

County Council Regular Meeting: May 26, 2015

Observer: Lynda Mayer

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 by presiding Council V. P. Pernell Jones at 5:04pm, with nine members present and Dale Miller and President Dan Brady excused. The meeting lasted one full hour.

II. Antecedents, Announcements and Public Comment

There had been a Committee of the Whole meeting prior to the regular session, where they discussed whether funds generated by a likely upcoming renewal tax levy for Cuyahoga Arts & Culture could finance capital improvements as well as operating expenses that until now primarily support only productions, events, groups and performing artists. A 5/27 Plain Dealer article reports that meeting.

Mr. Jones reported on two council pilot projects: a field trip by 42 at-risk Cleveland teens to experience history in Selma AL and attend commencement at Morehouse College, and an entrepreneurship initiative where three private companies train and employ clients newly re-entering the community after completing prison sentences. Both Jones and County Executive Budish commented on Cleveland's constructive and orderly aftermath of the Brelo verdict. Jones stressed, however, that change in the justice enforcement system must follow. Budish pointed out the role of the Sheriff's department in helping to keep protesters peaceful while protecting their free-speech rights. He also lauded area clergy and others who helped keep the lid on. Councilman Schron later noted that this very day the City of Cleveland and the Department of Justice agreed to sweeping reforms in police practices. Jones added that the country is watching how our area deals with this.

Finally, a local pastor requested that the Council investigate the appointment process for prominent job openings, such as the one currently of E. Cleveland Mayor Gary Norton to the RTA board. She also expressed the opinion that some women should be appointed.

III. Business Transacted.

* Adopted were the following interesting items:

- A \$500,000 award to College Now from the County's Educational Assistance Fund. That program assists and mentors qualified, needy local highschool graduates to survive the hurdles to college success, achieving very high retention and graduation results.
- A \$2.7 million award to the Perk Company for resurfacing Woodhill Road from Quincy to Kinsman in Cleveland.
- A \$25.5 million addition to the County's award to Medical Mutual of Ohio, to cover group healthcare & pharmacy management services for those communities participating in the

County's Benefits Regionalization Program. That brings the total award to \$141.6 million. Mr. Germana spoke glowingly of the savings to local governments of such collaboration.

--- A \$11 million Sales Tax Revenue Bond issue to pay or reimburse part of the costs of constructing, reconstructing, refurbishing, renovating and improving Public Square. The original measure was \$2 million higher, but Mr. Greenspan proposed a successful substitution, based upon expert testimony showing why the higher amount is not needed. Council was also reassured that, after reconstruction the County would have no subsequent upkeep responsibility.

-- An ordinance carried over from last year, amending the County's contracting procedures.

* The following interesting items are in earlier stages of consideration:

-- An ordinance repealing the Cuyahoga County College Savings Account Program, a pet project of the former administration. The sponsors were Mr. Greenspan, Mr. Schron and Ms Simon. It will be voted on June 11, but today there was no discussion.

-- The re-appointment of E. Cleveland Mayor Gary Norton as an RTA trustee. Among several others, this appointment has been referred to the appropriate committee.

-- \$1.4 million in additional funds, corresponding to an additional year of coverage, for the Out-of-School Time Program, part of the Child Care Resource Center's services -- also referred to committee.

-- \$0.9 million in a similar extension of 12 contracts or agreements with providers for the County's Fatherhood Initiative, a program originated in the mid-2000's by then Commissioner Peter Lawson Jones.

IV. Notes.

This meeting was notable in that most of the items were either promoted or explained by their sponsors, and one expert was brought to the microphone for questioning. It was all quite informative, and one left the session informed on a number of issues and with a sense of those Council members who supported or elaborated upon them.