

Embattled Middleburg Heights Mayor Gary Starr resigns

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Mayor Gary Starr announced his resignation during Tuesday night's City Council meeting after having served in that position for 37 years. (*Beth Mlady/Special to cleveland.com*)

Comment

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MIDDLEBURG HEIGHTS, Ohio -- Embattled **Mayor Gary Starr** resigned Tuesday night, ending his 37-year tenure.

The city leader had been one of Ohio's longest-serving mayors. His last day in office will be Dec. 31. He leaves in the midst of a four-year term, for which he was re-elected in November 2017.

He announced his upcoming departure at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

Starr was beset most of 2018 by [a persistent City Council that continually fought for information and access to legal documents](#) from his administration.

Perhaps more troubling, he was confronted by legal actions waged by former longtime law director Peter Hull (fired without explanation in January); past police chief [John Maddox, who received a \\$380,000 settlement for what initially had been a \\$22,000 matter](#); and previous executive assistant [Patricia Oakar, who recently detailed numerous alleged instances of sexual harassment](#).

In a carefully crafted Memorandum of Understanding signed earlier Tuesday, Starr agreed to "immediately announce his retirement effective Dec. 31." Any disputes and pending investigations between City Council and Starr must cease, according to the document. The mayor will receive his retirement benefits. In addition, neither Starr nor council members "shall disparage the other or their family members."

Starr highlighted his decades of public service to a full council chamber, but also called to task [local media coverage](#) of various personal and city personnel issues.

"Social media and [the news today](#), with reckless and unbalanced stories, make false accusations and slander your family without the slightest qualm," he said. "My advice is, 'Beware.'"

According to the City Charter, [Council President Matt Castelli](#) will become mayor and remain in that position "for the balance of the unexpired term and shall continue in office until his successor is elected and qualified."

If Castelli becomes unable to do the job, Council President Pro Tem David Bortolotto then would become acting mayor.