

County Council Regular Meeting: Aug. 26, 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

I. Introduction.

President Connally called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m. All Council members were present. County Executive FitzGerald did not attend. The meeting ended shortly after 6:45 p.m.

II. Antecedents, Announcements or Public Comment

Before the business meeting, Bob Ivory gave a 20-minute presentation about the program he directs to help close the achievement gap between black and white high school students. The program, called “Students of Promise” and based on a state model designed during the Strickland administration, is being piloted at the public high schools in Garfield Heights, Maple Heights, Warrensville Heights (and soon, Cleveland Heights). Ivory, who recently moved back to Cleveland, was a special assistant to Mr. FitzGerald before moving to San Francisco in 2012 to do educational work on closing the achievement gap there.

III. Charter Amendments

Council considered two additional proposed charter amendments, but only one received enough votes to make it onto the November ballot (joining the three others approved by Council earlier this month). The amendment, approved unanimously, would change residency requirements for the offices of County Executive and County Council. Specifically, it requires that any candidate for executive must have “been an elector in the County” for two years prior to filing for the office (this is already required for candidates for Council); and that Council members, required to live within their own districts during their terms, shall not be disqualified from serving their full terms due to redistricting. An effort proposed by Mr. Schron to amend the first part to require residency for two years prior to the date of taking office failed 8-3.

The second amendment discussed, which provides for the holding of special elections to fill vacancies in the office of County Executive, received 7 “yes” votes—one vote short of the necessary 8 that would have put it on the ballot. Mr. Brady, one of the four opponents, said he wants the proposal to be further clarified. Right now, the president of Council is to assume the executive position until the next general election in the county. Before the vote on this resolution, Mr. Miller proposed an amendment that would have prevented a special election during the final year of an executive’s four-year term; the amendment went down 6-5.

IV. Business Transacted

Passed unanimously on first reading under suspension of rules:

- A mostly routine amendment to the 2014-15 operating budget for additional appropriations and fund transfers; before the vote, Mr. Miller said that one item, \$25 million for the pedestrian bridge from the malls to the lakefront, was removed from the

resolution so Council could vote on it after the City of Cleveland approves its \$10 million funding of the project.

Passed unanimously on second reading under suspension of rules:

- The award of \$308,000 to Bray Whaler International for the purchase and delivery of furnishings and fixtures for operation of the new Hilton Hotel under construction near the Medical Mart. Bray Wheeler's spending budget is not to exceed \$25 million.
- Setting the boundaries of County Sewer District 17 to include all of Cleveland Heights (rather than just part of it).
- Setting 2015 water, storm and sanitary sewer maintenance and treatment rates and assessments for various sewer districts managed by the county.
- Amendment of a contract with Michael Baker Jr. Inc. for consultant engineering services for construction of the Towpath Trail Extension from Steelyard Commons to Tremont Trailhead for additional funds not to exceed \$2.04 million (all covered by federal funds).
- Amendment of a contract with American Bridge Co. for rehabilitation of Columbus Road Lift Bridge over the Cuyahoga River for additional funds not to exceed \$714,577, and authorizing the County Executive to apply for \$5 license tax funds in the amount of \$71,457 to fund the amendment. (This project will cost \$30 million overall.)
- Amendments of several agreements with the Cleveland Municipal School District for Universal Pre-Kindergarten services at various schools.
- Amendment of a contract for residential treatment services (via the Juvenile Court) to change the amount not-to-exceed from \$3.85 million to \$6.95 million, and to terminate the county's contract with Catholic Charities Corp. dba Parmadale.

As always, several pieces of legislation were on first or second reading and referred to various committees. The subjects of the legislation included:

- scholarships for veterans attending Tri-C or Cleveland State,
- the fee structure for the county's animal shelter dog adoption (Ms. Simon said that euthanasia has decreased from 46 percent to 11.8 percent in the past year),
- the use of certain county facilities rent-free during the 2016 Republican Convention,
- awarding Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc. \$2.8 million for design services for the pedestrian bridge from the mall to the lakefront,
- an agreement with the City of Cleveland for \$3 million for cellular 9-1-1 services originating in the city,
- an agreement with the City of Cleveland for operation of jail services for city prisoners,
- the establishment of a county Consumer Protection code and Weights and Measures code,
- a Financial Transaction Modernization Act governing the use of various payment devices for payment of county expenses.