service. This past weekend we are giving out, along with Senator Pat Browne carbon monoxide protectors. That's the kind of thing that is over and above and stated that he really appreciates the help they have given the community

and the children of the community.

Chief James Wehr stated you are welcome and it is a pleasure to be doing that work for the community.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he won't give up on the southside with the Fearless Fire Company.

Ms. Candida Affa thanked Chief Wehr for all of this work. She stated that the firefighters are so brave. All the firemen past and present.

Mr. Roger MacLean stated that he can relate to Chief Wehr on missing birthdays and holidays. He did for many years.

Mr. Roger MacLean asked if there were any comments from the public.

Mr. Joseph McMahon stated that while he was taking a walk in the west end last night and ran into the owners who suffered complete damage to their homes on N. Marshall Street, they got into the conversation, and the woman who lost everything in her house said that she wants to give the Chief something because he was such a wonderful person.

Mr. Ed Zucal congratulated Chief James Wehr. He stated that he has nothing but accolades to say about Chief Wehr. He congratulated Chief Wehr on his confirmation and asked Mayor O'Connell what is Chief Wehr's salary.

Mayor Ray O'Connell stated \$123,300. The same.

Mr. Ed Zucal congratulated Chief Wehr and stated that he knows he will continue to do a great job. He thanked Mayor O'Connell for bringing him forward.

Mr. Roger MacLean asked if there were any comments from the public.

**Yes:** 6 - Candida Affa, Roger MacLean, Courtney Robinson, Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, and Ed Zucal

**Absent:** 1 - Julio Guridy

Enactment No: 29872

**ADJOURNED: 5:40 PM**