

County Council Regular Meeting, June 25, 2013

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, council.cuyahogacounty.us.

I. Introduction: The meeting was called to order at 5:15 p.m., 15 minutes late, because the 3 p.m. executive session extended past 5 p.m. All members were present. The meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.

II. Announcements and Public Comments

Near the end of the meeting, Councilman David Greenspan announced that Council may receive 15 proposed charter amendments from the Charter Review Commission. Council's Committee of the Whole will consider them at three meetings: Tuesday, July 9, 3-5 p.m. (before the next Council meeting); Wednesday, July 10, 1-5 p.m.; and Thursday, July 11, 1-5 p.m.

Cleveland Councilman Zack Reed attended the meeting to make a public comment about the county's proposal to use \$90 million left over from the convention center budget to help build a hotel and garage. Mr. Reed wants the new hotel complex to be minority-owned and managed.

County Executive Ed FitzGerald said he met June 24 with several suburban officials to discuss a county plan to use a portion of the money (\$50 million to \$100 million) it has on hand to finance a pilot program of low-interest loans to interested Cleveland suburbs for investment in infrastructure projects. The loans could be used to refinance existing infrastructure loans or to start new projects. There has been a strong response to the proposal, especially by inner-ring suburbs such as Garfield Heights, Euclid and Maple Heights. The pilot program, Mr. Fitzgerald said, may not need to go to Council for approval.

III. Business Transacted

Passed on first or second reading following suspension of rules:

- A \$3 million low-interest Economic Development loan for renovation of a former Cleveland Clinic building on Clemens Road in Westlake for use by Equity Trust Co., which will move from Berea to Westlake after the renovation. Councilman Michael J. Gallagher said he was upset about the loan, did not approve of the way the county treated Berea, and did not want to see it happen in the future. Councilman Jack Schron said the three-year project totals \$20 million and will create 300 jobs in Westlake. County Executive Fitzgerald said the project will create 240 new jobs in the county and that the county (which has discouraged "poaching" between communities within the county) does not subsidize lateral moves without clear economic development potential. Gallagher said he would vote for the resolution only because Berea officials urged him to do so, and that Berea suffered a "double whammy" because the property there will be donated to Baldwin Wallace and taken off the property-tax rolls.

- An ordinance establishing Council’s annual approval, by resolution, of the county’s five-year economic development plan (Councilman Schron said the Economic Development committee would have the resolution ready in July).
- Resolutions awarding a two-year \$582,480 contract for interior painting at county buildings to Frank Novak & Sons; authorizing a five-year renewal (until 2018 and for an additional \$1.8 million) of a lease with Puskarco Ltd. for office space on Brookpark Road in Parma for use by the Department of Workforce Development; authorizing an Economic Development loan in the amount of \$650,000 for redevelopment of a factory at 4400 Carnegie Ave.; making routine amendments to the biennial operating budget; and adopting the Annual Tax Budget for the year 2014 (a routine state requirement).

Items on first or second reading and referred to committee included:

- A resolution placing a 3-mill six-year Mental and Behavioral Health Services levy on the November 2013 ballot.
- A motion amending Council Rules to allow the hiring of a chief of staff for Council. The motion will be on third reading July 9.
- A resolution directing the county executive to develop an “environmentally and economically efficient plan” to encourage county employees to use public transportation and share parking passes.
- A resolution approving the replacement of a Warrensville Center Road culvert in Shaker Heights at a total estimated construction cost of \$860,000.
- Resolutions regarding a service contract for the county’s data center; an amendment to a contract for shelter care; and loans and bond issues for downtown Economic Redevelopment projects .
- A resolution and ordinance involving the county’s non-bargaining classification plan and an ordinance establishing a required oath of office or affirmation for county officers, directors and other employees.