

County Council Regular Meeting: Aug. 25, 2015

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.

County Executive Armand Budish and Council President Dan Brady were on vacation this week, so Council Vice President Pernel Jones ran the meeting. All other Council members were present. The meeting began at 5 p.m. and ended at 5:45 p.m. During the public comment section of the meeting, Satinder Puri told Council (as he has done several times in the past) that he ardently opposes the “sin” tax earmarked for the arts that will be on the ballot in November.

II. Business Transacted

Resolutions adopted on third reading by unanimous vote:

- Support of the Cleveland 2030 District’s efforts to reduce the energy consumption of buildings downtown and across Greater Cleveland. The resolution also supports the Better Buildings Challenge and its voluntary leadership initiative, which asks local leaders to make a public commitment to energy efficiency. [The city of Cleveland already participates in both programs, as do several local businesses.]
- Authorization of payments totaling \$39,000 for veterans services through the end of 2016. According to Mr. Greenspan, Cuyahoga is the only Ohio county that makes sure any unspent state veterans services funds are used to help veterans, not deposited in the county’s general fund. The remaining funds available this year will be used for Tri-C and CSU scholarships and for veterans’ medical treatment.
- Amendments to agreements and contracts with 10 different providers for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act youth training. These amendments extend the time period of the agreements to June 30, 2016, and change the eligibility to ages 14-21. The agreements and contracts total more than \$2.5 million.
- A \$2.8 million award to Layne Inliner for the 2015 county sewer rehabilitation program. Layne Inliner is a supplier of products for the county engineer.
- An amendment to a contract with Economic and Community Development Institute for management of the county’s microenterprise revolving loan fund. The amendment extends the contract to Jan. 13, 2017, and adds an additional \$2 million in funding. Mr. Schron said that the fund helps promote economic development.

Resolutions adopted on first reading under suspension of rules and as emergencies, all by unanimous vote:

- Extension of the appointment of Mary Louise Madigan as interim director of the Department of Communications. (See below for more information on the appointment.)

- Amendments to the 2014-15 biennial operating budget for 2015 to provide for appropriation transfers between accounts and cash transfers between funds. Before the vote, Mr. Greenspan moved that one item in the resolution—a \$9 million additional appropriation for the hospitalization self-insurance fund—be removed from the resolution before the vote. He said his finance committee has asked county administrators for more detail about the appropriation and said that the committee would meet Monday, Aug. 31, to discuss it. *[After the meeting, Mr. Greenspan explained that prescriptions required by some county employees are very expensive. He wants to find out if the county's catastrophic stop-insurance can help pay for prescriptions. But he also said it appears that \$9 million is a lot more than is actually needed.]*

Resolutions adopted on second reading under suspension of rules and as emergencies, all by unanimous vote:

- Adoption of the five-year 2015 Economic Development Plan (a plan is required by the charter). Mr. Schron said that the plan, now in its fifth year, focuses on job creation and will continue to be tweaked. Mr. Miller said that the plan is designed to spur entrepreneurship and integrates and coordinates with various other services to strengthen the economy.
- Award of a contract not-to-exceed \$12.8 million to the supplier of electric power services for various county facilities from Sept. 1, 2015, to May 1, 2018. The consultant that advises Ohio counties on power contracts helped narrow six bids down to two—from Champion Energy Services and from AEP Energy—which were to be opened on Aug. 26. Mr. Germana explained that the consultant says the contract will save the county money compared to its current contract with First Energy. *[On Aug. 27, I emailed Mr. Greenspan to ask about the contract. He emailed me back right away and said the contract was awarded to AEP and that the county's projected savings is more than \$8,000 a month. A second—and ironic—note: a representative of First Energy introduced himself to Council members when public comments were welcomed at the end of the meeting.]*
- An agreement with RED (Regional Emergency Dispatch) Center for participation in the county benefits regionalization program.
- An agreement with MetroHealth in the amount of \$607,750 for healthcare for youth residing at the County Detention Center. The agreement covers July 1, 2015, to Dec. 31, 2015.

Items on second reading and scheduled for third reading and adoption at Council's Sept. 8 meeting included the acceptance of donations of burial plots for indigent burials, and the submission of loan applications to the U.S. EPA for sewer work.

Various other items were referred to committees, including a resolution referred to the Committee of the Whole that would confirm Ms. Madigan's appointment as permanent director of the Department of Communications. Also referred to committees: and a new \$998,500 five-year lease for the county's auto title office at Golden Gate shopping center.