

**Report: Westshore Council of Governments (WCOG) meeting, Wednesday May 14, 2014**

**by LWV observers Conda Boyd and Susan Murnane, Bay Village chapter**

*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 and posted on Fairview Park's website.*

Present: Mayors Patton (Fairview Park), Bobst (Rocky River), and Sutherland (Bay Village). Mayors Clough (Westlake) and Summers (Lakewood) arrived at 9:36 and 9:42, respectively.

Absent: Mayor Kennedy (North Olmsted)

Also in attendance: Dave Greenspan, District 1 Representative, Cuyahoga County Council; Fiscal Officer Steve Presley; Rob Berner, Fairview Park Director of Public Service & Development

Mayor Patton called the meeting to order at 9:39 in the Birch Room at the Gemini Center in Fairview Park.

Announcements:

Mayor Patton announced that WCOG minutes are now available on Fairview Park's website [under *Mayor's Office*]. Fire District Joint Implementation Committee minutes will also be posted.

Brandy Carney, Cuyahoga Emergency Communications System Manager, contacted Mayor Bobst about a possible Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) pilot in Rocky River. Mayor Bobst suggested a Westcom pilot serving Bay Village, Fairview Park, Rocky River, and Westlake would be more appropriate. A meeting with the four mayors and their fire and police chiefs is tentatively set for June 3.

Commission Reports:

**RTA:** Mayor Clough noted that evaluations are due May 20. Mass transit funding was discussed. Passengers cover only 25% of the cost. Other sources include sales tax, the State of Ohio, and the Federal Transportation Act. The federal gas tax has remained \$0.17 per gallon since 1992.

**NOACA:** [Per the last WCOG meeting, the five counties -- Lake, Geauga, Medina, Lorain, and Cuyahoga -- have \$20 billion in infrastructure repair projects. NOACA has \$44 million to distribute.] Mayor Summers discussed the conflict between dividing funding among the five counties equally ("fair share") vs. addressing greatest need ("fix it first"). NOACA Executive Director Grace Gallucci did a "great job" of presenting the options, and "fix it first" prevailed.

Including GCRTA and the Port Authority, Cuyahoga County holds 23 of the 45 Board seats. Mayor Summers discussed the need for a cohesive county caucus led by the County Executive. To maintain their majority, Board members must attend meetings or send their seconds. The issues are complex, so seconds need to stay informed. Mayor Bobst is Mayor Sutherland's second and noted that Mayor Sutherland both attends regularly and keeps her well informed.

*Land Bank:* In June, Cuyahoga County will hold the first hearing on a \$50 million fund to demolish abandoned houses. Fire departments may be offered training opportunities when houses are demolished.

*County Planning Commission:* Mayor Patton was unable to attend the last meeting, but stated that the planning commission wants to be more active in local projects and encouraged the mayors to contact it early in the planning process. Mayor Summers noted that the Commission is facilitating Lakewood's Active Living/Recreation Task Force [whose kickoff meeting is May 20].

Funding for local infrastructure projects from DOPWIC, the state public works program, was discussed. DOPWIC wants to ensure that water and sewer infrastructure be evaluated and repaired as needed as part of all road resurfacing projects but Cleveland opposes the requirement. Mayor Sutherland noted that the suburbs need help with sewers, whereas Cleveland is more focused on simple resurfacing. Mayor Clough stated that is because Cleveland wants to force cities to join their water line maintenance program.

*Cuyahoga County Mayors & Managers Association:* Mayor Sutherland was unable to attend the last meeting. A trip to Columbus is planned for May 28.

Mayor Bobst discussed the impact of Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement 68, which covers accounting for pensions. Pension liability must be disclosed as part of the bond rating process, and pensions are more heavily weighted than in the past. Also, state economic prospects and state funding cuts for municipalities are weighted in the bond rating process, and PERS, fire, and police pensions are underfunded at the state level. Lakewood and Rocky River were recently audited as part of a test of the new standards. Of the over 200 Ohio municipalities involved, only Rocky River and Lakewood maintained their bond ratings.

