

## **County Council Regular Meeting: April 22, 2014**

Observer: Marcia Goldberg

*This report contains member observations and selected highlights of a meeting of the Cuyahoga County Council and is not an official statement by any League of Women Voters in the county. For the official disposition of all agenda items, consult the Cuyahoga County Council website at [council.cuyahogacounty.us](http://council.cuyahogacounty.us)*

### **I. Introduction.**

Vice President Dan Brady called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m. and said that Council President C. Ellen Connally was out of town and excused from the meeting. All other Council members were present. The meeting ended at about 6:30 p.m.

### **II. Antecedents, Announcements or Public Comment**

Rev. Pamela Pinkney thanked Council for its work on the public defender project; said she hoped Council would work more with churches to help released prisoners return to productive lives; and complained that the county's Shelter Care program was not working well.

Cleveland Council members Zack Reed and Jeffrey Johnson separately addressed Council, saying they hoped that Mr. FitzGerald's Property Demolition Fund (referenced below by Mr. FitzGerald and by Council) would not use money solely to demolish abandoned houses. They both want the program to be flexible enough to allow rehabilitation or mothballing as options, and complained that the county's Land Bank is not flexible.

Mr. FitzGerald updated Council on the county's "heroin initiative," saying it could serve as a model for the country, and on his plans for the Property Demolition Fund, which he said could total \$50 million. He said the fund would provide "financial capacity" and guidelines, but that local communities would make their own decisions about demolition or other options. He added that the county has not given up on recouping money from banks that made bad decisions during the economic downturn yet faced no consequences—but said that the process is slow.

### **III. Business Transacted**

- Three resolutions related to the construction of a county-owned Convention Center Hotel were adopted on third reading, each 9-1 (with Mr. Greenspan voting no because he opposes the prospect of the county owning a hotel). The first resolution approved an agreement with Hilton Management to manage the hotel; the second amended the hotel design/build agreement with Turner/Ozane/VAA guaranteeing the maximum price of \$217,054 for the joint venture's services through Sept. 1, 2016; and the third provided for a lease purchase of real property, including the hotel. After the three resolutions passed, Mr. Brady announced, "We are building a new hotel."
- Also on third reading, an ordinance amending the county's college scholarship program was further amended by a vote of 7-3, then approved unanimously. The ordinance increases the program's annual scholarship from \$1,250 to \$1,500 (for about 300 students) and allows any unexpended funds any one year to be used for additional scholarships the following year (the original legislation split unspent funds among current recipients). The section of the proposed amendment that would have allowed a scholarship recipient to use the grant at an institution outside of Cuyahoga County was amended by Mr. Schron to instead require, as the original

legislation did, that the recipient attend a college in Cuyahoga County. Mr. Schron's amendment passed 7-3, with Ms. Simon, Ms. Conwell and Mr. Miller in opposition, before the amended amendment passed unanimously.

- Also approved unanimously on third reading: (1) Sale of the county-owned Loew's Building, 1501 Euclid Ave., to Playhouse Square Foundation for \$1. The building had been purchased by the county in 1977 to save it from demolition and has been leased to Playhouse Square since then. This terminates the lease and sells the property. (2) Installment-payment procedures (installment payments are an exception to the usual procedure and were approved because of the high cost to residents) for water and sewer connection charges for residents on Cook, McKenzie and Sterns roads in the western part of the county. (3) The appointment of Michael Abouserhal to serve on the five-member county audit committee for an unexpired term ending Dec. 31, 2016, and the reappointment of Steven Minter to serve on the Cuyahoga Arts and Culture Board of Trustees for a second seven-year term ending March 31, 2017. (4) Changes to the county code to align it with the biennial budget and capital improvements plan process and thereby create more flexibility.
- Approved unanimously for first or second reading adoption under suspension of rules: (1) A resolution supporting State Issue 1 on the May 6 ballot, which would renew the State Capital Improvements Program. (2) Approval of a \$10.3 million award for Shelter Plus Care tenant-based rental assistance services for the homeless. The award, a federal grant, will go to Emerald Development and Economic Network (EDEN) to administer the program, which supports rent for more than 1,200 rental units. (3) Awarding \$4.5 million to Youth Opportunities Unlimited for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Summer Youth Employment Program, which will help 160 employers hire hundreds of youth this summer. The program is supported by federal (97%) and county (3%) funds; state funding has been cut. (4) Agreed to pay the state auditor's office \$555,000 for the 2013 annual county audit, already underway. (5) Various budget account transfers.
- A resolution awarding \$1.7 million to TEC Communications for Wide Area Network and Voice over Internet Protocol consulting services was on second reading and will be on third reading on May 13.
- The Property Demolition Fund discussed by Mr. FitzGerald earlier in the meeting was referred to the Committee of the Whole. Mr. Brady said the committee will have an "interesting discussion" and that it "will take some time."
- A resolution approving a Collective Bargaining Agreement with 64 assistant public defenders was held over.
- Council referred various resolutions and ordinances to appropriate committees. The subjects included: financial management, the county's non-bargaining classification plan, road work, computer networks, a MetroHealth System facility in Medina County, and a lease at 75 Erieview Plaza for operation of the Family Justice Center, and placement services handled by Children and Family Services.
- Finally, Mr. Greenspan announced that he would hold a May 5 charter amendment meeting regarding conflicts of interest.