

County Council Regular Meeting: April 8, 2014

Observer: Janice Patterson

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

I. Introduction

The regular meeting of the County Council was called to order by President E. Ellen Connally at 5:02 pm with all members present.

II. Antecedents, Announcements or Public Comment

Three persons spoke in the public comment section: Adele Eisner, urging Council to vote “yes” on the Voting Rights Ordinance; Lynda Mayer of LWV Cuyahoga Area, urging a “yes” vote on the Voting Rights Ordinance; and Mark Davis, president of Cleveland Thermal, describing his company’s service record. (Later on the agenda Council approved a 20-year-contract to Cleveland Thermal to supply chilled water and cooling for county properties.)

III. Messages from the County Executive

Mr. FitzGerald described actions he had taken earlier in the day to request review by the U.S. Department of Justice on the legality of the State of Ohio’s laws restricting the mailing of absentee ballot applications. He reported to Council on an amendment to the state budget that had been made to reduce the Local Government Fund by 10 percent for any county that sought to supersede the restrictions on application mail-out. He said that the amendment had been withdrawn within an hour of its placement, upon the recommendation of Governor John Kasich and Secretary of State Jon Husted. He concluded his remarks with his personal views on the importance to seeking greater access to the ballot for Cuyahoga County citizens and guaranteeing all the rights of the federal Voting Rights Act.

IV. Business Transacted

* Elise Hara was re-appointed Director of Human Resources and sworn in by County Executive Ed FitzGerald. In other personnel matters, Jeannet Wright’s term as Interim County Treasurer was extended to July 18, 2014, and council members passed an ordinance changing terms for the election of Personnel Review Commission members. Ericka Thomas was reappointed to the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board for a four-year term. Council members approved various changes in the county’s non-bargaining classification plan.

* An ordinance enacting the Cuyahoga County Voting Rights Law and updating the county’s Equity Plan was passed 8-3 by voice vote on second reading adoption under suspension of the rules.

*Several resolutions were also adopted on second reading and under suspension of the rules:

- \$500,000 to College Now Greater Cleveland for the next cohort of the County's educational assistance program

- \$250,000 to augment the budget for the youth detention center to support additional staffing and approval to redirect additional unspent funds from defunct contracts to support staffing;

- approximately \$3.6 million per year for central heating and cooling services on a 20-year contract to Cleveland Thermal, LLC;

- a \$1.5 million economic development fund loan to National Automotive Experts for purchase of a facility in Strongsville;

- six projects totaling \$14.5 million for road and bridge work in seven cities and one township;

- three technology service contracts for county offices, totaling \$7.5 million.

* Largely routine budget appropriations were adopted on first reading under suspension of the rules, after much parliamentary action to separate the requests for serial voting.

* Two items were passed on third reading adoption. One was an ordinance amending the county code to streamline the process for oaths and affirmations. The other awarded \$712,500 for network and consultant services for the Regional Enterprise Data Sharing System.

* Items scheduled for second reading at the April 22 Council meeting include: a resolution expanding the geographic applicability of the Post-Secondary College/University Scholarship Program, a property sale, and payment procedures for certain County water and sewer facilities.

* Four resolutions were read and assigned to committees: a \$2.1 million contract for administration of the Grow Cuyahoga County Fund, an agreement with the State of Ohio regarding the annual audit, an award for technology consultant services, and funds for the 2014 summer youth employment program. In addition, three resolutions involving convention center hotel projects received second reading and will be considered by the Committee of the Whole on April 15.