

County Council Regular Meeting: March 11, 2014

Observer: Lesley Hahn

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 meeting was called to order at 5:05 p.m. and adjourned at approximately 6:15 p.m. All Council members were present with the exception of Jack Shron, who was excused. There was no public comment.

A swearing-in ceremony was conducted for Tenth District Councilman Anthony T. Hairston, the first new person to be appointed to Council since its inception. Mr. Hairston replaces Julian Rogers (who was later in the agenda appointed to an advisory board position). Mr. Hairston was sworn in by Cleveland Municipal Court Judge Pinkey S. Carr.

II. Report of County Executive

County Executive Ed FitzGerald, introducing a proposed Voting Rights ordinance, expressed concern over a bill in the state legislature which would limit citizens' rights to vote by mail. He stated that, in 2004, 175,000 citizens of the county were unable to vote because of lack of time. He stated that 78% of these were African-Americans. The county is collecting further information for a legal challenge to the proposed legislation.

Mr. FitzGerald also stated that he is working with Cleveland Schools Superintendent Eric Gordon and Mayor Frank Jackson to find additional funds for the county's Universal Pre-Kindergarten programs.

II. Business Transacted

Twenty-three resolutions received first reading and referral to committee, including one making an award to College Now Greater Cleveland in the amount of \$500,000 from the County's Education Assistance Fund. These resolutions also included many appointments or reappointments to the Cuyahoga Regional HIV Health Services Planning Council.

The rules were suspended to permit immediate adoption of a resolution confirming appointment of Mark A. Parks, Jr. as Fiscal Officer of the County, whereupon Mr. Parks was sworn in by County Executive Ed FitzGerald. Councilman Greenspan declined to vote in favor of this appointment, claiming that Mr. Parks lacked certain qualifications. Mr. Greenspan also challenged appointment of Julian Rogers and Kahlil Seren to serve on the College Savings Account Program Committee, which provides \$100 to student high school graduates, on the basis that the program lacked effectiveness. However, these appointments were approved, as well as that of Lisa M. Hunt to serve on the County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Lastly, Glenn Coyne's appointment to Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency Board of Directors (NOACA) was confirmed by unanimous vote of the Council following third reading.

A resolution for a budget amendment was approved following first reading under suspension of the rules for additional appropriations and transfers between budget accounts, many of which were minor and/or technical in nature. Funds to plan for repairs to the Justice Center generated many questions from the Council. Public Works Director Bonnie Teeuwen explained that the Justice Center, which was built in the 1970's, had attained its projected useful life and that requests for as much as \$300 million for renovations over the next twelve years would be forthcoming in the form of future bond issues. She explained that \$7.4 million was needed urgently for sealing joints in the Court Tower, for additional fire protection equipment, for window replacement and for perimeter security, especially in lower level parking.

Several other matters received first reading and were referred to committee, including:

(1) a proposed amendment to increase maximum yearly scholarships to \$1,500 and to revise the geographical limitations of eligible institutions under the Post Secondary College or University Scholarship Program;

(2) \$2+ million for rehabilitation of Bellaire Road Bridge over Countryman's Creek and \$1.2+ million for resurfacing of West 130th Street and resurfacing portions of Snow Road;

(3) \$400,000 for child support services;

(4) \$2+ million for operation of jail services for city prisoners and use of the City's Central Prison Unit on the 6th floor of the Justice Center;

(5) a \$4.6 million agreement with MetroHealth System for management and healthcare services at the Cuyahoga County Correction Center. (Dr. Talon came forth to state that he will work to create a model of healthcare for prisoners that could be implemented country-wide), and

(6) about \$2.8 million to Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry for emergency shelter services for homeless men and to MHS, Inc. for emergency shelter services for homeless women and families.

An award to Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry for \$553,000 was approved for second reading adoption under suspension of the rules. Councilman Brady reported that his committee – Health, Human Services & Aging – had questioned this request for Adult Guardianship Services thoroughly and had unanimously recommended approval. Still with the rules suspended, issuance of \$39.9 million for revenue Refunding Bonds was approved for the A.M. McGregor Home Project. This was a refunding of an existing bond issue, not a new bond issue.

An ordinance to enact the Cuyahoga County Voting Rights Law (referenced earlier by County Executive FitzGerald) was introduced by Sunny Simon and referred to the Council as a committee of the whole for discussion. This discussion will be held on March 18, at 3:00 p.m.

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