

Report: Westshore Council of Governments meeting, Oct. 9, 2013

by LWV observers Kathryn Kosiorek (Lakewood chapter) and Susan Murnane (Bay Village)

This report, which contains observations and selected highlights of a meeting of the WCOG, is the second in a new series by members of the League of Women Voters - Cuyahoga Area. It is not an official statement of the LWV.

The Westshore Council of Governments was founded in 1971 "to foster cooperation between municipalities in all areas of municipal service." The mayors of the six WCOG cities meet on the second Tuesday of the month, 9:30-11:30 a.m., at the Lakewood Women's Pavilion. Official minutes are prepared by Mayor Summers' office. All meetings are open to the public.

Present: Mayors Pamela Bobst (Rocky River), Dennis Clough (Westlake), Eileen Patton (Fairview Park), Deborah Sutherland (Bay Village), Michael Summers (Lakewood)

Absent: Mayor Kevin Kennedy (North Olmsted)

Also in attendance: Dave Greenspan, District 1 Representative, Cuyahoga County Council; Police Chiefs from Bay Village, Fairview Park, Lakewood, North Olmsted and Rocky River; Lakewood's Fire Chief; Steve Presley; and presenter Darryl L. Anderson of MARCS.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Summers of Lakewood.

A major part of the meeting was devoted to a presentation by Darryl L. Anderson, retired officer of the State Highway Patrol, and current director of the MARCS (Multi-Agency Radio Communications System) of the state of Ohio. Mr. Anderson presented the case for a statewide, state-of-the art communications system. The need for an integrated statewide system is based on the experiences of law enforcement in several major events including 9/11, Sandy Hook school shooting, and the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. The response time at Sandy Hook was seven minutes. An integrated system could have cut this response time to under a minute. Several advantages of such a system are: better communications over local boundaries, cost savings and better response times, which save lives.

The MARCS system was introduced to Ohio in 2001 and currently is in use statewide by the Highway Patrol. In 2012 an additional \$90 million was granted to the MARCS system to provide statewide implementation. The cities of Lakewood and Rocky River currently are using the MARCS system. The fire departments of all of the WCOG communities currently use the MARCS system. Other communities are either in the process of converting their safety forces to MARCS or considering whether to do so. Current users offered to share their experiences

and assist newer users.

The MARCS mission is stated as follows: "MARCS is dedicated to providing Ohio's first responders and public safety providers with state-of-the-art wireless digital communications, and to promote interoperability, in order to save lives and maximize effectiveness in both normal operations and emergency situations."

Currently, a federal grant pays most of Cuyahoga County's share of the system's operating cost of \$20 per radio per year. The radios were distributed among the communities as requested by applications about two years ago, and radios are still in the process of being distributed. Mayor Bobst expressed concern about the cost of the program to local communities in the future, especially as they will continue to incur expenses for legacy systems for some time. Cuyahoga County Council has assisted with providing phones. Other sources of payment will be explored.

Mayors Bobst and Sutherland reported a very successful meeting with Governor Kasich regarding House Bill 5. The governor promised to veto HB5 if it will hurt the cities.

The meeting was adjourned at 11 a.m. The next meeting will be at the Women's Pavilion in Lakewood on Nov. 13.