

**Report: Westshore Council of Governments (WCOG) meeting, Feb 12, 2014
by LWV observers Conda Boyd and Susan Murnane (Bay Village)**

This report, which contains observations and selected highlights of a meeting of the WCOG, is not an official statement of the LWV. Official minutes are prepared by Mayor Patton's office.

Present: Mayors Bobst (Rocky River), Clough (Westlake), Kennedy (North Olmsted), Patton (Fairview Park), Summers (Lakewood), Sutherland (Bay Village)

Also in attendance: Dave Greenspan, District 1 Representative, Cuyahoga County Council; Steve Presley, Fiscal Officer

The meeting was called to order at 9:40 in the Birch Room at the Gemini Center in Fairview Park and adjourned at 11:25.

Commission Reports

RTA: The federal Transportation Bill is up for reauthorization in 2014. Mayor Summers expressed concern about the Highway Trust Fund's ongoing support for mass transit.

NOACA: There is a new emphasis on strategic planning. The full board will meet quarterly, with committees meeting in the intervening months. Mayor Bobst reported that the Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative (TLCI) awarded \$75,000 for the Detroit Road Traffic and Parking Study with Marion Ramp Redevelopment Feasibility Analysis. The City of Rocky River will fund the \$18,750 balance. Closing the Marion Ramp, which connects the Clifton Park Bridge to Detroit Road, needs public conversation because of the effect on traffic from Lakewood.

Land Bank: Mayor Patton stated the Land Bank is reaching out to the suburbs. Mayor Summers applauded their contribution of \$100,000 to a school demolition project that will be returned when the land is sold. Mayor Bobst expressed gratitude for their help in remediating an abandoned gas station.

County Planning Commission: Mayor Patton has been approved as a member. The first meeting is February 13.

Senior Transportation: Council Member Greenspan is arranging for representatives from Senior Transportation Connection to present information about their services at a future meeting. WCOG cities' senior center staff will be invited to attend.

Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Association: Work on Ohio's budget is ramping up again. There will be a legislative meeting March 12 in

Columbus.

Old Business:

Temporary Appropriations: Mr. Presley will distribute a draft budget before the next meeting.

Crisis Intervention Training: Mayor Patton and Police Chief Upperman will follow up with Bill Denihan to arrange training for west shore police, possibly including librarians and other city employees with extensive public contact.

Fire District Study: The mayors of Bay Village, Fairview Park, Rocky River, and Westlake will meet Monday, February 24th at 11am in Westlake. Mayor Clough will chair in 2014. If the Rocky River Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) collective bargaining agreement is ready, the mayors may follow the Fire District meeting with a WWTP meeting.

FirstAid4Autism: Akron Police Sergeant Mark Farrar is available to conduct training. Council Member Greenspan may be able to help with funding. The mayors will poll their police departments about what training has already been done. The mayors agreed that when safety forces' training is scheduled, all cities should be invited. Police and fire departments cannot be shut down for everyone to attend training. Holding 3-4 sessions in different cities and inviting everyone to participate can maximize the number of people trained at a minimal cost.

New Business:

Regional Civil Service Exam: A listing of each city's eligibility list expiration dates was handed out. The objectives of sharing exam dates are to generate a larger applicant pool, save cities' advertising costs (about \$1500 per exam), and save applicants' fees and time. The cities weight factors differently, so the top applicants may vary. Some cities are required to hire the top applicants and promote from within; others have more flexibility.

CERT: Copies of the annual report were distributed. See <http://westshorecert.com/WSC-AnnualReport2013.pdf>.

Regional Dispatch: Cuyahoga County wants to consolidate all 911 dispatch centers to six sites and to expand the service to include police as well as fire and EMS. Lakewood declined to join the Westshore Central Dispatch Center (WCDC), and Mayor Summers expressed skepticism about the proposed consolidation. WCDC has the capacity to add police calls, but Lakewood, which receives 50,000 calls per year, would be a "game changer". Although consolidation might save 1-2 dispatchers, it would not be worth the cost in lost local knowledge and thus slower service.

Mayor Sutherland stated that the vast majority of Bay Village's 12,000 calls are

not emergencies, and because there needs to be a police officer on premises, consolidation would not result in personnel savings. Furthermore, a police officer must be present in the station if anyone is in the jail.

Mr. Presley stated that some east side cities are pursuing consolidation, and observed that the county has also proposed regional jails, which would eliminate the need for uniformed personnel at police stations. Non-emergency calls could be handled remotely.

Mayor Clough stated that the core problem is how to speed response to 911 calls from cell phones. Mayor Patton stated that despite initial resistance, the WCDC has been a success. She asked the mayors to stay open to the idea. She will call State Representative Nan Baker and ask her whom to contact for further information.

Mayor Sutherland stated she would like to see the county do a pilot project rather than attempting to consolidate all at once. Mayor Summers stated that in 2013, Lakewood spent \$800,000 to update its dispatch operations and integrate its MARCS radios. He suggested that when upgrades are needed, the WCOG cities use modular units and a shared platform.

Health Insurance: Mayor Patton stated that as of January 1, Fairview Park has a 3-year contract with the Cuyahoga County health pool under Medical Mutual and the Cleveland Clinic. The plan is premium based and offers Health Savings Accounts. The new cost is \$1.3 million, a reduction of \$500,000.

Suburban Water Regional Council of Governments: Rocky River and Fairview Park are among 28 communities that have signed a maintenance agreement with the Cleveland Water Department; 40 cities have not signed. Mayor Sutherland stated that Bay Village's failure to sign is costing \$200,000 on the Cahoon Road Sewer Project alone.

MARCS Radios: The \$20/unit/year user fees, which pay for the tower system, are under statewide discussion. Additional monies are expected to reduce the fees and pay for additional radios. Mayor Bobst is on the task force. Lakewood has 320 radios in use.

Road Salt: The Ohio DOT is purchasing an additional 150,000 tons that cities can pick up now and return on the honor system once supplies are available. The mayors agreed that a better procurement plan is needed for next year.

Marine Patrol: Rocky River, Lakewood, and the Metro Parks are collaborating on a Homeland Security grant for a \$266,000 patrol vessel, with the Metro Parks picking up the \$60,000 match portion.

The Westshore Council of Governments was founded in 1971 "to foster cooperation between municipalities in all areas of municipal service." All

meetings are open to the public. The next meeting will be March 26, 9:30-11:30 a.m., in the Fairview Park Gemini Center's Birch Room.