#### Old Business:

*FirstAid4Autism:* Fairview Park hosted training on May 12 to which WCOG cities were invited. Attendance was light, but attendees said the training was excellent.

*Cuyahoga River Dredging:* Following up on the protest letter he distributed at the last WCOG meeting, Mayor Summers announced that the U.S. Corps of Engineers has decided not to dump dredged material in Lake Erie. Two years' capacity remains in on-land disposal sites. Mayor Sutherland noted one plan

under consideration is to use the material to pave over brownfields.

*Recycling:* Mayor Patton announced that Fairview Park's May 10 Clutter Buster Recycling Event was "a huge success." Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District supported shredding with a grant. Participants included Habitat for Humanity, the Green Team, and Simple Recycling, a for-profit company that collects reusable material, sells it, and returns a tonnage-based rebate to the city. Mayor Bobst mentioned that a tool drive is a great way to support Habitat for Humanity.

*Ready Notify:* [Cuyahoga County has a new free, automated, opt-in notification system similar to Nixle. See <http://ready.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/ReadyNotify.aspx>.] Fairview Park will kick off their participation next month; they will discontinue Nixle. Bay Village has signed up for Nixle for another year, paying \$5,200 for the service that dials residents' home phones. They are conducting Ready Notify training next week and will run both platforms until they have evaluated the new system.

The May 12 tornado watch was discussed. The window for warning of an imminent tornado is seven minutes. Ready Notify did not send alerts. The FCC/National Weather Service alerts sounded during Bay Village's City Council meeting. Lakewood sirens were not activated because there was no imminent threat. Sirens are intended to alert people who are outside. The mayors agreed on the importance of utilizing multiple means for alerts.

#### New Business:

*Supplemental Appropriation for CERT:* Donations of \$7,150 were added. Mr. Greenspan noted that his softball tournament may net only \$1,000 (instead of \$2,000) for CERT this year.

Mayor Sutherland praised the response of CERT, Metro Parks, auxiliary police, and other safety forces in responding to a missing 6th grader on May 12.

*Tub Grinder:* Westlake, Fairview Park, Rocky River, Lakewood, and Bay Village jointly own a tub grinder to chip brush and wood, thereby diverting yard waste from the landfill. (Westlake and Bay Village also jointly own a leaf mulcher.) Westlake operates the grinder and bills the other cities 20% of annual costs. The agreement calls for annual review.

Mr. Berner presented a handout of expenses and utilization for the past ten years. For 2013, the total cost was \$54,583, or \$10,917 per city. The heaviest users were Westlake (59%) and Bay Village (29%), followed by Rocky River (8%), Fairview Park (3%), and Lakewood (0.2%). Mayor Summers stated that he has been aware that Lakewood pays more than its share for this service, but it evens out in the long run because Lakewood uses more of other WCOG services.

The mayors agreed to review the figures with their staffs. Mayor Clough will check the age and condition of the equipment. Cost and utilization will be discussed at the next WCOG meeting.

*Asphalt:* Mayor Bobst stated that Rocky River's asphalt is not hot enough on delivery. She asked for input from the other cities on their contractors.

*ODOT Salt contract:* Lakewood has joined a consortium with Beachwood and Brecksville instead of participating in ODOT's program.

*Fire District Study:* Fairview Park has accepted the grant.

*County Council Update:* Mr. Greenspan met with public works officials about county road maintenance. For 2015, Cuyahoga County will provide materials-only funding to repair potholes and cracks and stripe roads. Funds will be awarded based on greatest need. Cities must pay for labor.

Mr. Greenspan's May 15 town hall meeting will focus on Health and Human Services programs and operations, including consulting services available to cities. He has been working with Lorain County officials on their proposed charter, which will be on the November ballot.

*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 June 11, 9:30-11:30 a.m., in the Fairview Park Gemini Center's Birch Room.*